

The Chesapeake Paddler



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Paddling in my back yard



The entrance to Parkers Creek in Calvert County, MD with the Chesapeake Bay in the background. The wildlife refuge has become a refuge for many paddlers, too, during the pandemic. (Photo: Bill Upton)

By Bill Upton

The pandemic put in big dent in everyone's paddling plans, including mine. Before I knew it, my epic road trip to my favorite place in the San Juan Islands in Washington state turned into sharing too much quality time with our indoor cats.

As the weeks turned into months and more months, all activities became hyper-local. Luckily for me, retirement meant no worries for income or going to an office. As for paddling, I was also lucky to live in a community in Calvert County with access to the Bay. It's just a short walk from my house to the beach and miles of water.

And so began paddling in my backyard. I've now made

too many to count trips from my home near Breezy Point to Parkers Creek. It's a pleasant five-mile trip along some of the most rural areas left on the Bay's western shore.

There are beaches, small creeks, farms, cliffs, Tom Clancy's old house, the remains of a summer camp (ask Marla Aaron about it next time you buy CPA gear) and lots of birds along the way.

The [Parkers Creek Natural Area](#) is owned by the American Chestnut Land Trust and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources. The area is named

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after William Parker, one of the original founders of Anne Arundel County. He received a land grant known as Parkers Cliffs in 1651. After he returned to England, the land went to his nephew, George Calvert.

The area is one of the largest contiguous forest tracts in the county with a network of hiking trails in addition to paddling opportunities in the creek.

There's a large beach at the creek entrance that's a good spot to take a break and either make the return trip or head up the creek for a couple miles.

When the pandemic hit in 2020, my occasional trips to Parkers turned into a couple times per week, weather permitting. As spring's weeks went by, trees bloomed, Ospreys returned and then came summer heat and jellyfish.

Fall arrived, Ospreys left and before long it was back into the dry suit for winter paddling with the eagles that stayed year-round. Each trip started like another Ground

Hog day, but before long there was always something new to see among the familiar landmarks.

Some days it was a race to see how fast I could make it. Other days it was a lazy trip to just enjoy the calm or stop and look for shark's teeth. Sometimes the calm wind in the morning gave way to strong winds in the afternoon and a difficult ride home.

On one trip, just as I arrived the Chestnut Land Trust was leading a large group of kids into Parkers Creek. One of the kids was paddling the first kayak I ever bought that I had donated to them years ago. We had a good laugh and they went on their way.

During our brief vaccine freedom this spring and summer there weren't as many backyard trips as we all ventured out, but with Delta, for me it's back to staying local. Once again, the leaves are starting to turn and most of the Ospreys have left, but it's nice to be back.

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Looking north towards Dares Beach from the beach at the mouth of Parkers Creek. The beach is popular with local boaters, hikers and paddlers. (Photo: Bill Upton)

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Large cliffs are common between Breezy Point and Dares Beach. Be careful if you make a stop, those big rocks are from slides. (Photo: Bill Upton)

If you are interested in paddling Parkers Creek, there's public access at Breezy Point Marina (<http://www.breezypointmarina.com>). They have a large boat ramp and the launch fee is \$15.

Ironically, the new marina owner also commandeered the Pirates of Arundell's old home at Pier 7. Access on weekends can be tricky because the marina is next to the county's Breezy Point Park which gets a lot of use and the county sometimes limits traffic.

There's a description of the trip in [Sea Kayaking Maryland's Chesapeake Bay](#) by Michael Savario and Andrea Nolan (check out the [CPA online library](#) for a copy!). From the marina, it's a five-mile paddle to the creek entrance and about two miles to the head of the creek for a 14-mile total paddle.

Tips for paddling to Parkers Creek:

If you plan on going up the creek, time it to hit the creek near high tide. It gets shallow and muddy at low tide.

The cliffs look great but can be dangerous. If you stop to sight see or fossil hunt, beware of the large cliffs. They are unstable and those big boulders on the beach came from slides, which are common.

At about three miles from the marina, near the community of Dares Beach, the Bay to the east opens up and there's a lot of potential fetch. When the wind is from the south or east, the waves get bigger on this stretch than on the first three miles.

Also, the cliffs between Dares Beach and the creek are hard clay and they reflect incoming waves. On any east wind above about eight knots it can get like a washing machine.

And finally, because this is such rural area, there are few bailout points. Check the weather and wind forecast, it can go from flat calm to very rough in a short time.

For more photos, go to:

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/ZRutud8WjfekYKvo7>