

The Chesapeake Paddler



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Maryland water trails make kayak touring possible

Paddle-in campsites, marked trails deem Janes Island State Park a destination.

By Ralph Heimlich

There are not many places in the Chesapeake Bay region to enjoy kayak touring (camping out of your kayak at primitive sites). The three paddle-in campsites at Janes Island State Park, near Crisfield, MD, are part of one of Maryland's first water trails. Three other kayakers joined me for a weekend of paddling at this location in late March.

Late winter is one of the best times to visit Janes Island because there are few other visitors, the temperatures are generally cool compared to the heat and humidity of summer, and there are NO BUGS! I actually jumped the gun a bit in planning this trip for late March, since the park doesn't officially reopen until April 1. However, we got permission to use the backcountry sites from the Park Manager, as long as we registered with the office and got hang tags for our vehicles. Campsites are \$7 per night and offer little beyond wooden tent platforms. There are no tables, open fires are prohibited, and Leave No Trace camping is required (see <https://Int.org/learn/seven-principles-overview>).

Joining me were Sue Sierke, Greg Welker and Dave Isbell. We were all paddling larger touring kayaks, were well equipped with dry suits and insulation to deal with 47-degree water temperatures, and were blessed with a benign weather forecast (partly sunny, air temps ranging from mid-40's to mid-60's, very little rain, and winds at 10-15 kts from the SW). We arrived at the Janes Island boat ramp about 10



Backcountry campsites offer little beyond wooden tent platforms — and solitude. Pro tip: go early in the paddling season to avoid the bugs. Photo/Ralph Heimlich

a.m. and after the usual ramp-side trauma of getting everything packed, paddled out about a half-hour later.

My original plan was to camp one night at the southern-most campsite on Long Island, then paddle up the bay-side beaches to the northern-most campsite on Daugherty Creek for Sunday night. I had scheduled a Monday paddle on the Big Annessex River, which borders the park on the north, to include our group and a few other day paddlers. A rainy forecast for Monday caused all the day paddlers to bail, and the Ranger had cautioned that the Long Island

site would be very exposed to SW winds, so we altered plans to fit the circumstances.

Paddling down Daugherty Canal from the ramp was very pleasant against a light SW wind. We decided we could avoid the continued paddle against the wind by ducking into the Black Trail. Entering Back Creek, we immediately lost the wind as we wound our way through low marsh, eventually emerging onto the Flatcap Basin. A lone and unsociable kayaker was just paddling around the bend away from us as we approached. The park has an elaborate boat dock on the bayward end of this basin at a wash-over beach. We landed there for lunch in the warm sunshine looking out over the bay. Deale Island was visible to the NW and the faint trace of Smith Island seven miles to our west could be made out. Behind us, the new wind turbine at Crisfield turned slowly, and the twin towers of the high-rise condos

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THE CHESAPEAKE PADDLERS ASSOCIATION, INC.

The mission of the Chesapeake Paddlers Association is to provide a way for people to enjoy sea kayaking within the Chesapeake Bay area and to promote safe sea kayaking practices through educating the local sea kayaking community and the interested public.

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THE CHESAPEAKE PADDLER

The Chesapeake Paddler is published 10 times a year, with combination issues in Nov/Dec and Jan/Feb. The deadline for submitting copy is the 15th of the preceding month. Have an idea for an article, or is there information you would like to see in the newsletter? Contact news_editor@cpakayaker.com

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News From the CPA Coordinator - Bill Smith

By now most of us are well into the paddling season and have participated in several trips. If not, it's a great time to play catch-up. Since I live on the Magothy River I frequently lead trips there. The past two Magothy advanced beginner trips I led were around the weekend of May 20 only a year apart and with similar results. For both trips we used the Spriggs Farm Park for a launch. Last year after launching and crossing the river we encountered steadily increasing winds to 25 knots; this trip was cut short and the plan 'B' bailout was implemented. This year since the wind was already howling at launch time I altered the paddle plan to follow the south shore and explore a few of the coves but this still left us out in the mix a good portion of the time. This trip was exciting with the confused seas and waves that battered us around pretty well. I am not sure I would ever plan a trip in those conditions but it did prove to be a fun day. I think it is a good learning experience when you paddle out of your comfort zone; it certainly keeps things interesting. Next year I need to change the weekend or leave it as is and plan for the wind. One interesting part was that the river was dead calm the next day; I also led a beginner's paddle the following week with 2 knot winds. As a frequent trip leader I have learned to have a plan 'B' for the unexpected because the vision you had for the trip is only a vision and not always reality. Routine paddling would get boring so I welcome it.

In early June CPA held the annual "Fall Out of Your Boat Day." This event was a great success with 60 participants. I really want to thank Jaclin Gilbert, Paula Hubbard, Denise Parisi, Shelley Wiechelt, Robert Golden, and Greg Welker for volunteering to teach the newbies wet exits and some rescue practices. It is always fun to watch newbies try their first wet exit since I think some are really apprehensive about going over with a spray skirt on and finding out it's not as bad as they thought. It's great to see the newbies come up with big smiles on their faces. Several members also practiced rescues; as experienced paddlers, they know the value of having rescue skills down pat when you really need it. Another must-have skill is paddle-float reentry; this could be a matter of life or death if a paddler is stranded a mile off



shore and can't get back in their boat. You could be paddling in a group and still find yourself out of your boat and no one around-- especially during rough conditions when the paddle groups tend to get spread out while everyone is concentrating on paddling without going over. This event was also successful because of volunteers Jim Allen, Mike Cohn, Sue and Rich Stevens, and, of course, Marla Aron peddling CPA merchandise (I hope I didn't forget anyone!). Benefits of this event include the chance to socialize with members you probably won't see the rest of the year and the opportunity to meet new friends.

Volunteers are such an important part of any club; without volunteers the club would cease to exist. SK102 is a great example of this. I have yet to attend a SK102 but after reading Catriona Miller's writeup of the event it is clear that volunteers are what makes it happen. The number of people needed to make SK 102 a success is astounding and I want to thank Cat and the many volunteers for making it happen. SK101 and SK203 are other examples where volunteer instructors sacrifice their time to teach. The best part is that a lot of the instructors teach at all three events. Trip leaders and piracy captains are also volunteers who keep the club going; without trips or events there wouldn't be much point in staying in a club.

I hope everyone is enjoying the season and getting on the water.

~ Bill Smith

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Paddler Profile: Jen Bine

Interview by Bob Browning

Lives in: Indian Lake, New York

Real job: Adirondack Experience / Director of Interpretation (a.k.a. exhibits, education, and public programs)

Member of a piracy? I was a long-time Pirate of Georgetown until moving to the Adirondacks in 2013

Number of years paddling? 17

How did you get involved in sea kayaking? A friend of my father's talked him into taking a sea kayaking class. He had a blast and a couple years later he, my sister, and I tried it during a trip to Seattle. After 10 awkward dips of the paddle, I remember thinking, "Oh, yeah!" I was hooked.

What boats do you paddle? Seaward Silhouette, 17', red. Necky Eliza, 16', blue.

Rudder or skeg? I'm ecumenical on this topic. I have one of each.

Type paddle used: Greenland in the kayaks.

Do you do any other type of paddling besides sea kayaking? I bought a Hornbeck New Tricks canoe upon moving to the ADK. They're made locally and at 17 pounds, they're ideal when you have to do a long portage or several of them.

Do you regularly do any other outdoor activities? I have a pair of Nordic skates and am slowly learning how to use them.

How often on average do you paddle in summer between May and October?: At least a couple times a week. This business of having a day job gets in the way sometimes.

Do any winter paddling? That would be a bit difficult in the Adirondacks. Our ice regularly gets thick enough to drive a truck on.

Favorite local paddling location? Way too many to count. I've always loved paddling on lakes and we have an abundance of them. But some of my favorites are Forked and Lows Lakes and Middle and Lower Saranac Lake.



Photo/Catriona Miller

Favorite CPA trip you've ever been on and why?: I always loved paddling the Pocomoke. Great campsites and the paddling was always interesting, particularly the abundance of wildlife. The company was not too shabby, either.

Best paddling trip/experience ever and why? Kayaks have carried me on many trips, and my "paddling family" has been an important part of every one of those trips. But a pair of trips to the Adirondacks not only cemented my love of this activity, but it also introduced me to the place I am now lucky to call home.

Scariest/most dangerous trip/experience and why? I had a couple of experiences that were really only scary in hindsight. The most frightened I've been was when a fellow paddler landed to rest and wait for the group to pick him up upon our return. When we got back he was gone. It was not until we returned to our cars that we found that his vehicle was gone and that he had left without leaving a message of any sort.

Bucket list trip(s): There are a dozen lakes in the Adirondacks that I still haven't explored, but beyond that, I'd love to paddle in the Everglades and the Florida Keys, Alaska, the San Juans. New Zealand....

Three things you like most about paddling? I love where kayaking has taken me, who it has introduced me to, and the peace of being on the water.

What do you like about CPA? CPA is all about the people. It started by providing me with great teachers and today I know it has brought me friends that I'll treasure for the rest of my life.

One unusual, non-paddling thing other people find interesting about you? I grew up on a farm in the almost lake-free state of Iowa. For some reason, folks assume I know about all things agricultural but my expertise is limited to hogs, corn, and soybeans. ♠

Do you know a paddler who would make an interesting profile? Contact Bob Browning at: BBBrowning43@verizon.net

Hope for the best, but plan for the worst: Words to live by

When Mother Nature puts your plans in a tailspin, flexibility can help you go with the flow

By Lois Wyatt

A common theme to a number of planned paddles on the CPA schedule this spring has been the importance of Plan B or even Plan X. When asked for trip reports, several leaders said their original plans had had to be modified to reflect day-of conditions. In articles in this issue, Ralph Heimlich and Bill Smith describe the weather challenges they faced. Ralph relates making adjustments to the Janes Island trip in late March based on wind conditions. Bill tells how he changed the plan for his May 20th Magothy trip because of the wind strength, a decision made easier by the experience of the previous year for the same trip plan when it became necessary to bail out in mid-paddle. In 2016 four paddlers crossed from Spriggs Farm to Sillery Bay on the north side of the Magothy. While the small group explored the backside of Gibson Island and Windmill Point, the winds grew significantly stronger, so that as they emerged from that sheltered area, the three participants realized that paddling back to the launch site was impossible. Imposing on a nearby property owner to allow paddlers to land and set kayaks on his lawn was the only option. Fortunately, a sympathetic homeowner was soon found, and help was only a phone call away. The group was near Bill's home and the family minivan could accommodate all. Lesson learned - Bill had checked the forecast the night before, but not in the morning. Overnight, the forecast for

wind speed had increased by more than 10 mph. This year the wind speed was higher in the morning, and Bill did not want a repeat of last year. On yet another trip, Ralph's plan for a paddle on the Western Sinepuxent Bay was foiled by strong winds, which led to an alternate, more sheltered trip up Nassawango Creek in the rain.

Other days the wisest choice is Plan X, or cancelling the outing. Such was the fate of two Monday paddles in June. Because of the strong likelihood of rain and the threat of thunderstorms, Jay Perry cancelled his June 5th trip for the Lower Chester River and Chip Walsh, his June 19th trip for the Patuxent.

So, fellow paddlers, please keep in mind that planning and posting are only the first steps for your trip leaders. Actually, part of the initial plan usually includes identifying backup options so as to be prepared to be flexible when conditions are less than ideal and not to disappoint those who traveled some distance. As the date draws near, they repeatedly check relevant weather information and weigh the input. Will the trip follow Plan A, or shift to Plan B or Plan X? Leaders take their responsibility seriously, so when they feel they cannot hold with Plan A, please be a good sport and realize that the leader is probably just as disappointed as the paddlers. Their wisdom and caution often come from CPA trip leader training, SK 203, or from lessons learned the hard way. ♦



You are invited to submit photographs and articles for consideration by *The Chesapeake Paddler*.

Mail to:

news_editor@cpakayaker.com

Photo: Ben Stephenson/[Creative Commons](#)

Speaking of Dehydration...

An alert reader of the article on dehydration last month suggested clarification regarding the danger of drinking too much water, too fast. Author Susan

Green responded that this behavior can lead to a condition called "hyponatremia," which is defined by low sodium levels in the blood. The symptoms can include: headaches, fatigue, and nausea. Symptoms can progress to confusion, seizures, and even coma. This condition is not unusual among endurance athletes (ahem, kayakers!) who incorrectly believe they can hydrate completely before a long paddle – instead of hydrating periodically during the paddle as they perspire (as suggested in the June 2017 article). See, MayoClinic.org for more information about this condition. ♦



Taro Taylor/[Creative Commons](#)

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rising above the marsh on Crisfield's waterfront provided an unmistakable landmark.

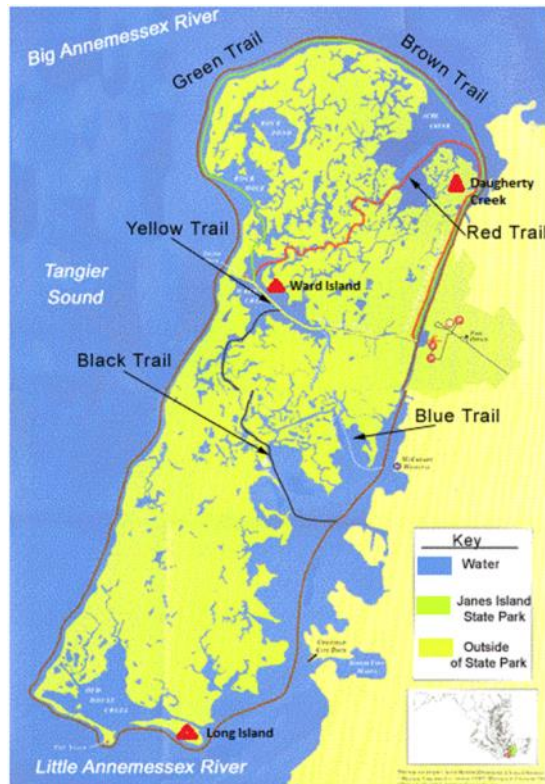
At the time of Captain John Smith's Chesapeake Bay voyages, the inhabitants of the land near present-day Janes Island State Park were American Indians of the Accohannock or Annesmessex Nation. Later, settlers farmed the land in the marsh. One resident lady nicknamed "Old Ailsey" lived at the north end in an area known as Long Acre and is responsible for the Chesapeake Ghost story of Old Ailsey's Light. A fish packing plant at the southern tip of the island prospered early in the last century but eventually went out of business.

We paddled out of Flatcap Basin following the Green Trail through the cut and coasted along the beach in the bay for awhile, then turned into another cut at Rock Hole, into Rock Pond. After exploring awhile, we exited and paddled north and east along the northern end of the island, passing miles of beautiful, pristine white beaches. Dave Isbell got out his new half-dome shaped downwind sail and after a hesitant start, soon was clipping along at a good pace. We passed a couple with a dog and a skiff and turned into Acre Creek, intending to follow the Red Trail through the marsh to our campsite at Ward's Island. Unfortunately, we had dawdled too long and the receding tide left too little water for forward progress. We reluctantly turned around and crawled out of Acre Creek to Daugherty Creek.

We paddled down past some houses on the east bank, and the Daugherty Creek campsite on the western shore. Coming to the Park boundary, we passed the cabins, which can be rented year-round, and eventually came back to the boat ramp. Turning west on the Yellow Trail, we paddled the short distance to Ward Island.

Camping at Ward Island is fine, except that at low tide, THERE WILL BE MUD! We got within 10 feet for the landing and ran out of water.

Over the side we went and into a foot and half of grey, sticky mud.



Then we had to drag the loaded boats that last few yards to the "beach."

Accommodations at Wards Island were "cozy," to say the least. The two platforms have room (barely) for two tents each, but it is better than attempting to sleep on the brushy, often wet ground.

After setting up camp and cooking dinner, we sat around enjoying the still-mild temperature. Without a camp fire, nights at a primitive camp in March often begin early, with everyone

heading into the sack to stay warm. However, with temperatures in the fifties, we weren't in any hurry to head in. Going out to the "beach" for one last check on the boats tethered to the small dock, we were fascinated to see how the lights helped pick out landmarks so easily. Crisfield was all lit up, but even far away places like Smith Island and Tangier Island showed up easily in the clear night with lights ablaze.

Next morning, the forecast confirmed that our weekend was coming to a close. With rain and higher winds forecast, we had a leisurely breakfast (had to wait for the tide to come up and spare us slogging out through the mud), and packed up our gear.

After paddling back along the Yellow Trail, we unloaded the boats and loaded them on the cars, then sat down on the dockside benches for a nice lunch in the sunshine. As we were finishing, a young man drove up in a pickup, looked over the landing, and hauled out a short rec boat. We warned him about the cold water temperatures, but he proceeded to launch in street clothes with no PFD. At least he paddled out to the sheltered Yellow Trail. We hope he enjoyed his paddling at Janes Island. We certainly did. ♦



Photo/Ralph Heimlich

Sue Sierke, Dave Isbell, and Greg Welker don cold water gear for a March tour of Janes Island trails.