

Island Hopping in the Chesapeake Bay

By Susanita Hicks

Sometimes I come back from a trip and I'm just glad to be home. Maybe the weather was bad or the trip dynamics didn't work out. Or I didn't click with my travel companions. And other times I come home and can't stop thinking about all the cool things we saw and did. Our trip June 20 was the latter. It was the perfect trip, with perfect weather, and perfect companions. Special thanks to Rick who invited the four of us to scout this trip out with him. Rick Wiebush is a kayak instructor for Kayaktraining.com. He and Mike Aronoff will be offering this trip as a paid adventure through REI later in the summer, but you get to read about it here.

We met Friday morning at 9:15 at the dock in Crisfield, Maryland, drove all the cars to the take-out point at Saxis, and drove back to Crisfield in one car. Then, we took the ferry from Crisfield to [Smith Island](#) with the kayaks. From Smith Island we paddled south through mostly protected waters to [Tangier](#). We spent the night in [Hilda Crockett's](#) B&B on Tangier Island, and on Saturday kayaked from Tangier to Watts Island, then camped on a remote, uninhabited island. Sunday, we paddled from the island to the takeout at Saxis, stopping at various islands along the way.

We had two Bob's on the trip, which was going to be confusing so we decided one of the Bob's needed a new name. Bob Huber, from Baltimore, had done a [70 mile race](#) the previous weekend so we dubbed him Uber Bob. We unloaded the kayaks and gear onto the dock and left Bob Knill to guard our gear while Uber Bob, Gina Cicotella, Rick and I drove the cars to Saxis.



The ferry from Crisfield to Smith Island costs \$10 per person and \$10 per kayak. We loaded the kayaks on the roof of the ferry. The ferry ride from Crisfield to Smith Island was short and uneventful. We applied sunscreen lotion and bug spray and watched the weather. The ferry stopped at the town of Ewell on Smith Island around 1:15. We unloaded the kayaks and looked around for a place to launch. The best launch spot we could find was a small drop off the main road with no beach and plenty of rocks. But first ... crab cakes. My food supply was stocked with energy bars, dried fruit and peanut butter crackers. There were two restaurants at the dock. We all agreed that a crab cake sandwich would be the perfect way to start the trip. The energy bars could be saved for later. We launched from Smith around 3:00.

The trip from Smith Island to Tangier was approximately 11.5 nautical miles. The first part was uneventful, although it's always good to be out on the water. I was still focused on my speed and racing so I would ask Rick what we were aiming for on the horizon then try to race to it. We paddled south through the main part of the island and came out to a small chain of sandbar type islands filled with ... birds. Hundreds of them. Startled by the presence of us strange intruders they exited the sandbars in droves, filling the sky above us and around us, just like a scene out of a Hitchcock movie. Gina got a really cool shot of me in my kayak surrounded by birds. She has a Pentax Optio with a zoom.



After the birds we had about a 2 hour paddle till we reached Tangier. So we stopped on a sandbar to snack and stretch our legs. Once we were back in the boats and left the area with the sandbars the waves picked up a little but still the weather was much better than the forecast. We reached Tangier about 6:30. We unloaded some clothes and toiletries from the kayaks and left the rest of the gear with the boats. It was around 7:30 before we made it to the B&B. Hilda Crockett's B&B was only a short walk up the road, and the Crockett's were actually looking for us. We were quickly ushered to our rooms and told to meet in the dining room for dinner in about half an hour. Gina and I took the more feminine looking room and Rick, Uber Bob and Bob took the other room. Two beds in each room. I'm not sure how the three guys negotiated their sleeping arrangements, but I gave Gina the double bed and I took the single.

I was expecting the B&B to drag out a few leftovers for our dinner. Oh was I wrong! She laid out a feast. There were crabcakes, ham, potato salad, coleslaw, corn pudding, homemade bread, pound cake, green beans and more. It had been a long day. We were tired and famished. We left some food on the table. But not much. After dinner someone brought out some wine and the group went for a walk around the island.

Saturday morning we paddled out of Tangier around 11 am. The first part of the trip was still protected by a sandbar on the right, so the waves were small. After we passed the sandbar the waves got more interesting, up to 2 feet. It was about a 4 mile crossing to Watts Island. My initial thought was to race over and wait for the others. I was still thinking speed and racing. So I started paddling hard. I hadn't gotten very far when Uber Bob sped up beside me. He gave me a kind lecture about the dangers of doing an open water crossing alone and suggested I stick with the group. It was a good move. I slowed down and let the group catch up. Occasionally I would do a few sprints just to see how my speed was in the Mirage but I didn't let myself get too far ahead.



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We had an early lunch on Watts then headed out to the other island where we would camp for the night. The uninhabited island was nothing but a large sandbar with a few trees and shrubs. No birds or other animal life was visible. Unless you count biting flies. Gina and Bob went for a walk around the island while Uber Bob and Rick went back out kayaking. I settled down in my kayak on the beach and just enjoyed the sound of the waves lapping against the shore. Later Gina and Bob came back and we sat on the kayaks. Gina covered herself in sand to escape the biting flies and Bob scanned his GPS for signs of our island. According to the GPS we were still in the water! Since no one had claimed this island Bob stuck his greenland paddle in the sand and put out a flag. The island was now ours! Later we all set up our tents and started meal preparations.

Saturday was also Rick's birthday. After dinner we made a small campfire, broke open Gina's bottle of scotch and presented Rick with a gift. A loud tie-died t-shirt from Tangier and a hat. Gina also had an apple cobbler in a bag that she passed around. The fire didn't last long and neither did the scotch. We stayed up for a while telling stories, none of which I remember, but all of which were very funny (or maybe it was the scotch). Pretty soon people were drifting back to their tents for the evening. I fell asleep pretty fast.

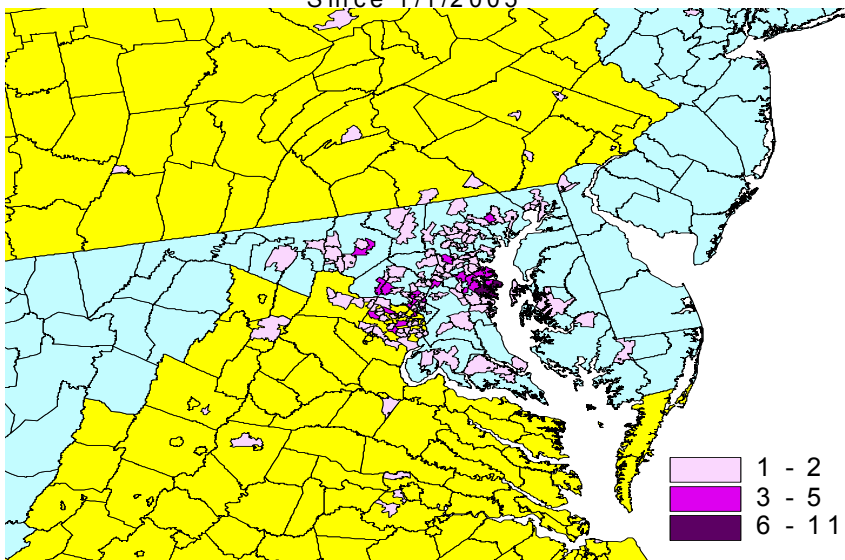
Rick must be an early riser because he was up long before anyone else. Gina was probably the last to get up. But when she did she was greeted by a chorus of "Good morning, Sunshine." Gina is our sunshine girl, and the sun was shining. It was to be another perfect day. We left our unnamed island around 9:30. We had an 11 mile paddle to the take-out at Saxis. For the first part of the trip the wind was almost dead calm and the water was flat. We stopped on Half-moon island for about 30 minutes to snack and stretch our legs, but most of the day was spent paddling. The wind started to pick up later and so did the waves. I pinched a nerve in my wrist so I decided to switch from the wing paddle to the greenland paddle. It made the return trip a lot easier on my arms but I never made it much over 4.5 mph unless I was surfing.



We made it to the take-out at Saxis around 1:30. It took us another hour or so to get organized and load the cars. Uber Bob and Bob surprised us all by quickly changing into clean dry clothes. Gina and I were still wearing the same paddling clothes we started out in two days ago. Some people have higher standards of cleanliness I guess. Rick still had his car back in Crisfield so I drove him back and the others followed. We ended the trip with a farewell seafood dinner in Crisfield.

Thanks to everyone for a truly memorable weekend. And especially thanks to Rick for putting it all together and inviting us along. [Editor's Note: This is from Susanita's web site at http://susanita.typepad.com/susanita/2006/06/island_hopping_.html And all pictures are from there.]

Location of New CPA Members Added Since 1/1/2005



I recently analyzed where are newest members are coming from to help decide where we might put on another edition of SK-101, the beginner course in seakayaking.

The results are by ZIP Code, summarized by State here

State	Number	Percent
Not identified	3	1.0%
DC	15	4.9%
DE	2	0.7%
MD	192	62.5%
NC	3	1.0%
NJ	3	1.0%
NY	3	1.0%
OR	1	0.3%
PA	10	3.3%
VA	74	24.1%
WV	1	0.3%
Grand Total	307	100.0%

There are 501 current members.

Ralph Heimlich
Pirate GIS Coordinator