

Breton Bay Paddle

Ten hearty souls yearning to see some wildlife showed up at Leonardtown, MD, on August 26. The object was a short paddle on the northern neck of Breton Bay up into McIntosh Run, depth permitting.

We set out around 9:30 AM from the end of Camp Calvert Road, located behind Ryken Catholic High School. The launch site's shallow depth supports only canoes and kayaks. Oyster shells located everywhere on the beach motivated some folks to launch directly out in the water. Bill Gallagher reminded all of us to verify that the spray skirt "ripcord" was visible in case we needed a wet exit.



Group shot awaiting a muskrat *photo by Mark Woodside*

Cindy Howard was appointed the lead, while Bill, a member of the Calvert Marine Museum Kayak and Canoe Club, volunteered to sweep. We passed by the first osprey nest, empty at the time, then made a wide starboard turn into the northern-most inlet of Breton Bay. Shortly thereafter, a young passenger on a passing motor boat proclaimed, "Look Dad, a neat flotilla of Kayaks". Dad, decked out in water skiing attire, responded "That means bad news". This turned out to be an ominous sign—only five minutes before I had forecast a total absence of jet skis and motorized craft due to shallow water. Equally wrong was my research on high tide. Todd Angerhofer accurately noted that the predicted high tide at 10:10 AM was plus or minus two hours.

The sight of a large pile of boulders and two small cranes marked the ongoing removal of an old oyster canning wharf in Leonardtown. Next to the old pilings, recently removed, was a 1950s era public boat launch just wide enough nowadays for a jet ski. Signs posted there now ask boaters to launch at Abells Wharf, some 8 miles away. [Note to all, Camp Calvert Rd County Park offers kayakers a peaceful launch point with parking, even though it lacks facilities.]

We covered the first mile with only a distant sighting of an osprey bathing on a sandbar. As we left civilization with pastel \$500K condos on the banks in Leonardtown, we spotted our first of numerous great blue herons. Marsh grass above mud banks marked our entrance into the southern mouth of McIntosh Run. Several herons were gracefully perched aloft in some tall trees sneering down at what must have looked like a colorful snake with ten links winding its way up the creek. The marsh grass along the banks escorted our paddle north, often with minnows scurrying along side for protection. Low tide sharpened our paddling skills, forcing us to navigate around sand bars and visible sunken logs. Leaving all signs of humanity behind us, we encountered our first of many Ospreys hovering above us. They appeared to be hoping a spooked fish would swim away from the protective cover of the marsh grass.

Numerous birds and plants were sighted along the way. In no particular order of sightings, one could not help but be impressed with this group, well-versed in ornithology and botany. Humbly, I was informed that the bird I identified as a Baltimore Oriole was really a red-wing black bird. Catbirds, sea gulls, juvenile bald eagles, great blue herons and a few of the smaller green herons were a few of birds escorting our paddle. By far, the most controversial bird sighted on a mud bank going up stream and later back down stream has led to some post trip research by many. Absent their correction, I believe we saw a Killdeer. I await feedback from Goldie Blumenstyk, Kristina Callahan or Cindy to update our sightings. The confusion centered on what appeared to be 3 black bands spotted around the neck vice the standard two.

Hedy Sladovich, Margie Kriz and Bill quietly came packed with a superior knowledge on the botany lining the banks. The marsh grass slowly gave way to the transition of deep woods as we paddled north. White Hibiscus, Red Trumpet and other flowers hosted numerous swarms of yellow Swallowtail butterflies along the stream banks. A purple Joe-



Joe Pye Weed out on a limb *photo by Mark Woodside*

Pye-weed growing out on the limb made for an interesting photo. We paddled leisurely for good mile plus up McIntosh Run, totally without man made noise. Rick Harwell, the prize owner of Vince's brilliant Green Kevlar Squamish, seemed to be thrilled to be going up stream vice fighting traffic in the metro area. Rick drove over from Alexandria; however, he originally lived only 5 miles from Leonardtown. He offered quite a perspective on how St. Mary's County has changed in the last 15 years.

Putting in during low tide, the lower water level separated "Glass" from "Tupperware" in the northern web of McIntosh Run. Mike Adams, a new CPA member, officially christened his brand new yellow on yellow Squamish when he settled the bottom against a sand bar, grimacing in pain. He was reassured after an immediate hull inspection revealed only a blemish.

Our return down stream was a repeat of the wildlife seen going up stream. We could see the tide slowly coming in, 2 hours late in my book. Used to the standard crabs pots, we came upon some 30 floats that appeared to be bright orange volleyballs, spaced in two perfectly straight lines, covering a ¼ mile. The inner competitors in Todd, Kristina and Margie were tempted to slalom these floats. Fearful of their wake, the group continued back to the launch at a more leisurely pace. Todd's GPS informed us that we covered 5.3 Statute miles. Everyone enjoyed the experience, continuing it at one of the local diners located a few blocks away that also hosts a restroom. Rick came ashore, but relaunched to paddle to the Abells Wharf launch, located about a mile away.

Mike and I sat on the large log under the shaded trees eating our lunch, visited by a red bellied woodpecker in a nearby tree- Overall, a successful and most enjoyable trip made possible only by the participants. The general consensus calls for the CPA to offer additional day trips.

Mark Woodside

(Continued from page 1) **New Zealand's Marlborough Sounds**

Paddling across Queen Charlotte Sound went smoothly. There were whitecaps out in the sound, but just barely. The Shear Water was very stable and I used the huge rudder...maybe twice the surface area of what I normally see...on the way across. I was headed pretty much due west and the 18 mph wind was from the Northwest. While it wasn't helping me, it wasn't hurting me that much, I was quartering the waves at an angle that lengthened the troughs and I wasn't getting a lot of splash or hull-slap. Meanwhile, the scenery was stunning. I thought I'd be in a lee once I got into Torea Bay, a body of water that cul d' sacs in a pocket of the hills of the Queen Charlotte Peninsula. Amazingly, the further I got into the bay, the harder the wind came. It baffled me. What was making this wind blow off the mountains like that? Maybe it was coming over the saddle, the low notch in the hill at the back of Torea Bay, which was my next destination.

Torea Bay was longer than I thought. About 8pm, I located the landing near the sealed track (road) to the village of Portage on Kenepuru Sound. I estimated that the QC Penninsula is only a kilometer wide at this point. For some reason, I had my mind fixed on Kenepuru Sound. It's pretty smack dab in the middle of the Marlborough Sounds Region. To paddle there would have taken several days, time I didn't have. I had a cart, so I planned to pull across the track. My map showed the saddle elevation as 104 meters, a huge gradient over a kilometer. By necessity, the road switch backed its way up the grade so I ended up walking a lot more than a kilometer. I rigged a harness around my hips and pulled like a donkey, towing 150 pounds of kayak and gear step, by step, by....



Towing the kayak over the Saddle Road. Photo by Chip Walsh.

It was fully dark by the time I reached Portage, and I had to go into a luxury hotel to ask directions to the campground. I didn't care for this camp ground, which was more of an RV parking area than a camp, but I wasn't there long. I pitched my tent beside (and by the glow of) the guest host's RV, ate the second half of my Subway sub from Picton, and lost no time getting in the sack.

Like on the Whanganui, I was awakened before dawn by the sound of rain. And again, it dried up in the daylight. I ate, packed, and launched into a humid morning when, for a change, no wind was blowing. I had only a vague idea of where to find the campsites and was very pleased to find the Ferndale Campsite near a point on the northern side of the center of Kenepuru Sound. It had a table, privy, and a water spigot, a nice feature even though the sign said not to drink it without treating it. The site were I ended up pitching my tent shrunk considerably as the tide came up right under the table.

A small group of kayakers arrived for lunch. They went past me and landed a 100 meters down the beach in the other direction, revealing the presence of another site. They had lunch and departed. Upon my return to camp (after a few failed kayak rolls) I was shocked by the huge increase in the size of the beach. The tide had receded in elevation by about ten feet.

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