

The Chesapeake Paddler



Publication of The Chesapeake Paddlers Association, Inc.

Volume 27 Issue III

April 2017

The Park Ranger Paddles

By Melissa Acuti

For the past six years, I have been a park ranger with the Maryland Park Service and up until last spring worked at the Point Lookout State Park Complex in St. Mary's County. I currently work in Annapolis at the Maryland Park Service Headquarters, overseeing the Maryland State Park's Youth Conservation Programs. My work and play have taken me to some of the most beautiful places in Maryland. Allow me to share with you some of my favorite paddling places.

Point Lookout State Park is the southernmost point on the Western Shore, where the Potomac River meets the Chesapeake Bay. You are surrounded by water on three sides, making it is one of my favorite places for both beautiful sunrises and sunsets. Lake Canoy at Point Lookout is a wonderful little place to paddle, especially when you want to be a bit more sheltered. Although it is not actually a lake as its name suggests, it is a shallow body of water connected to the Potomac River near the park's boat launch. You can launch there if you like cement ramps or from the sandy beach behind the park store. You can also launch directly from the campground if you happen have one of the most popular waterfront campsites in the Green's Point Loop. Campsites, which can be booked up to one year in advance, are quite popular on weekends during the summer. If you have the option to visit during the week or in September or early October, it is a bit less busy and often the weather is still very nice!

During your paddle in Lake Canoy, be sure to take time to enjoy the wildlife all around. There is a small heron rookery, or nesting colony, between the causeway and the park store. If you look and listen, you will see great blue herons coming and going, building nests and feeding young, from late spring to early summer. If you listen carefully, you may even hear the young herons "clacking" and begging for food. You will also see plenty of bald eagles and ospreys in this area. There has been an active eagle nest in the top of a large pine across from the boat launch on "Treasure Island" for many years. The nest typically yields two young each year. It takes about five years for the young eagles to get their "bald" heads; the juvenile eagles maintain a dark, blotchy appearance until then. Osprey can also be seen nesting on man-made nest "towers," or platforms, throughout the park, as well as using some dead tree snags. Watch for these



Perks! The chance to paddle Maryland's best waters comes with the territory when you are a park ranger. Photo of Janes Island State Park by Melissa Acuti

noisy "fish hawks" building nests and fishing from spring to summer. Cow-nosed rays are often spotted in Lake Canoy, especially during mating season, but don't be fooled into thinking their "wings" are shark fins even if several years ago a local waterman caught bull sharks just off Point Lookout in a pound net in the Potomac! The fisheries folks have confirmed that it is not unusual for bull sharks to be in this area, especially in later summer months. Still, every year in early June, open-water swimmers cross the Potomac from Virginia to Point Lookout, each swimmer assisted by a kayaker. The Potomac River Swim is always in need of additional paddlers, so keep an eye out for this upcoming event.

Newtowne Neck State Park is one of Maryland's "newest" parks, located in St. Mary's County, just outside of Leonardtown off the Potomac between Breton Bay and St. Clement's Bay. The 700+ acre property was purchased by the state in 2009, and the master plan was approved last year. Over the next five years or so, the master plan for Newtowne Neck will begin to be put into place, but don't be surprised if you don't notice too many big changes. The overall plan is for the area to remain low-impact, re-using farm buildings that are already in place on the property and keeping parking lots on the smaller side. Plans call for paddling amenities to include two soft launch sites

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Upcoming Events

Date	Event	Summary
Saturday, April 1, 2017	Patuxent River cleanup	8:00, clean up trash from the river, 2 groups work to meet at Rt. 7 Bridge. If you don't have canoe, volunteer to join a crew.
Saturday, April 8, 2017	KIPP #1	9:00, first of monthly group meetings to help paddlers improve skills and build endurance to prepare for the personal distance challenge paddle in September.
Fri, Apr 21 - Sun, Apr 23	non-CPA event: East Coast Paddlesports Symposium	A 3-day immersion in the history, technique, hands-on experience, and fun of kayaking, canoeing, SUP, and more.
Sat, Apr 29-Sun, May 7	non-CPA event: Sails Angels Gathering	Gather with others who sail their kayaks and canoes. Tent or cabin camping on Virginia's eastern shore.
Saturday, April 29, 2017	Eastern Neck Spring Paddle	9:00 Adv Beg, 10-12 mile circumnavigation, cold water gear needed, plan modified if conditions on the western side will be
Saturday, April 29, 2017	non-CPA event: Little D on the Monocacy	Free kayak/canoe/paddleboard race in Frederick, MD.
Sunday, April 30, 2017	Potomac River from Riley's Lock	10:00 Beg & Adv Beg, launch on Great Seneca Creek, up the Potomac, round trip 10-12 miles
Monday, May 1, 2017	Corsica River	10:00, paddle the Corsica and tributaries on protected and semi-protected waters
Wednesday, May 3, 2017	Pirates of Arundell - Galesville Wharf	Opening paddle of Arundell Pirates' 2017 season, 4:00, casual peer paddle with potluck snacks after
Fri, May 5-Sun, May 7	SK 102, CPA's 19th annual sea kayak skills	On water skills clinic weekend at Lake Anna, VA
Monday, May 8, 2017	Battle Creek, nr Benedict, MD	10:00 Adv Beg, tributary of the Patuxent south of Benedict, MD terminates in a cypress swamp. With high tide, can we get past the strainers to the cypresses?
Wednesday, May 10, 2017	Pirates of Arundell - Homeport Farm	4:00, casual peer paddle with potluck snacks after
Saturday, May 13, 2017	KIPP #2	8:00, second of monthly group meetings to help paddlers improve skills and build endurance to prepare for the personal distance challenge paddle in September.
Saturday, May 13, 2017	non-CPA event: EMS Kayak - SUP Demo	10:00-4:00 Truxton Park Pavilion & Boat Ramp
Monday, May 15, 2017	Upper Chester River, MD	10:00 Adv Beg, Queen Anne's Cty ramp permit required
Wednesday, May 17, 2017	Pirates of Arundell - Spriggs Farm	4:00 casual peer paddle with potluck snacks after
Saturday, May 20, 2017	Magothy River, MD	9:00 Adv Beg, paddle past Sillery Bay, Gibson Island, Dobbins Island, & Little Island
Saturday, May 20, 2017	Nanjemoi Creek, MD	10:00 Friendship Landing to Rt 6 Bridge
Saturday, May 20, 2017	non-CPA event: Okoumefest, Chesapeake Light Craft	9:00, wooden boat-building at store & demo day at Matapeake SP
Mon, May 22- Wed, 24, 2017	Western Sinepuxent Bay	11:00 5/22 - 5:00 5/24, car camping at Shad Landing SP with day trips on Western Sinepuxent Bay and Pocomoke River
Wednesday, May 24, 2017	Pirates of Arundell - Jonas Green	4:00, casual peer paddle with potluck snacks after
Saturday, May 27, 2017	Magothy River, MD	9:00 Beg, for new paddlers, 5-6 mi on protected waters nr
Sat, May 27-Sun 28	Patuxent River practice kayak camper	9:00 5/27 - 5:00 5/28, to try kayak camping for first time with support & guidance, 6-8 mi in somewhat protected waters, to a paddle-in-only campsite
Wednesday, May 31, 2017	Pirates of Arundell - private beach	4:00, casual peer paddle with potluck snacks after
Saturday, June 3, 2017	CPA Gear Day & Fall Out of Your Boat Day	9:00 - 4:00 all skill levels, skills practice and CPA logo gear sales

News from the CPA Coordinator - Bill Smith

Happy Spring! Warm water and longer days are around the corner. Like many of you, I am ready for the paddling season. There are some great trips listed on the CPA calendar for this year, and some of the trips are filling up fast, so check it out. Also, remember that trips will be added as the season goes on, so check it frequently. This time of year some of us need to add or replace gear, so remember to check out on our website the list of vendors that support CPA by offering discounts to our members.

April opportunities are light, as expected, since the water is still cold. April trips include the first KIPP paddle of the year, Patuxent River cleanup, and a Potomac River paddle to Riley's Lock at the end of the month. May is when the trips really get going with the piracies and many other day trips. There are also a few camping trips, including a practice camper in late May.

Recently CPA conducted the annual SK 101. It was my first time attending; I thought the instructors and presenters did a fabulous job of conveying the message to an engaged and enthusiastic class. A huge tip of the paddle to Paul Casto, Brian Blankenship, Greg and Jenny Welker, Paula Hubbard, Suzanne Farace, Sue Stevens, and Rick Leader for a job well done. Don Goff from the Coast Guard Auxiliary also give a presentation, and Marla Aron sold t-shirts at the break.

One of the topics touched on was when to replace PFDs. I realized that I put on my PFD so robotically that I can't think of the last time I even looked at it with this concern in mind. That mention led me to examine my 10-year-old PFD; I noticed it was in good shape except for being faded and salty from the bay. For paddle sports, I know that a type III Coast Guard vest, which has a minimum of 15 pounds of flotation, is required. Several years ago, I purchased a hi-float PFD for canoeing, which has 29 pounds of flotation. Since I know the PFD doesn't weigh 29 pounds, this question piqued my curiosity, so I did some research. All USCG approved vests or other safety items are tested in a lab to determine how much buoyant material is needed to add 15 pounds of buoyancy. To calculate how much buoyant material is needed or how many pounds of buoyancy is in a PFD, they test by submerging the vest in a tub of water and catching and weighing the water that is displaced. They then weigh the vest and subtract the weight of the vest from the weight of the displaced water. If it's a positive number, the item will float. A typical person has about 8 pounds of flotation naturally in their body, but this amount is not necessarily enough to keep their head out of the water. It was then determined that an additional 15 pounds of flotation is adequate to keep a person afloat.

Over the past several years I have taught canoe safety to various groups, and I always challenge them to try putting their PFD on while



they are in the water, an impossible task for most people. If they succeed, then congratulations, but they just wasted a lot of energy they could have used getting back in the boat and/or rescuing their paddling partner.

During the past few months, the CPA officers and steering committee have been working on the new website and meet-up site to make it more user friendly. I hope by now everyone has signed up for the meet-up site and checked out the calendar link on our website. Having a new website and implementing the meet-up has been a work in progress, so future changes are expected. Another topic for the leadership has been our support for the designation of Mallow's Bay Sanctuary; if you haven't sent a letter of support to your state representatives and governor, now is the time. There will be some opposition from the commercial fishing industry. A vote is coming up soon, so if you feel strongly about this issue, it is time to act.

~ *Bill Smith*

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(one already exists), as well several paddle-in campsites, available by reservation. Newtowne Neck has more than seven miles of shoreline, plenty for a short paddle. For a longer day trip, you can paddle out to St. Clement's Island, which was Maryland's first landing in 1634. On St. Clement's Island, you will find a replica of the Blackistone Lighthouse, as well as a picnic pavilion, tables, grills, and composting toilets. There is no camping permitted on St. Clement's Island, so take a break and refuel before heading back to Newtowne Neck, or continue your way following the Captain John Smith Trail along the Potomac River.

If there were a park known as a paddler's playground, it would have to be **Janes Island State Park** with almost 30 miles of water trails. Located on Maryland's Eastern Shore in Crisfield, it is surrounded by water and certainly has some of the best sunsets. I've spent entirely too much time at Janes Island during my career wishing I could go for a paddle while I was there for work functions and trainings. However, a few years back I finally made it to Janes in late April for a paddling trip with a few friends. Let me first warn you that the mosquitos at Janes are some of the healthiest and hungriest on the Chesapeake, so early spring is a wise time to plan a trip. Janes has a large variety of camping accommodations, everything from a small conference center, to full service cabins that can sleep 6, to rustic 4-person mini-cabins, and a campground with water and electric. There

are also several more "primitive" paddle-in campsites only accessible by boat. We really enjoyed exploring all around the island and even checked out the old "fish factory" remains after settling in at our campsite. The beaches are beautiful and stretch on and on. This is truly a gem on the Chesapeake. Don't forget to stop in Crisfield for a crab cake and a slice of Maryland's state dessert, the Smith Island Cake, before heading home!

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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Be sure to visit the [CPA Meetup Calendar!](#)

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