

CPA Paddler Profile ~ Mike Hamilton

Interview by Rick Wiebush



Mike Hamilton at this year's SK 102 at Lake Anna
photo by Catriona Miller

Name: Mike Hamilton

Lives in: Sykesville, Carroll County, Maryland

Real job: Urban Biologist/Entomologist with the dormitory system at the University of Maryland, College Park

Member of a Piracy? I suppose I am a member of Pirates of Baltimore, although I rarely get to meet up after work. It's hard to paddle during the week.

Paddling Buddies: My favorite paddling buddy is my wife, Cindy. Also spent some time with 27-ish Kent Island Practice Paddle (KIPP) paddlers, Eric Dougherty and Paul Diggins in 2012.

Number years paddling: 16-ish

How did you get involved in sea kayaking? We rented sit-on-top kayaks at Lake Habib in Rocky Gap State Park in the 90's and liked it. A friend then gave me a tour with Atlantic Kayak for my birthday; we paddled at Piscataway Park upstream. I think Patrick Holmes was the guide. That led to classes, a guide job and eventually to instructing.

How did you learn to sea kayak? I took a LOT of formal classes with a lot of very good coaches. The first classes were ACA L2 and L3 at Atlantic Kayak at Pis-

cataway, Maryland. Then came the BCU 3 star and 4 star training and assessments with visiting European coaches. I went to BCU weeks in Tybee, Georgia. Dale Williams, Mark Schoon and Axel Schoevers were big influences and helped me become a BCU Coach 2. I took my L3 Instructor IDW/ICE and traditional endorsement from Ray Killen in New Jersey. Ray got me started with skin boats and paddle carving. Delmarva Paddlers Retreats helped me refine the Greenland maneuvers (thanks to Cheri Perry, Dan Segal, and Dave Sides). I mentioned a lot of names but that is how to learn to sea kayak - work with lots of good paddlers; everyone taught me something. Remember to take quality instruction and then... pay it forward!!!

Boat usually paddled: Depends. I use a Valley Argonaut (17'8" x 22.5", yellow over white, fiberglass) for open water paddling, a Betsie Bay Aral (18'x20.5", natural wooden deck over white fiberglassed wooden hull) for gunk-holing with Cindy (that sounds crude!) - we explore the nooks and crannies at Liberty Reservoir, and a Greenland-style skin on frame qajaq (16'6"x20", brown, nylon skin) for my Greenland rolling skill progression. I probably use all kayaks equally.

Type paddle used: 50:50, Greenland and Euro. I prefer a Greenland paddle for its versatility but keep in practice with a Euro blade to teach skills to Euro-bladed students.

Do you do any other type of paddling besides sea kayaking? No, but I have built a few skin-on-frame qajaqs and carved a few paddles. While these are land-based activities, they certainly help me understand how design affects performance, how qajaqs were traditionally made and gives me an appreciation of how this technology has evolved over the last thousand years or so.

Do you regularly do any other outdoor activities? Day hikes, yoga (does lawn-mowing and splitting firewood count?)

How often do you paddle in summer? 1-2 times per week

Do any winter paddling? Yes. Have joined in on Kippburrz / Eastern Neck trips with Marshall Woodruff and company and day paddles at Liberty until the passes expire on December 31. I'm also known to paddle destinations during winter (Florida Keys and Gulf Coast, Hilton Head and Edisto, South Carolina, Tybee Island, Georgia (which is not technically winter paddling, but rather paddling during winter). Don't forget pool sessions!

Go to pool sessions? Yes. Fairlands Aquatic Center, College Park. I also roll in my pool, which is a challenge at 11 feet wide.

Favorite local paddling location within 1-2 hours of your house: Liberty Reservoir (it's the closest at seven miles), Rocky Point/Hart-Miller, Triadelphia/Rocky Gorge Reservoir is on the way home from work.

Favorite non-local location: Definitely a tie between Florida Keys and Tybee Island, Georgia.

Best paddling trip/experience ever and why? A tie between Rick Wiebush's Tangier /Smith Island trip and primitive camping on Little Tybee Island, Georgia. When you kayak-camp, you develop a deeper understanding / synergy / appreciation of your kayak. The same thing happens within your paddling group. Plus, it's hard to beat crab cakes on the beach or paddling over alligators in a narrow salt marsh channel.

(Continued on page 6)