

Patuxent River Monday Paddle

By Ralph Heimlich

On May 9, I was joined by 10 hardy Monday paddlers for a jaunt down a secluded and historic waterway in the middle Patuxent River. Queen Anne Canoe Launch is a facility of the Patuxent River Park (MNCCP and Jug Bay) located adjacent to the 4H Center off Queen Anne Road, just south of the intersection of Rts 301 and 214 near Bowie, Maryland. The launch is gated, but you call the Jug Bay HQ to get the access code.



Dock launch at Queen Annes (Ed Santlemann, Jay Perry, and Mark Taylor) photo by Ralph Heimlich

The sky was cloudy, and the weather damp, but relatively rainless when we gathered at the parking area above the landing. Recent rains had made the steep road down to the floating dock launch muddy, so we all opted to unload at the parking area and carry boats down to the dock. The current was running briskly as we launched into the muddy brown river with much assistance holding boats as the paddler got in the saddle and skirted up. Launching were Jim Allen, Jay Perry, Gib Hoshall, Nancy Eichert, and Ed Santelmann. Long-time CPA member Mark Taylor joined us for the first time in a while, and Florida member John Garon joined us on his way north to his Maine house. Linda Delaney decided the current was a bit swifter than she wanted to deal with, but wished us luck.

We initially paddled upstream against the current, but were soon blocked by blow downs and shallowing waters over the gravel bars. It is hard for modern eyes to believe that Queen Anne was once the official port of embarkation on the Patuxent River, one of several designated tobacco inspection and warehousing ports on the Bay. Poor agricultural practices and resulting massive silting damaged the deep Patuxent River here and the last ship was loaded about 1790. Today, the narrow stream is overhung with dense, green vegetation, and the only commerce is carried on by Prothonotary Warblers, beavers, and soaring Ospreys.

We paddled with the current downstream past floodplain islands that benefit early each Spring from the efforts of the Pax Cleanup. Muddy, water-logged landscapes near the river mean that the nearest houses are far away on firmer land, leaving the river's edge mostly undeveloped, save for a few fishing camp shelters and chairs. We passed Rattlesnake Island, and went down past our intended lunch stop at Wooten's Landing to an area just below Spyglass Island where what is now known as Back Channel, once the main channel, is only a narrow tree-choked isthmus from what is now the main run of the river. During the War of 1812, Commodore Joshua Barney's fleet of oared gunboats were bottled up by the British fleet under Admiral Sir George Cockburn until Barney fired his gunboats and trundled their cannon overland to take part as artillery in the Battle of Bladensburg.

Wooten's Landing has a floating dock setup similar to the one at Queen Anne Canoe Launch, but the floats need to be adjusted to bring the dock surface closer to the water for kayak landing. I've contacted the Parks and Rec and they promise to make the adjustment. We mostly chose the mud-

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Pine Barren Paddles

By Mike Fernandez

The idea for this trip came from a conversation with Marla Aron on one of Ralph's Potomac Passage Paddles, in which she indicated the New Jersey Pine Barrens had been on her list of paddling destinations to get to. Being that the Pines are practically in my back yard and they were where I learned to paddle as a youth, I offered to put together a trip. As this was my first experience leading a CPA trip, Marla was a tremendous asset in helping co-ordinate the event.

Our group started arriving at Godfrey Bridge campground on Thursday evening, with the early arrivals enjoying a pleasant evening of solitude with the pine trees and whippoorwills to keep us company. We all remarked on a seeming abundance of airplanes and helicopters passing overhead; I later learned that there was an air show at Joint Base MDL (the new name for the Fort Dix/McGuire/Lakehurst complex) located a short distance north of us that weekend; they may have been flying in for the event, as there was minimal air traffic observed after Thursday evening.

Early forecasts for the area all had a chance of thunderstorms Friday and Saturday. Although Friday dawned to a cloudy sky, the rain held off until we got on the water for our shorter paddle on the Wading River around noon. Our paddle from Hawkens Bridge to Evans Bridge was accompanied by off and on light showers, and the forecast thunderstorms never materialized. The shuttle, while short, was mostly over sand roads that characterize the Pines – I hope no one became too nervous with my wild careening down these roads!



Marla Aron

Photo by Mike Fernandez

With everyone finally arriving late on Friday, we had another relaxed evening around the campfire. The skies began to clear, and Saturday dawned bright and sunny. Our full group paddled the Oswego River from Oswego Lake to Harrisville Lake. This was a longer and more varied paddle, starting with a crossing of Oswego Lake and a portage over the dam before setting off down-river. About mid-way through the paddle there is a broad, braided section where the river flows through what had been a mill-pond for Martha Furnace, a long-gone bog iron works and village of which practically nothing remains. The river narrows again below Martha before opening onto Harrisville Lake; this proved to be a challenging paddle for me in a canoe as the winds began to pick up late in the day. Saturday evening some of us had dinner about a half hour away in Hammonton, the nearest town of any consequence, while others stayed in camp. A quick moving cold front threatened rain, but delivered little more than showers.

Sunday dawned sunny, breezy, and markedly cooler. Some opted for a short paddle upriver from Oswego Lake, while others checked out the goings-on at Batsto State Park. Batsto is the headquarters for Wharton State Forest, and is a restored iron and glass manufacturing village dating to before the American Revolution.

Speaking for myself, it was a great experience planning my first CPA event. It was my first time camping in the Pine in many, MANY years. Although we did not have the wildflower display I was hoping for due to a cold, late

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Kayak Sail Gathering

By Greg Welker

Most people just paddle their kayaks. Some of us sail them. There is a group of kayak sailors on the east coast who add tall masts (12-16 feet), sails (28-100+ square feet), leeboards and outriggers to their boats and sail them. This group, known as the Sail Angels, had their spring gathering the first week of May at Tall Pines campground on Virginia's eastern shore. There were 17 people in attendance. We sailed, ate well, and coped with a bunch of rain.

Many of you may have seen sails advertised for kayaks that let you sail downwind, in the direction the wind is blowing. The sails we use do more than just go downwind. They are able to go upwind as well as many sailboats, and can reach speeds in excess of 16 knots. Sailing kayaks and canoes of this type use outriggers, usually inflatable, to allow the use of taller masts and larger main sails and jibs. There are even some spinnakers in use. Many of us use the Balogh Sail Design Sail and Outrigger System (BSD) (www.balogsailsdesigns.com), while others use similar systems by Folbot, or a combination of commercial and custom made components. The boats use rudders, and if you are seriously into sailing you will switch out your normal kayak rudder for a balanced rudder with a larger surface area to help steer when sailing.

The best boats for sailing are those with significant rocker for maneuverability and large bow volumes to keep from submerging on downwind sailing runs. Whitewater kayaks converted to sailing are like acrobatic biplanes, turning quickly with lots of sail power for their size. While the whitewater boats can turn circles around the sailing sea kayaks, the hard shell sea kayaks are faster in a straight line, especially sailing across the direction of the wind. As with sailboats, the more sail you add the faster you go. Some kayaks, especially two person folding or hard shell kayaks, increase sail area by adding additional masts and sails. Schooner rigs with two masts are common, and we had a three masted schooner at the gathering this year. Others of us increase sail area by adding sails in front of the main sail, called jibs or spinnakers. These can get a bit too exciting on high wind days, so we tend to use them only when we have light winds. When the wind

really picks up, the kayaks decrease sail area by "reefing", or shortening the sails.

Like other sailors, kayak sailors tend to sleep in, since early mornings usually have light winds. The group at the gathering had a number of leisurely group breakfasts, from waffles to pancakes to potlucks. Sailing was usually from mid to late morning until early evening. Several times during the week we patronized the local restaurants. This is a group that enjoys local color, and hole in the wall breakfast and dinner joints are highly prized.

During the week we installed a new BSD system on a CPA member's Looksha (he had to turn away while we drilled the mast hole in his boat's deck), and we had him out on the water for his first sailing lessons in one of the schooners. This brings the number of kayak sailors I know of in the CPA membership area to eight.

The fall gathering will be in October at Cedar Island, North Carolina. Camping or house rental options are available. If you don't have a sail rig, there are some rigged boats that can be borrowed during the week. Feel free to contact me if you are interested in learning more or attending. ☺



Some of the Boats on the Beach

Photo by Greg Welker

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dy shoreline to get out for lunch, cut short by the beginning of a more serious rain. Wootens Landing Wetland Park is an Anne Arundel County park with a parking area off Sands Road and easy access (by cart) from the parking area.

On the paddle back upriver, we were fortunate to see something plummet from the trees to the bank. Looking closer, we saw a downy Barred Owl owlet peering intently back at us through the undergrowth. Apparently unsteady on his new wings, he fell down from his perch, none the worse for wear.



Owlet by Ralph Heimlich

Loading up, we concluded another in the series of Monday paddles listed on the CPA calendar. Formerly known as the Gunkhole Paddles, this series accommodates the retired, or merely flexibly-scheduled paddlers. We often coordinate them with campers, staying over an extra day to paddle in the more remote parts of the Bay. Paddling on Mondays is a real treat as there are few other users competing for parking or space on the water. If you can be free on a Monday, check the calendar and come join us. ☺

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spring, it was good to get back and hear the whippoorwills; their evening calls in the Pines are to me are what the loons are to the North Woods. I hope everyone enjoyed it... y'all come back now!

IF YOU GO...

The Pine Barrens are a unique part of New Jersey; except for the lack of rocks or scrub palms, you would think you were in the North Woods or deepest Florida! But you are a short hour from major metropolitan areas, and summer weekends can see bank-to-bank paddlers coating the waterways and clogging the campgrounds. Off-season or mid-week is definitely the time to go. We saw only one other group on Saturday, which gave a little taste of how crazy it can get!

Four major paddle trails traverse the southern Pine Barrens in Wharton State Forest – the Mullica, Batsto, Wading, and Oswego. The Mullica and Batsto are long enough to have paddle-in campsites on them, but all can be done as day trips. Shuttles for the Oswego and Wading are mercifully short, no more than 15 minutes one-way, whereas the Mullica and Batsto can take a good hour to set up. There are four inexpensive primitive campgrounds accessible by car that have outhouses and a hand pump for water, or there are full-service campgrounds at Atsion and Bass River. All can be reserved thru the Reserve America website that so many state parks now use. A [map](#), provided by [Bel Haven Paddlesports](#), provides a good overview of the area. Bel Haven can also provide shuttle service should you need it. ☺