

The Chesapeake Paddler



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Saranac River creates meandering paradise

How many Loons fit in a lock? Adirondack paddlers discover what floats their boats

By Al Larsen

In what has become an annual tradition, a gaggle of CPA paddlers who call themselves the Loons gathered for a week of paddling in the Adirondacks. While I've paddled a fair amount in the ADK, this was the first time my wife Anne and I joined the Loons. Led by Rich and Sue Stevens, we headed out each day for a beautiful, pristine piece of water to explore. The Saranac River creates a meandering paradise, with narrow channels and big



The Middle Saranac is one of the least used sections of the chain. Photos/Al Larsen.

lakes, paddle-in campsites and car access points, large (for the Adirondacks) towns, and very remote locations. For one of our paddles, we chose the Middle Saranac Lake—one of the least used sections of the Saranac chain. The put-in is rather obscure, and the creek leading to the lake is so small it's single file even for kayaks.

We had clear blue skies heading out, and the lighting was spectacular. Veterans of this lake admonished us to look back as we headed out of the creek onto the lake, as the entry point would not be obvious on the return. Middle Saranac was a treat for the eyes—little rocky islands with a handful of conifers growing on them, shorelines with sandy beaches, and coves and interesting features enough to distract from some very large, barely submerged rocks that were awaiting anyone who got too deeply mesmerized.

Our goal was to head across the lake, enter the outlet creek (Saranac River), and make our way onto the next lake, Lower Saranac. To do

that, we would have to enter a lock that separated the two with a considerable differential in water height. Of course, this led to a lot of jokes of the “locks straight ahead, bagels on the right” variety. Apparently in the off seasons, boaters operate the locks themselves. We had the luxury of rangers operating the mechanisms for us, so we all entered the hold at once, sort of sardine style, and held onto ropes that were strung front to back along the hold, while the water dropped on the out-bound journey, and rose on the return. When the water reached

the correct level for the body we were moving into, the lock gates opened and the little fishes, er, kayaks, darted away. Sort of the sea kayak equivalent of paddling over a waterfall to reach downstream. Sort of.

After paddling down a beautiful meander past a big beaver lodge, we emerged onto Lower Saranac to a very noticeable wind that had been blocked by various land features on the trip to that point. We admired the lake, but lunch was calling and we



[Continued on page 7](#)

THE CHESAPEAKE PADDLERS ASSOCIATION, INC.

The mission of the Chesapeake Paddlers Association is to provide a way for people to enjoy sea kayaking within the Chesapeake Bay area and to promote safe sea kayaking practices through educating the local sea kayaking community and the interested public.

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We accept display advertising that relates to the interest of our readers. Monthly rates are as follows:

size	cost	dimensions (col)
1/8 page	\$20	2.4" x 3.5" (1)
1/4 page	\$32	4.9" x 4.7" (2)
1/2 page	\$50	7.5" x 4.7" (3)
Full page	\$80	7.5" x 9.75" (3)

A 5% discount will be given for ads supplied as electronic files in acceptable formats (i.e., .tif, .gif, .jpeg, bit-map). Email or call for more information and for 10-month discount. See advertising contact in masthead.

Public service announcements and personal ads to sell kayaks/ accessories are printed at no charge; non-members pay \$10 for 3 months. Ads dated three months before the date of this issue will be pulled unless a new request is received by the 15th of the month prior to the next issue. And if it has sold...tell us!

THE CHESAPEAKE PADDLER

The Chesapeake Paddler is published 10 times a year, with combination issues in Nov/Dec and Jan/Feb. The deadline for submitting copy is the 15th of the preceding month. Have an idea for an article, or is there information you would like to see in the newsletter? Contact news_editor@cpakayaker.com

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News From the CPA Coordinator - Bill Smith

Last year Rick Leader organized the SK 101 event and did a fabulous job adding a new spin with experienced paddlers standing up and giving a brief description of why they paddle and a fast-paced agenda, but good things don't last since Rick has decided to make it a onetime affair. This year Shelley Weichelt has stepped up and will fill the role vacated by Rick; Rick has graciously offered to help Shelley get it off the ground without reinventing the wheel. Thank You, Rick, and Thank You, Shelley.



Well it's that time of year when many paddlers hang it up for the season or at least slow down the frequency of paddle days per month; I like to winter paddle on occasion but certainly don't get out much as I did in my younger days. Sometimes it's hard to convince myself to leave a perfectly warm house, put on that horribly confining dry suit, slosh around in ice cold water and launch your boat into the frigid wind to take a short paddle because of the limited daylight-but it is still fun, and I am always glad I made it out. The short day can really cause issues if you are delayed during the paddle for one reason or another; last November during a KIPPPERZ paddle we wound up paddling about an hour after dark which I worried we would have trouble finding our landing in the dark but fortunately the landing was well lit so no harm. Many years ago I was with a group paddling in

Northern Michigan on the Rifle River when we ran out of daylight and paddled about three hours in the dark on a moonless night on a narrow winding river with high banks and deep woods so darkness was complete; it was really a unique experience since after a while our eyes became accustomed to the darkness and we could make out the water flow but the occasional tree in the water would teach us a lesson. We would have missed our take out but it was just past a campground and we could smell wood smoke, so we knew we were close.

The CPA Holiday party is December 8th and Ralph and Beth Heimlich have again graciously offered their home for the party. The Heimlich's have moved since last year's party so if you show up at their old address then the surprise will be on you. Watch the CPA meet up page for information on the party and to RSVP. The holiday party is always a good time to socialize with your paddling friends without all that funny stuff on. The white elephant exchange can also be very entertaining since some people take it very seriously and I suspect some may even hold a grudge from last year. Come to the party and have a great time.

I hope everyone has a glorious and safe holiday season.

~ *Bill Smith*

Plan to attend the CPA holiday party on December 8



The holiday party will take place Saturday, December 8 with a white elephant gift exchange. The venue will be the Heimlich's NEW DIGS:

3873 Paul Mill Road, Ellicott City, MD 21042

Share your favorite dish, toss back a few, and share the year in review through projected photos.

If your last name begins with:

A-K bring a casserole or entrée

L-S bring a dessert

T-Z bring a salad and bread

All to feed 4 people.

Ralph will supply a couple of pans of pulled pork and brisket from Mission BBQ and non-alcoholic beverages, but you should bring your own beer, wine, or other beverage of choice. We'll have a white elephant gift exchange for those wishing to participate. Bring a wrapped, kayak-related treasure of modest value, worth less than \$10 if possible. Re-gifting is an art form!

GPS: 3873 Paul Mill Road, Ellicott City, MD 21042

Phone: 240-472-8825

Paddler Profile: Shelley Wiechelt

By Bob Browning

Lives in: Catonsville, MD

Real job: UMBC, Associate Professor of Social Work

Do you regularly attend a Piracy? No, but I enjoy paddling with the Pirates of Sugarloaf when I can.

Number of years paddling: 4.5 years of regular paddling. Paddled expedition trips for a few years before.

How did you get involved in sea kayaking? I discovered

Ocean Woman Kayaking, which was a women only kayaking tour group, in the '90s. I paddled with them once every year or so on expeditions. After living in MD for a while, I discovered the many kayaking groups and clubs and began paddling regularly.

What boats do you paddle? Necky Chatham 17 (Steeler Gold, fiber glass, all around boat); Romany S (14 foot, Steeler Gold, polypro, rough water boat).

Rudder or skeg? Skeg

Type paddle used: I use an Epic euro paddle but recently started to learn to use my Gear Lab Greenland stick.

Do you do any other type of paddling besides sea kayaking? I have canoed, whitewater kayaked, and whitewater rafted some in the past.

Do you regularly do any other outdoor activities? No, not regularly

How often on average do you paddle between May and October? I usually paddle 3-5 times per week during kayak season. However, this season I had a shoulder injury and so paddled much less frequently.

Do any winter paddling? I do winter paddle a bit.

Favorite local paddling location? Beverly Triton to Thomas Point Lighthouse

Favorite CPA trip you've ever been on and why? Magothy River with Bill Smith. Bill and I had a lot of fun helping new paddlers manage the Magothy; they had a great time and really grew that day.

Coollest paddling trip you've ever been on anywhere and why? Glacier Bay, Alaska – Although I have kayaked in many wonderful



places with wonderful people, nothing surpasses the spectacular scenery and interaction with wildlife that I experienced in Glacier Bay. We were visited by a regal brown bear in our camp and were blessed to paddle with a surfacing humpback whale near a glacier. We also encountered otters, seals, eagles, as well as other bears and whales.

Scariest/most dangerous trip/experience and why?

We were paddling from Watts Island back to Beach Island, between Tangier

Island and the Virginia portion of the Eastern Shore http://articles.baltimoresun.com/1992-04-19/news/1992110088_1_watts-klinefelter-island, when the wind and waves picked up. We experienced large breaking waves in the channel and ended up somewhat off course. A day marker in the distance gave us a target to aim for and an indicator of exactly where we were on the water. We arrived at our destination rather spent but all safe and affirmed in our rough water skills.

Future bucket list trip(s)? Baja, Italy, Greece

Three things you like most about paddling? Stillness of calm silent paddling, exhilaration in rough water paddling, connection with fellow paddlers.

What do you like about CPA? The organization's commitment to promoting safe paddling in the region and having a great time on the water.

One unusual, non-paddling thing other people find interesting about you? I conduct research on trauma and addiction and have several published book chapters and journal articles. ♦

Do you know a paddler who would make an interesting profile? Contact Bob Browning at: BBBrowning43@verizon.net

Think sprayskirt entrapment can't happen to you?

Gear is only as good as your ability to use it. Complacency can be deadly. Practice!

By Paula Hubbard

One of the most frightening things for a kayak instructor or trip leader is to have a student capsize and become trapped in his or her boat. Recently that happened to me. The paddler was not a beginner, was using her own equipment, had done wet exits previously. There were no indicators to suggest that we might have a problem. We were getting ready to practice assisted rescues and Denise, one of the assistants in the class, was working with her. I saw the capsize and things didn't look right, no swimmer, no set up for a roll, some banging and bouncing.

I quickly paddled to them. Denise had already assessed the situation and was starting to do a Hand of God rescue. For this maneuver, the rescuer rolls the capsized boat up with the paddler still in the cockpit. Denise got the paddler up enough so that she could get some air but couldn't completely roll the kayak upright. I went to the other side of the paddler's boat and had her grab my bow. Fortunately, she was able to hear and follow instructions. At that point we were stable, with everyone breathing air.

According to Denise, this is what happened:

"I was positioned at the bow of a student's boat preparing to demonstrate a bow rescue. The student mentioned that she wanted to attempt a skill that she was unable to adequately describe and did not know what it was called.

Suddenly, the student was upside down. I attempted to right her boat, but was unable to do so from my position at the bow. As I maneuvered alongside her boat, I grabbed deck-lines to pull her up a bit and help her get some air. I asked if student knew how to wet exit, and she replied "yes," but that she could not pull her skirt.

I was still in front of the cockpit and it was difficult to maintain my hold from this angle. My concern was that I needed to get her up for air.

I quickly moved into position to perform a Hand of God rescue. At the cockpit, I pushed down on her boat and grabbed the combing in an attempt to pull her upright. The student's position in her boat and the fact that she was trying to keep her head above water



Practicing wet exit instruction at Trip Leader Training.

prevented me from completing the HOG. I was able to hold her boat on enough of an angle to allow her to continue breathing. Then Paula pulled into position with her bow."

After a moment to relax, Denise and I got her boat upright. Our paddler settled in her seat; everything was OK. The entire incident probably took less than a minute but felt like forever.

What happened? Unplanned capsizes can happen for many different reasons - rough conditions, trying new skills, simply not paying attention.

We should always be ready to deal with a capsize, whether as a paddler or as a potential rescuer.

What causes spray skirt entrapment? In this case the spray skirt was very tight, the paddler was out of position and twisted, so she couldn't get into the tuck position, and she couldn't release the skirt. Other causes might be loose equipment in the cockpit or an inaccessible grab loop.

As trip leaders, we need to be aware of the problems associated with wearing spray skirts. We sometimes take for granted that people who wear a skirt are comfortable with wet exits and have practiced them. I would never make someone who was uncomfortable with wet exits wear the skirt. Many of the places where we paddle are on calm water and spray skirts are not necessarily needed. I would rather deal with water splashing into the cockpit that entrapment and a panicking paddler.

We should all have a plan for how to deal with an entrapment. The trip leader may not be the closest to the incident; quick action is essential. The Hand of God rescue can be difficult for some because of boat design and weight differences. The general principle is that you are rolling the kayak up. When you are next to the upside down boat, push down on the side of the boat that is closest to you, reach across to grab the coaming that is farthest away from you, and roll the boat up. If the paddler can relax, it is helpful. When the trapped paddler lifts their head and struggles, it is harder for the rescuer to right the boat. If you can't get the boat upright, try to remove the skirt. Use members of the group to assist with a bow rescue or help

[Continued on page 7](#)

Tuckahoe obstacle course inspires creative paddle

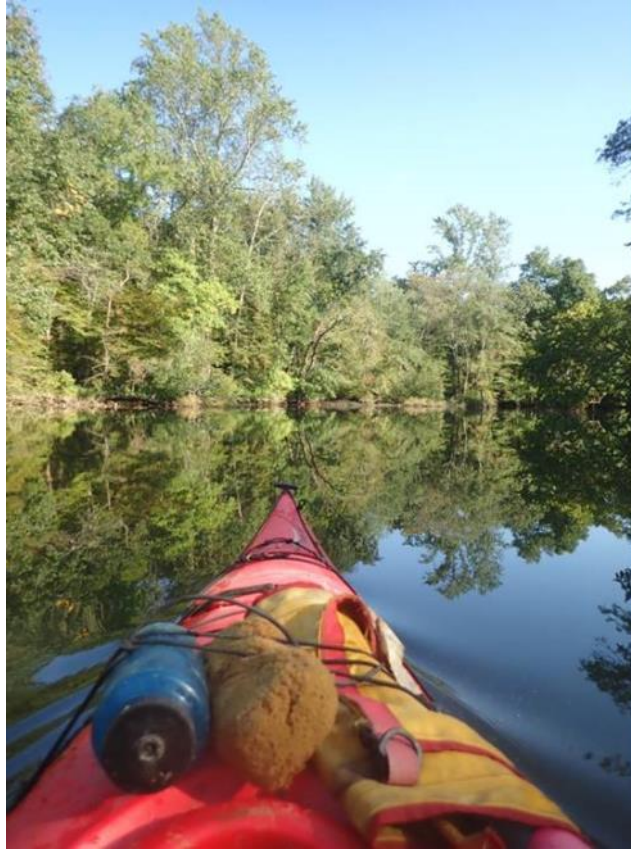
Pack that "Plan B" in your day hatch. Destination offers birds, fall colors — and toppled trees.

By Paul Fofonoff

Since 2003, Tuckahoe Creek, on the Eastern Shore, and especially the five-mile stretch from Hillsboro to the dam at Tuckahoe Lake, has been one of my favorite paddling locations. I first found out about it in *Sea Kayaking in Maryland's Chesapeake Bay*, by Michael Savarino and Andrea Nolan. The launch site at Hillsboro is one of the bay's most beautiful, a wooded well-kept park on the tidal river. Going upstream, the river is wide and tidal - after that, you're paddling uphill, mostly against mild currents, on a narrow river, through rich bottomland forest, and the fallen trees determine how far you can go. Usually, the park crew cuts enough of the fallen trees in the spring to permit passage through the obstacle course, but winter damage and summer storms can create major blockages, some of which are too big for an easy portage. I was on one CPA paddle here, and I've led shorter beginner-level Tuckahoe paddles for the Potomac Chapter of the Appalachian Mountain Club.

I was considering scheduling a paddling trip on the Tuckahoe for the AMC, so I went on a scouting trip Sunday, Oct. 6th and drove to the Hillsboro Landing off MD 404. My goal, for a group with mixed abilities in recreational kayaks and canoes, was to paddle upstream to a horse-trail bridge about three miles, but of course, for myself I was hoping to paddle all the way up to the dam. It was a beautiful warm day, and paddling was pleasant on the tidal river, past tall green trees with faint hints of

color. As the river narrowed and the current increased, it became a dodge-em course past logs and snags. Eventually, I



Typical Tuckahoe. Photos/Paul Fofonoff

reached a riffle two miles upriver where the uphill was visible and the current tested my paddling ability. I decide to stop here for rest and lunch. As I ate, a family of three crossed the creek on horseback; the horses were shy about the current here, and the park does not recommend the ford for human hikers. I put in, paddled a short distance, and found the creek blocked by a fallen tree. I beached the boat, followed a path through weeds and mud, and launched again. After a few strokes, I found myself facing a fallen oak about four feet thick with no easy way around. It's clear that the wet summer has toppled lots of trees in the soft bottom soils. It looks like the creek could be blocked for more than a year.

Fortunately, the Tuckahoe has lots of alternatives. Another year when the

Tuckahoe was blocked, I led a group downstream five miles from Hillsboro to Coveys Landing. The river widens, and the shore changes from swamp to marsh. It's lightly developed; we saw lots of birds and a big beaver lodge. A paddler told me that the five miles below Coveys Landing to the next landing, Ganey's Wharf, were nice too. For a shorter paddle, the Tuckahoe above Tuckahoe Lake has about two miles of easy paddling through swamp forest to a landing at the park's non-electric campground. On a couple of AMC trips, I have combined this short paddle with a five-mile hike on the park trails for a pretty good outing. ♣



Always have a backup plan At left, a four-foot thick oak presents a minor obstacle to the original paddle plan. At right, a land-water intersection on Tuckahoe Creek.

Upcoming Events. For the most up-to-date listings, visit the [CPA Meetup Calendar](#)

Date	Event	Summary
Th 11/8-Su 11/11	Chickahominy Camper	12:00 pm 11/8 - 4:00 pm 11/11, car camper, paddles on area rivers, reserve campsites now, potluck Sat dinner
Sun, Nov 11	Non-CPA event: Bohemia River SP Open House	10:00-2:00, Open House, 3864 Augustine Herman Hwy, Chesapeake City
Sat, Dec 8	Holiday Party	7:00-11:00, barbecue provided, potluck of salads, main dishes, and desserts; White Elephant gift exchange w kayak theme
Tue, Dec. 25	Truxton Park paddle	10:00 a.m. launch. Dry suits required; Santa hats optional but recommended!

Sprayskirt Entrapment

get the skirt off. A knife to cut the skirt would be a last resort; you can cause serious injury to the paddler if you cut through a skirt and into their legs.

Prevention of entrapment should always be a high priority. Paddlers don't seem to like to practice wet exits; for many it's an uncomfortable experience. However, it is a critical skill. When someone is uncomfortable with the wet exit, I will stand in the water with them until they are confident that they can remove the skirt and get out of the boat. Remember, doing something once isn't mastering the skill. Any time you get new equipment, go practice: new boat, practice wet exits; new skirt, practice; beginning of the season, practice. During rescue practices, do a real wet exit; don't just jump out of your boat. ♣



A new CPA Steering Committee was elected at the Nov. 4 annual meeting. Left to right: Treasurer, Rich Stevens, Coordinator, Bill Smith, Steering Committee members, Katherine Neale and Paula Hubbard, Secretary, Sue Stevens, and Steering Committee members, Chip Walsh, Shelley Weichelt, and Ralph Heimlich. Not pictured, Steering Committee member Linda Delaney.

Loons

had seen some great-looking sand beaches back on Middle Saranac. So, we headed back up river, through the lock and out onto Middle Saranac, where we caught the full force of the stiffening wind. We paddled through the wind, with a determination that only the



Rain gear is mighty fine.

thought of food can muster. We landed and pulled the boats up—and for me, that meant only one thing: time for a swim. I swam out far enough to see around a jut of land at the far end of “our” beach—allowing me to see what was clearly a storm bearing down on us. I skedaddled (a nautical term) back to shore, to find most of our group with the faces in their electronic devices, announcing that a storm apparently was coming, and might be in here in 10 minutes. I told them—ah, yeah, look in the sky and you'll see it, and by the way, it's here. Kind of funny. A lesson in different approaches to modern seamanship—either look and be aware, or use your electronics. I find the former more consistently accurate and rewarding. With that, everyone pulled their raingear, as well as their lunches, out of their hatches, and we hunkered down for what was actually a kind of fun lunch.

The storm moved through while we ate and attended to other needs, and in the aftermath, the wind died down considerably. What remained for us was a gorgeous paddle across Middle Saranac and finding the little inlet to the put-in creek. As Rich likes to say, we cheated death once again. Actually, a great outing on an accessible but not heavily used lake. Oh—and that swim? It feels like you've been in a spa when you emerge from an Adirondack lake. ♣

Launch of the Month: Winter Quarters



Lat: 38.08579788 Long: -75.55930377

Address: 399 Winter Quarters Dr Pocomoke City, MD 21851

Type: ramp, dock

Parking: Moderate

Restroom: No

Ownership: The Town of Pocomoke City

County: Worcester

State: Maryland

Water Body: Pocomoke River

Comments: <http://>

webapps02.dnr.state.md.us/

MDPublicWaterAccess/

ShowWaterAccessToPublic.aspx?

This launch is about a mile upstream from Pocomoke City and a mile downstream from the mouth of Dividing Creek, a pretty paddle that can take you more than 17 miles into the bottomland hardwood swamps. However this last July this was reduced to 5.2 miles roundtrip due to major deadfall.

<http://www.cpakayaker.com/chesapeake-bay-access-and-paddle-in-campsite-map/>

The Chesapeake Paddler

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