

CPA Paddler Profiles ~ Mark Rizzuto

Interview by Rick Wiebush



Mark Rizzuto kayaking on the Susquehanna River, south of Wrightsville, Pennsylvania
photo by Jack Clark

Name: Mark Rizzuto

Lives in: York, Pennsylvania

Real job: Programmer/ project manager with R.R. Donnelly

Member of a Piracy? Pirates of the Lakes

Paddling Buddies: PoL members, Jack Clark, Tom Hunt, Fran Arnott, Dave Bronson, Sandy Bixler, Marshall Woodruff and the Kippers

Number years paddling: Four

How did you get involved in kayaking: A local outfitter was giving a free five-hour class. I took it, and then immediately bought a boat.

How did you learn to sea kayak? I did a lot of things with CPA, including SK 101 and 102, the navigation class, and the cold water clinic. I also took the skills sessions that you (Rick) ran last year for Pirates of the Lakes and went to the Kiptopeke Symposium last September. Also, I joined KIPP and that has been invaluable, just talking with people about paddling and dealing with bigger conditions.

Any formal training or ACA/BCU certifications? Yes, formal training, see above

Boat usually paddled: Boreal Designs Baffin T2. It's 17 ft long and 22 inches wide.

Type paddle used: Euro

Do you do any other type of paddling besides sea kayaking? No

Do you regularly do any other outdoor activities? I used to do a lot of biking but kayaking has taken over.

How often do you paddle in summer? Usually twice per week

Do any winter paddling? Yes, once per week on the Susquehanna

Go to pool sessions? No

Favorite local paddling location: The Susquehanna above Harrisburg. It's got a lot of little islands, ledges, class 1-2 whitewater and lots of calmer pools.

Favorite non-local location: Kent Island (It's not local for me.)

Best paddling trip/experience ever and why: The final 34 miles KIPP circumnavigation of Kent Island. I felt a great sense of accomplishment.

Scariest/most dangerous trip/experience and why: In the first year of paddling we were doing a shuttle on the Susquehanna from Falmouth to Wrightsville, when we started the paddle we could hear this roar for the first few miles. We knew from Google Maps there was something under this railroad bridge four miles in but could not see much detail. When we approached a railroad bridge the river narrowed and right under the bridge the water dropped about two feet with chutes and rapids the entire width of the river. We didn't have much time to commit but we picked a line and hoped for the best. Here's where it got tricky we both went through the chute at the same time and bang into each other and somehow did not end up in the water which was 47 degrees and all we had on was shorts, t-shirt and PFD. After the paddle we realized how lucky we were that we did not end up in the water.

Bucket list trips: The Delaware Bay crossing. Florida. The Pacific Northwest. Long Island Sound. And I really want to do the circumnavigation of Manhattan.

Three things you like most about paddling? Relaxation; being able to get to places that most people never see, and being able to paddle almost anywhere

What do you like about CPA? The education and skills instruction and the safety consciousness

One thing other people find interesting about you: Actually there are two things. First, people are surprised that I'm very athletic. I was a runner in high school and college and also completed marathons, triathlons, mountain bike races. I was also an avid bicyclist. Now the kayaking.