

PADDLING ON THE POCOMOKE

By Ronald Piling

The [Pocomoke River Canoe Company](#) is at 2 River Street in Snow Hill. The floating dock at our shop is free for public use, and there are ramps in Byrd Park on the south end of town.

The Pocomoke is tidal, and sometimes at high tide it's difficult to get under the Snow Hill drawbridge. If we know at the shop we can arrange for a bridge tender, or help paddlers portage around the bridge. Camping is at Shad and Milburn Landings minutes from Snow Hill (<https://dnr.maryland.gov/publiclands/pages/eastern/pocomokeriver.aspx>). For any information, you



can call us at the shop at 410-632-3971 or email to canoe@pocomokeriverpaddle.com. We can tell you about many great launch sites in our watershed.

When our guests ask about bug spray before they launch on the Pocomoke River, we tell them that there are no mosquitoes on the Pocomoke. You can tell by the looks on their faces (especially those who are camping on Assateague Island) that they don't believe a word of it.

But it's true. There are scientific reasons that we don't need to go into here, and mosquitoes are the only critters native to the Eastern Shore that you won't see on the placid, deep, tea-colored river. Thanks to the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area designation, and the cypress-lined banks that are unfriendly to conventional development, the Pocomoke remains the most pristine river on the Shore. It isn't unusual for guests on Delmarva Birding Weekend to see 35 species of birds in one paddling trip. Beaver have returned in abundance after being trapped out years ago, and river otters are frequently seen.

Throughout the season the flora is just as breathtaking. By late May the swamp rose and swamp azalea are in bloom. Shortly after that the spatterdock (our native water lily) blooms, then the spiky purple pickerel weed and the scarlet cardinal flower. The Pocomoke water-



shed is the northernmost habitat on the East Coast for bald cypress, once threatened by over-logging, now thriving. A tree growing in the middle of the river just north of the shop is pictured on a postcard postmarked 1904, the "Buzzard Roost," still alive and hosting cormorants and eagles.

Though we bend over backwards to make a day on the Pocomoke a pleasant adventure for everyone who visits the Pocomoke River Canoe Company, the truth is that the river itself above Snow Hill is so engaging that it's hard to mess up.

The shop maintains an inventory of solo and tandem recreational kayaks, canoes and paddleboards for rental. We have a portage service for those who, like most CPA members, bring their own boats. One popular launch site is 5 ½ miles north of Snow Hill, another is on Nassawango Creek bisecting the Nature Conservancy's largest Eastern Shore holding. We're happy to direct paddlers to nearly a dozen great launch sites in the watershed. The floating dock yards from the shop door is free for anyone to use at any time.

There are lots of great places to paddle in the Chesapeake watershed, but few as unique or as captivating as the Pocomoke. CPA members who have paddled with us – and many have – will concur. At the end of your paddle there are two spots in town with great draft beer selections. And a taqueria with great margaritas. Just saying.