

The Chesapeake Paddler



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Legendary Dismal Swamp intrigues and surprises

Spanning two states and an imaginary space between fact and fiction are storied waters

By Lois Wyatt

Great Dismal Swamp has haunted me for many years, piquing my curiosity and beckoning me to experience the place with the eerie name. Every autumn, I used the traditional folk tale, "Phantom Lovers of Dismal Swamp," for a Halloween reading in my classes. An inconsolable lover, after the death of his bride-to-be from swamp fever, refused to accept her death. To find her, he plunged deep into the swamp intending to

hide her from Death in the hollow of a cypress tree. He arrived at the edge of Drummond's Pond, saw the flickering of a lantern far out, fashioned a raft from fallen cypress boughs, and poled his way out to join her. Key elements of the story, like swamp fever and the hollow of a cypress tree, do indeed reflect features of this unusual area.

Other intriguing stories have a more solid foundation in history. Runaway slaves found refuge as residents known as Maroons or as a stop on the Underground Railroad. I once read that it had miles of roads good for cycling, so I took my bike there in the spring of 2004 but quickly discovered many downed trees blocking every road I tried, the result of Hurricane Isabelle's power the previous fall. My effort to explore and find Lake Drummond was thwarted.

Then there are tales of lightning strikes that set the swamp burning for months. Water is an inherent element of a swamp, so why does it burn? The Father of our Country is partly to blame. George Washington had ditches built to drain the area in an effort to convert



Photo/Ralph Heimlich

swamp into farmland. Though he learned peat soil is not good for farming, it and subsequent development projects lowered the water table which provided dry fuel. Because the peat is 6 to 8 feet in depth, it burns deep and hot, smolders for months, and generates a lot of carbon-rich smoke. One recent fire began Aug 4, 2011 and was not declared extinguished until Nov 23, 111 days later. Follow this link for dramatic photos:

https://pilotonline.com/news/local/environment/article_6004928d-ad61-55fb-8bef-1134b03e680e.html

The only way to fight this type of fire is to flood the area, to recreate the swamp. With legislation in 2013, the goal of hydrological restoration and management got a boost.

With stories of Great Dismal Swamp and my previous failed effort stuck in my head, I was delighted to see that destination on the CPA calendar for April. And I found I was not the only one under the spell of the place. Apparently, fascination spans international borders. From rural Ontario, Canada, Ron Miron flew south to borrow a kayak from his friend Don Monday and join us (and also CPA). I wondered if he was our first international member. No, I learned, but the only current one. He even created an ominous, custom-designed decal for us participants. The group also included our most active Tidewater member, Carolyn Sanford, whose wrist was broken last November on the Chickahominy trip when a limb fell on her during

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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

Summer is here and hopefully everyone has had the chance to get out and enjoy the waterways in our area. Next time you go to your favorite park or launch, take a moment to think about how this launch or park came to be. I live in Anne Arundel county, home to Annapolis and a stretch of the western shore of the Chesapeake Bay. AA County has 533 miles of shoreline accessible to about 15 % of the population with private waterfront access, but that means 85% of the population and persons who live outside the county need to use public access to get to the waters.

I live along the Magothy River, a beautiful place to paddle, but until recently it had zero public access; now the river has two recently opened parks for car-top launches. The county has also opened a few more public parks, including Beverly Triton Beach and Mayo Beach on the bay; Spriggs Farm and Beechwood Park on the Magothy River; and Homeport Farms on the South River to name a few. This list is not a complete, but all have one thing in common: resistance from the local communities. These folks themselves. No need to share with outsiders. Getting the county to open these parks has been an uphill battle. Fortunately for CPA and the paddling community, Steve Schuh the AA County executive, has supported opening these parks to the public, and Lisa Arrasmith, a CPA member, has been tirelessly active in keeping this issue in front of the commissioner and the county council.

In a county with so many miles of water, you would think that water access would be automatic, but it is not. Many residents of the county would love to keep county-owned property as their private playgrounds. Many other residents hold different priorities having nothing to do with the beautiful water in their backyard. For instance, Homeport Farms received county monies for improvements aimed at the car-top boat launch group. Construction this past winter included parking, an improved access road and path to get to the water, and a sandy beach to launch from. The park construction is nearly complete, but it has suffered setbacks due to vandalism, including destroyed signage and rocks placed across the beach area to prevent kayaks from launching. This type of vandalism suggests a hostile adult neighbor because that type of damage had a specific goal and the perpetrator would have to walk in to do the damage.

I recently attended a county budget meeting that was packed wall-to-wall with residents, but only a few of us were there from the paddling community to keep water access prominent for the people who decide the budget. I can see how the water access budget could easily

be tabled to satisfy the other demands being thrown at them. Keep in mind these parks could easily be closed to save on operating and maintenance costs. In the late 1970's I traveled through this bay area



going to and from Ocean City. I decided to detour to find a few parks from which I could explore the bay; I was very disappointed that I couldn't find anything other than Sandy Point State Park. I had automatically assumed that Chesapeake Bay would offer a treasure trove of parks and wild areas.

Whether you paddle Anne Arundel County or other waterways in the area, please consider helping to keep your favorite launch open by attending the meetings and/or contacting your county representative to let them know you support their efforts to keep public access spots open or you would appreciate their support. You do not have to be a resident of the county to walk into the budget meeting wearing a PFD or a paddling shirt. You can also show your support by making a phone call or sending an email. ♣

~ Bill Smith

Share your escapades, tips, and ideas in the *Paddler*

Do you enjoy reading of the paddling adventures, local and distant, of other members? Do you like getting new ideas for paddling trips? Are you advocating for paddling access or amenities in your area? Have you pondered questions relating to kayak gear? Variety is the spice of life, and of newsletters. Please write an article reflecting your thoughts, experiences, and discoveries to share with our paddling community. We all become a bit wiser and excited to be on the water again. We need your input to make *The Chesapeake Paddler* the best it can be. We look forward to your help with content for these issues of 2018. ♣

Paddler Profile: Patty Jones

By Bob Browning

Lives in: Bel Air, Maryland

Real job: Retired, but considering going back to work for a rest!

Do you regularly attend a Piracy? Try to attend Pirates of the North or Pirates of Baltimore

Number of years paddling:

Three or four years sea kayaking; three or four decades rec kayaking

How did you get involved in sea kayaking? Find your people with Meetup.com! I did!

What boats do you paddle?

17' Neon Necky; 17' Current Designs, Red/White/Scratched Cypress, small fleet of plastic rec kayaks that are mostly faded (Did you know you can heat a putty knife and melt pieces of plastic tarp to fill cuts on plastic boats?)

Rudder or skeg? Skeg

Type paddle used? Both, but mostly Greenland.

Do you do any other type of paddling besides sea kayaking? Some canoeing but favorite water activity besides sea kayaking is creek paddling.

Do you regularly do any other outdoor activities? Have not yet taken a mortgage out on a dry suit, so I try to stay busy with hiking and biking during cold weather months. Also enjoy downhill skiing.

How often on average do you paddle between May and October? Often enough that the gear doesn't have a chance to dry out.

Do any winter paddling? Only in my dreams.

Favorite local paddling location: I absolutely love paddling out of Cold Cabin in Pennsylvania. Paddle up the Susquehanna River as far as possible toward Holtwood Dam, enjoying the awesome rock formations, other scenery, and wildlife as I paddle among the islands. On the way back down the river, enjoy a different type of scenery by paddling up Muddy Creek. It is beautiful!

Favorite CPA trip you've ever been on and why: I absolutely love SK102. I love the camaraderie, the instruction, the camping, the excitement of new people getting hooked on sea kayaking, and the

venue. It is a great way to get psyched for the new kayak season and great to learn and practice skills in chilly April with the advantage of warm water. Thank you, CPA!

Coolest paddling trip you've ever been on anywhere and why?

When my son graduated from the University of Miami, we went down to Key West for a celebration. We did a sailing/kayak/snorkeling trip on a day that had the most fantastic water visibility I have ever seen. Even the trip leaders hopped into the water with cameras. The people on the trip were great and the music, food, and drinks were superb. Kayaking seems to draw people who know how to have fun

and who don't require a lot of amenities.

Scariest/most dangerous trip/experience and why?

On one trip with a small group of just five people, the conditions became quite challenging with wind, waves, and tide challenges. Suddenly we realized that we were missing one person who had decided to turn around and go back without letting anyone know. Don't do that!

Future bucket list trip(s)?

Everywhere that I have not yet been!



Photo/Ralph Heimlich

Three things you like most about paddling? Being outside on the water, getting exercise, and socializing with great people.

What do you like about CPA? I really appreciate their commitment to growing the sport and emphasis on safety.

One unusual, non-paddling thing other people find interesting about you? Two of my favorite toys are my Kubota tractor and ATV with a dump bed. ♦

Do you know a paddler who would make an interesting profile?

Contact Bob Browning at:

BBBrowning43@verizon.net

Not all in Dismal
Swamp was dark
and spooky.
Arrow-straight
canals, tall
grasses, and
sunshine
contrasted with
Cypress knees,
shaded waters,
and a fabled
history.
Photos/Ralph
Heimlich



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the lunch stop, as reported in Bill Smith's column in the Jan-Feb edition of *The Chesapeake Paddler*. A complicated break that required surgery, her wrist is healing and we were glad to see that she is paddling well. We were paddling almost in her backyard.

Chilly weather was with us over the four days. As Ralph Heimlich and Greg Welker chose each day's destination, wind was the main consideration. The first day we launched onto the Northwest River from Baum Road, just around the corner from our campground, headed downriver, crossed the North Carolina state line, and on to Shingle Landing for our lunch stop. On our return, a spur leg up Indian Creek let us see where folks can rent boats in the park. That day held some of the atmosphere I was expecting, dense forest, dark water, and gnome villages, aka cypress knees. However, the overcast day likely was a better reason for this effect.



The second day our route was a loop. We departed from Lotus Garden on Sandbridge Rd to travel down Asheville Bridge Creek through lovely open area of phragmites, redwing blackbirds, and distant lines of cypress to North Bay. The wind turned out to be stronger than anticipated, so we cut short our time exposed on the open bay and headed up Hell Point Creek with a pullout at Indian Cove Resort trailer park for lunch. Connecting upstream, we turned into a channeled Asheville Bridge Creek and completed our circle. A few chose to pass through the culvert while most opted to portage across the busy road to our parked cars. Across from the launch we had an early dinner at Margie & Ray's Crabhouse before returning to camp.

Saturday we intended to hit Great Dismal Swamp but were thwarted by a road, and therefore access to the launch, closed for a memorial walk. We were mildly annoyed, but Plan B was a wonderful substitute, so we still enjoyed an excellent paddle. Retracing our steps toward the campground, we launched at Bob's Fishing Hole to head up the Northwest River, reaching

almost to Bunch Walnuts Bridge. Lunch was at Triple R Ranch, a camp facility, where we tried to be as unobtrusive as possible while large groups of kids participating in a weekend adventure were heading into the dining hall.

The last day, Sunday, we finally paddled the Great Dismal Swamp, as the name of this trip had promised. The day brought sunshine, clear blue skies, and arrow-straight canals leading us to a flat calm Lake Drummond. The Great Dismal Swamp canal is an alternate route of the Atlantic Intercoastal Waterway primarily used by pleasure craft. We passed a retractable bridge, a design I had never seen before. A 90° turn and a straight-as-a-western-highway feeder canal brought us three miles later to a weir and a portage. A short stretch later the water opened to the great flat expanse of Lake Drummond. What a contrast to the long-held images I had conjured up! On a sunny spring day in 2018, the area could not have felt less spooky, confusing, and ominous. I may have felt a twinge of disappointment not to have chills down my spine and moments of foreboding, but it was a great day. I have now satisfied my curiosity and had my own calm, clear, and bright Great Dismal Swamp experience. ♦



The Great Dismal Swamp did not disappoint when it came to critters and birds.

For paddling satisfaction, pay attention to trip ratings

CPA is home to sea kayakers with a range of water skills, experiences, comfort levels, strength, and stamina. In the planning process, a trip leader needs to use his/her best judgment to rate the intended trip. This rating is to help you decide if the trip is a good match for you. About 2015, the old levels were subdivided to narrow overly broad groupings. Please understand that leaders want you to have a pleasurable and satisfying day. However, it will not be good for you if you are frustrated by a trip too short and slow or anxious on one too long and difficult. How strong are the river currents or the tidal flow in the area? How sheltered or open is the body of water? From what direction and how strongly will the wind blow? Notice that while the answers to first two questions can be fairly consistently anticipated from reference charts, the third depends on last minute information. If the weather forecast indicates that wind will be more challenging than usual, the rating may change a few hours before. It might be disappointing, but the safety of every paddler is your leader's first priority. Though you sign a waiver, the trip leader feels the weight of responsibility.

As I work on the calendar each month, I have been surprised this year that many outings do not include a rating. It is an important piece of information for members, so I am puzzled by its frequent omission. Therefore, along with asking potential paddlers to consider carefully as they choose, I urge leaders to be sure they include a rating in the basic information when they post a trip.

For more detailed descriptions of the ratings, go to the CPA website and click the About button on the top navigator bar. ♦

~ Lois Wyatt, Co-Editor

The following table represents conditions that are appropriate for each level

Level	Wind	Waves	Current	Surf Break
Level 1 (Beginner) Calm, flat water	Protected from wind	Minimal waves from wind or boat traffic	No apparent current	None
Level 2 (Advanced Beginner) Protected water near shore	Up to 10 knots	Up to 1 foot	Up to 1 knot	None
Level 3 (Intermediate) Gentle to Moderate Sea Conditions	Up to 10 - 15 knots (Force 3-4 on the Beaufort Scale)	Up to 1 - 2 feet	Up to 2 knots	Up to 2 feet
Level 4 (Advanced Intermediate) Moderate Sea Conditions ¹	Up to 16 knots (Force 4 on the Beaufort Scale)	Up to 2 feet	Up to 3 knots	Up to 2 feet
Level 5 (Advanced) Moderate Sea Conditions ¹	Up to 20 knots (Force 4-5 on the Beaufort Scale)	Up to 4 feet	Up to 4 knots, with standing waves	Up to 3 feet

¹ 2 or 3 of the above conditions may be appropriate, but all 4 together are not recommended in the same trip.

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

Date	Event	Summary
Sat, Jun 2	non-CPA event: Potomac River Swim Support	8:00-5:00, free camping Pt. Lookout SP, experienced kayakers to accompany individual swimmers & provide support, 7.5 mi
Sun, Jun 3	Gear Day & Fall-Out-of-Boat Day	9:00 - 4:00, Truxton Park, Annapolis, w potluck lunch
Mon, Jun 4	Islands of the Chesapeake	10:00 - 3:30, explore Bodkin & Parsons Is, Eastern Bay
T, W, Th, 6/5-7	area piracies	check CPA website for more info
Sat, Jun 9	KIPP #3	third mtg to help improve skills & build endurance
Sat, 6/9-Sun 6/10	Martinak Car Camper	6/9 9:00-6/10 6:00, Adv Beg, Martinak SP, paddling on Tuckahoe Creek and Choptank River
Sat, Jun 9	non-CPA event: March & Flotilla for the Ocean (M40)	DC, Blue Frontier Campaign to mobilize for a healthy ocean & clean water
Sun, Jun 10	Ghost Fleet of Mallows Bay	9:30 am-3:30 pm, Adv Beg, from Quantico cross Potomac
Sun, Jun 10	non-CPA event: Bay Swim	11:00-3:00, kayak support needed for swimmers
Mon, Jun 11	Circumnavigate Barren Is	9:00 - 5:00, Int, open water crossing
T, W, Th, 6/12-14	area piracies	check CPA website for more info
Sat, Jun 16	St Clements Is Champagne Brunch	9:00 - 3:00, fr Newtowne Neck SP to St Clements, potluck
Mon, Jun 18	Islands of the Chesapeake series	10:00 - 3:30, Adv Beg, explore waters of Eastern Neck Is
T, W, Th, 6/19-21	area piracies	check CPA website for more info
Sat, 6/23	non-CPA event: Chester River Swim for LIFE	7:30-2:00, kayak support needed for swimmers
Mon, Jun 25	Islands of the Chesapeake series	10:00 - 3:30, Int, waters of Poplar, Coach, & Jefferson Ilands, exposed open waters
T, W, Th, 6/26-28	area piracies	check CPA website for more info
Fri, 6/29-Sun, 7/2	Fourth of July Holiday Pocomoke Car Camper	6/29 3:00 pm - 7/2 1:00 pm, Pocomoke River SP, paddle area waterways
Th, 7/5	Thurs area piracies only this week	check CPA website for more info
T, W, Th, 7/10-12	area piracies	check CPA website for more info
Sat, July 14	KIPP #4	fourth mtg to help improve skills & build endurance
Sat, July 14	non-CPA event: Paddle Palooza	8:00-3:00, fun paddle to explore wetlands & circumnavigate Horsehead Peninsula, Grasonville, MD
T, W, Th, 7/17-19	area piracies	check CPA website for more info
Sat, Jul 21	Practice Kayak Camper	7/21 9:00-7/22 5:00 - Patuxent River, practice one night kayak camping with support & advice from experienced campers
T, W, Th, 7/24-26	area piracies	check CPA website for more info
Sat, Jul 28	Circumnavigate Wye Is	9:00 - 3:00, 12 mi on open water
T 7/31, WTh 8/1-	area piracies	check CPA website for more info
Sat, Aug 4	non-CPA event: Circumnavigate Manhattan	6:45 am - 7:30 pm, 2 launch locations w 2 groups each
Sat, Aug 11	KIPP #5	fifth mtg to help improve skills & build endurance
Sat 8/25-Sun 8/26	Full Moon Overnight Paddle & Breakfast	7:00 pm-2:00 pm, Int, 20+ mi, southern MD

Launch of the Month: Otter Point Landing



Location: 39.44610318 -
76.26647013

Street Address: 600 Otter Point
Road Abingdon, MD 21009

Type: ramp, small beach

Parking: Moderate

Restroom: Yes

Owner: Harford County - Depart-
ment of Parks and Recreation

County: Harford, Maryland

Water Body: Otter Point Creek

Link: <http://www.harfordcountymd.gov/Facilities/Facility/Details/Otter-Point-Landing-8>

The Chesapeake Paddler

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