

Anacostia surprises, delights

Figure 8 route spans urban/rural divide

By Jan Tucker

When I think of places to paddle, the Anacostia River is not the first place that jumps into my mind, but when I saw Lois's trip on the Meetup schedule, I thought it might be someplace different to see. I had heard horror stories for years about how polluted the Anacostia was, but the past few years have brought quite an improvement.

Everyone got to the Anacostia park boat ramp early (I wanted to allow time to find the place if I got lost). There were eleven paddlers with a variety of experience levels. Some were beginners with rented boats and others were more experienced.

Lois planned the trip as a "figure 8" with one loop going up river and around Kingman Island and the second, for those who wanted a longer paddle, down to the Washington Channel. The first loop was a very pleasant surprise. I was expecting a sort of "urban environment" but instead it was wooded and felt like we were miles from nowhere



Photos/Huei-Chi Hsu

except for the occasional Metro train passing over one of the bridges. There were egrets, herons and cormorants along the way. At the top of Kingman Island, we stopped to talk to the lady driving the golf course beer cart over the bridge as we went under. She seemed quite surprised to see a group of kayakers. I guess if we had asked to buy a few, she could have tossed them down but getting the money up to her might have been a problem. Also, we would have been in violation of our CPA insurance policy. The island was very pretty; there were more birds and flowers. The loop around the island and back totaled around 4.6 miles.

We ate our lunches back at the launch, and then on to the Advanced Beginner segment. Six of us did the second loop going down the river past the War College and into the Washington Channel. We

passed the Navy Yard and Nationals' stadium. This was more of the urban scene I had expected. There were big yachts, water taxis, people going every which way in rented kayaks and stand-up paddleboards and all sorts of things to see. After about 4.3 miles we turned around and headed back to the park. Our total mileage for the day was a bit over 13.

The two loop format worked out well for our mixed group. A couple of the paddlers who did the whole thing were in shorter rec boats and kept up just fine; Lois did a great job keeping us all together. For me it was a fun and different paddle. ♣



[Wye, continued from previous page](#)

On the north side of the island and beyond the Wye Island Bridge sits the historic Wye Plantation property where University of Maryland Agricultural & Natural Resources has managed a long-term breeding program for a Black Angus herd since 1954: <https://agresearch.umd.edu/wye/angus>. They introduced larger Angus cattle breeding commonly seen throughout the U.S: http://agresearch.umd.edu/sites/agresearch.umd.edu/files/docs/Wye_article_final%5b1%5d.pdf. There is also a large conference retreat complex, Wye Aspen Center/ Houghton House located on this point, site of the summit between Israel and Palestine in 1998: .

The historic Wye Plantation was once owned by William Paca, signer of the Declaration of Independence and a former governor of Maryland: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Paca. His other mansion and historic gardens are located in downtown Annapolis: <http://www.annapolis.org/contact/william-paca-house-garden>. William Paca was buried in 1799 at this family cemetery though the original Paca residence burned down later in 1879. The current Wye Hall, built in the 1930s, is not visible from the water, but we know it's there!

We've always heard there is another kayak landing located on Wye Island at the back of one of the coves, but it's hard to find. Paddlers are not allowed to use the DNR dock. The trail guide shows an existing campsite located at the end Dividing Creek with kayak/canoe access: http://dnr.maryland.gov/publiclands/Documents/WyeIsland_Map.pdf.

We discovered that a brand-new hand-carry sand launch has been built at the Granary Creek Picnic Area, 632 Wye Island Road 38° 53'31.6"N 76°08'22.7"W: <http://news.maryland.gov/dnr/2018/07/01/wye-paddle>. It just opened July, 2018, jointly funded by the MD State Highway Administration, DNR, the Nature Conservancy and REI: <http://chesapeakeconservancy.org/explore/explore-by-boat/public-access-projects/wye-island/>. You may need a DNR park pass - check first! There is limited parking at the site with some additional parking at a small lot approximately 1/4-quarter mile away. Please note - parking is prohibited along the road.

Our Chesapeake watershed has nearly 12,000 miles of shoreline, but only 2 percent of it is publicly accessible. If folks can't access the water, it is hard to ignite their love of the bay as kayakers know well! ♣