

A Quartet of Winter Paddles

December 27, Eastern Neck- 5 Winter 2008—The last Eastern Neck Island paddle (near Rock Hall on the Eastern Shore) of 2008. This winter paddle, the fifth and last in the 2008 series, was attended by 13 paddlers, but our organizer, Marshall Woodruff, couldn't paddle because of the effects of his chemotherapy. Nevertheless, Marshall was at Bogle's Wharf to see us off and make sure we knew to look for lots and lots of wildlife: Canada geese, canvasbacks, black ducks, goldeneyes, mallards, buffeheads, ruddy ducks, wigeons, scaup, gadwalls, mute swans, red breasted mergansers, hooded mergansers, pintails, pied billed grebes, southern bald eagles, Snipe, the illusive Delmarva fox squirrel, foxes along the shore and more. Wow! The Eastern Neck Refuge is 2,285 acre island refuge, a major feeding and resting place for migratory and wintering waterfowl.

Pictures at http://web.mac.com/dtmoore/My_Kayaking_2009/Winter_2009_Photos.html#28 (David Moore)
<http://picasaweb.google.com/HeneghanTallTom/EasternNeckDec272008?authkey=3iV51ZIM6l8&feat=email#> (Tom Heneghan)
<http://picasaweb.google.com/ralph.heimlich/EasternNeckWinterPaddle#> (Ralph Heimlich)

January 1, Havre De Grace to Swan Creek—Michael Free organized this 20-degree paddle from Millard Tydings Memorial Park in Havre De Grace down the western shore to the mouth of Swan Creek and back. Our first destination was Stump Point at Perryville community park, but the ice was 10-12 feet wide to get to the water, and Furnace Creek was frozen solid. Bob Shakeshaft suggested Millard Tydings Park, and we drove over to check it out.

We paddled with the current and NW wind down the western shore, observing large rafts of ducks and geese, and many eagles (at least 6). Got down to the mouth of Swan Creek and found it frozen in, with many open pockets behind a wall of 1/2 inch ice that broke only reluctantly. We spied a bald eagle on the ice and landed to walk down the beach to get a better look inside the cove.

We warmed up some paddling. Saw even more eagles fishing the flats, and paddled up through a raft of about 300 American Coot (mud hen) that only flew a few hundred feet in front of us to repeat the maneuver. By the time we got back, my spray deck was coated in ice and the bilge water froze into the space behind my seat. Bob had to take off, but Mike and I repaired to Coakley's Tavern for cold beer and warm cream of crab soup. They say you'll do all year what you did on New Year's Day, so I'm looking forward to paddling through ice in August!

Ralph's pictures at <http://picasaweb.google.com/ralph.heimlich/NewYearSDayPaddleAtHavreDeGrace#>

Michael's pics at: http://www.kodakgallery.com/ShareLanding.action?c=17m8rpt7_apy9d7k3&x=0&y=m4bqp5&localeid=en_US

Bob's pics at: <http://picasaweb.google.com/lh/sredir?uname=bpmcshake&target=ALBUM&id=5286539472012799553&authkey=ya222dBxsAo&feat=email>

January 1, Gravelly Point—Being New Year's Day, it's time for the first kayaking trip of the year! I chipped some ice off my kayak, loaded it and my gear up, and headed for the meeting point at Bladensburg Park. The water level in the Anacostia river was very, very low, and all of my fellow paddlers were clustered by their cars outside the locked park gate. After a quick pow-wow we decided to put in at Gravelly Point on the Potomac instead. Dave and Cyndi, Nelson and Caroline, Brian, Peter and I drove in a caravan back over to Virginia, where Kingsley caught up with us. We unloaded, suited up and were quickly under way.

Fortunately the winds had died down quite a bit from the day before. The Potomac was still ever so slightly bumpy, but nothing of any concern, and there was no risk of injury from exposure. After hanging out at the launch point watching planes take off we crossed the Potomac and headed up Washington Channel. The channel was almost completely protected from the wind, and we all warmed up pretty quickly. We saw three bald eagles - two mature birds (a nesting pair?) in a tree over Haines Point, then a maturing bird (white head, but otherwise immature plumage) at Ft. McNair. The channel is home to a large marina, so we all gawked at the big boats and daydreamed about ditching our conventional lives and living aboard a houseboat (particularly after we spotted a houseboat with two kayaks lashed to its side).



Cooling off after a warm paddle photo by Jesse Aronson

At the end of the trip Peter wanted to test how waterproof his two-piece dry suit actually was, so he took a stroll into the 37 degree Potomac. Seeing how refreshing it looked, I joined him and we floated around for a bit. Cyndi waded in to snap a few pictures. I did learn a lesson from this immersion. This winter I've been paddling with pogies. At the point when I jumped into the river my hands were no longer protected by the pogies (since I wasn't holding my paddle), leaving my hands protected by just a light pair of polypro gloves. It was, so far, my favorite paddling trip of the year.

Pictures at <http://picasaweb.google.com/aronsoni/FirstKayakTripOf2009?authkey=fCbD5x6WLxM&feat=directlink> (Jesse)

January 3, Jackson Landing (Jug Bay) and Western Branch—Driving down the various Croom roads to the Patuxent River Park headquarters the temperature hovered around the freezing mark. Watery areas were frozen. We arrived at the park headquarters and met up with Robert Golden, Ralph Heimlich, Annette Ramos, Deb Schmiel, Jerry Stezar, and Bill Upton. We drove down to a cold Jackson's Landing; ice was all over the shoreline. We eight soon had our kits loaded and were heading upstream from the landing into a 10-15 mile per hour headwind. It was chilly. No, make that cold.



Marshall sees us off at Eastern Neck photo by Tom Heneghan



Bob Shakeshaft trying the ice at Swan Creek photo by Ralph Heimlich

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At the fork between the Patuxent and the Western Branch we discussed options and decided to go up the Western Branch and then return to have lunch at nearby Mt. Calvert. The strong January sun quickly warmed us. We looked at Iron Pot Landing as a possible lunch stop. It is Patuxent Water Trail Site 45. We headed on up past the WSSC water treatment plant on the falling tide to a point where deadfalls blocked our further progress: The end of navigation on the Western Branch. We took a group shot and turned around to head back only to find that the falling tide had exposed some obstacles to our return. We "schooched" over a couple of semi-submerged logs. We landed at the Mt. Calvert beach and climbed the hill to sit in the sun for lunch. It was really pleasant: Food, company, sun, and no wind. We paddled back to Jackson's Landing and a surprise. The kayak dock was high and dry in that infamous Patuxent mud. Three of us headed to Grace's Fortune in Bowie for a early supper of soup and appetizers.



Bill Upton, Debbie Schmeil, Jerry Stezar, Annette Ramos, Robert Golden, Elizabeth and David Moore at head of navigation on Western Branch photo by Ralph Heimlich

A great paddle with great paddlers. Thanks all for coming out.

David Moore's pics at http://web.mac.com/dtmoore/My_Kayaking_2009/Winter_2009_Photos.html#13

Ralph Heimlich's pics at <http://picasaweb.google.com/ralph.heimlich/PatuxentRiverWinterPaddle?authkey=o-fucGGyTIE>

CPA Virtual Calendar Debuts

<http://www.cpakayaker.com/downloads/newsletter/2008/CPACalendar2009.pdf>

For those of you that missed all the excitement because of Christmas, New Year's Eve or other mundane activities like that, the competition for the best Baker's Dozen photos to grace the CPA Virtual Calendar was fiercely contested in the last hours of 2008. The winner was Jenny Plummer-Welker's ethereal photo of kayaks resting before SK102 at Lake Anna (see [back cover](#) of this newsletter) and the runner up was Jesse Aronson's chilling Ice Pirate photo that graced the January spot. To follow the blow-by-blow, go to <http://www.cpakayaker.com/forums/viewtopic.php?t=3588>.

To download your very own copy of the CPA Virtual Calendar for 2009, go to

<http://www.cpakayaker.com/downloads/newsletter/2008/CPACalendar2009.pdf>

And keep taking pictures for the 2010 edition, which we may actually print (maybe, could be).

Upcoming CPA Events

February

Feb. 8 (Sun) **Maryland Planning Meeting**--Got some great ideas for a day paddle? Car- or Kayak camping trip? Extended excursion? Training event? Bring them to the Maryland CPA Planning Meeting!! A light lunch (soup and crackers, feel free to bring dessert or whatever) will be served about noon and the Planning Meeting starts after lunch. **Organizer(s):** Ralph Heimlich 301-498-0918 (H, leave a message) **Location:** 7914 Belgaro Road, Laurel, MD (in Howard County).

March

Mar. 7 (Sat) **Virginia Planning Meeting**--Here is your second chance to get in on the club trip planning! People come to make new day-trip plans and over-night-trip plans. People come just to meet other club members interested in the same things. It's a fun time for all. We will have coffee, and tea available, as well as some breakfast-like goodies. Feel free to contribute. The meeting will commence about 10:00 am and will run until everyone is talked out. That is usually about 2:00 to 3:00 pm. **Organizer(s):** Dave Biss 703-241-0036, Cyndi Janetzko 703-241-0036. **Location:** Cyndi and Dave's Yak Shak, 6668 Barrett Road, Falls Church, VA 22042

Mar. 14 (Sat) **SK101: An Introduction to SeaKayaking**—Once again this year, CPA is hosting our one-day seminar on the basics of sea kayaking, SK101. Geared to new paddlers. For details, see [page 9](#) and registration form on [page 10](#). Organizer(s): Yvonne Thayer yfthayer@gmail.com and for registration Gina Cicotello ginacico@earthlink.net

May 1-3 (Fri-Sun) **SK102: On-Water Skills Workshop**—For the 11th year, this event will take place in the warm waters of Lake Anna, VA. Organizer(s): Brian Blankinship <http://www.baykayaking.com/> See the March CPA Paddler for registration forms and watch the Forum.