

SOUTHERN MAINE

SEA KAYAKING NETWORK

NEWSLETTER

P. O. Box 4794 Portland, Maine 04112 January 2000

MISSION STATEMENT

The Southern Maine Sea Kayaking Network is an association of paddlers interested in connecting with others who enjoy the sport of sea kayaking. Our purpose is to promote safe and responsible practices and, at the same time, have fun.

EXPAND
YOUR
KAYAKING
HORIZONS

Clyde on the ICW

by Clyde Sisler

This is a summary (sent by Clyde to the network) of trips taken on 4 different days. Complete trip reports can be found at: <http://csisler.com>

Day 1: Having just arrived in Florida from the frozen north of Georgia, I was desperately in need of a (sea kayaking) fix. To satisfy that craving, I dumped the boat in the first available body of water I could find.

The Halifax River, part of the *Inter Coastal Waterway*, lies about midway between St. Augustine and Daytona Beach.

I got distracted by a pelican while launching. It kept circling around the tiny little cove I was launching from and then would dive into the water after a fish with a fair amount of speed. It's a wonder it didn't break something hitting the water that fast and hard or at least get a headache.

This section of the Halifax River is less than 100 yards

across. I always imagined the ICW as much wider to accommodate tankers and such. I guess depth rather than width is the key. The Army Corps of Engineers is responsible for keeping the

ICW dredged to the proper depth. Most of the water I paddled in was 1.5-2 feet deep, but of course I was out of the channel most of the time.

Immediately to the south of where I entered the ICW is a Manatee Zone. This is an area manatees are known to frequent and boat speed is limited to help protect them. The signs probably refer to the summertime because the manatees are elsewhere this time of year.

Lots of blue herons and some smaller dark colored wading birds lined both sides of the river along with a few of what I chose to think were egrets.

I poked around in some coves and some dead-end rivers (which I guess means they're not rivers, duh). Every once in a while the

possibility of alligators crossed my mind. The mud banks along some of the feeder streams looked ideal for 'gator sunning spots. I started looking behind to see if anything might be gaining on me.

This experience reminded me of a book I read entitled *Kabloona*. It was about a woman kayaker paddling through the Northwest Territories. She told about being in an area with lots of seals and walrus. Paddling along one day, she had the distinct impression of being watched. Looking around, she saw a black nose and two black eyes set in a white head not far behind her. It was a polar bear stalking her with every intention of having her for lunch.

That's what I felt like looking behind me for alligators. After a while I decided not to look for the 'gators themselves, but for signs of them, like tracks, mud slides, etc. I hoped that would be sufficient.

As I was paddling along, minding my own business,

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"Every once in a while the possibility of alligators crossed my mind."

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"Clyde... (Continued from page 1)

watching pelicans diving out of the sky after fish, snowy white egrets and great blue herons stalking prey on the shores, I looked up and saw 6 turkey buzzards circling overhead.

They went around and around with me pretty much near the center of the circles. Geeze, I certainly hoped they didn't know something I didn't. Eventually I paddled out of their circle so apparently they had their eye on something else. Phew!

Nearing my little cove at the end of the day I saw a large power cruiser coming up through the Manatee Zone with pretty large bow waves pushing out in front. As I reached the edge of my cove, he exited the zone and zoomed by me. His large wake hit the shallow waters I was in and started breaking right over me. I was in 2 foot water and these were about 2 foot, nearly vertical waves, one right after another. I tried to nose into them but each one broke over the deck or over my side as they pushed me around. They didn't cause me any real problems except to turn a nice dry trip into a soaking wet one.

Day 2: I put in a couple of miles farther south. Heading north would bring me to the put-in at the state park where I launched yesterday. This would only be a couple of miles but I could always turn around and go the other way too.

When I got even with the state park ramp, I swung over to the other side of the Halifax. Almost immediately I saw something scoot away from the bow of the boat towards shore. Little puffs of sand hung in the water as the thing disappeared. A little farther on another one took off. My first thought was some little marine animal then I thought of a fish a foot or so long.

And then I saw one. A sting ray! Just this morning we were talking about the Florida Keys and I said I hoped to see a sting ray, not step on one. And there was one. It was plate sized and kind of a brownish, purplish color.

Now that I knew what I was looking for, I began to see many of them in the foot deep water, some of them the size of a platter, but most dish size. I tried to maneuver the boat to get a picture of one but they were too skittish. They were easy to see but hard to get near enough for the camera.

I started noticing ray-sized indentations in the sand and assume that is where they rest or feed or whatever and cover themselves over with sand. In 50 yards or so I saw 10-20 stingrays and then none. The indentations were still around, but no rays.

I gave up on them and picked up speed and then glided over one. I was moving too fast to snap a picture or stop and try to work back to one. It appeared (notice I say appeared) that they had little tadpole type legs or some kind of protuberance at the base of their long spiked tail.

I really didn't get a very good view looking down at one but that was the impression I had so it may not be as crazy as it sounds

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"The world is full of
willing people,
some are willing
to work, the rest are
willing to let them."

- Robert Frost

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"Clyde..." (Continued from page 2)

Tadpoles grow up to be frogs. Maybe this was some sort of species that grows up to be alligators or something. I'd half expected those suckers to chase me up on shore and then run after me on those hind legs, (like those hooded lizards that run on water) and whack me with that long stinger thing. Hey, what do I know? I'm just an old Yankee boy from up north.

(12/31: A park ranger later confirmed this. He said they were appendages used by the stingrays to help steer, so there!)

Many sail and power boats move up and down the ICW and you can't help but wonder where they've been or where they might be going. Maybe to a New Year's rendezvous with fellow sailors for an extended cruise or an around the world voyage. Maybe to the Caribbean or the South Pacific. Maybe Scandinavia or the Mediterranean, East Africa or the Indian Ocean. Sigh!

Day 3: I put in at Ponce de Leon Inlet. The barrier islands and peninsula run 60-80 miles or more with only one break in them. I would expect some really strong currents to flow through the inlet.

The channel out to the ICW was lined with lots of egrets, blue herons and some smaller gray and white wading birds. A lot of (red tailed?) hawks soared overhead and a few perched on the limbs of dead trees. I saw a new bird, for me anyway. A moderate-sized white



bird with a long, thin, orange bill and black tail or feet.

I was just paddling along with no particular goal in mind when I saw a dorsal fin 150 feet or so away. I just happened to be looking where it was. It didn't reappear right away so I marked it off as a porpoise. But a minute or so later I saw two of them appear together and realized they were in fact bottle nosed dolphins.

They started surfacing every 5 seconds or so, sometimes lunging forward with a splash. Then I saw there were 4 of

them, one out in front and 3 in a row behind it. I gave chase and would estimate their speed at maybe 3+ knots. I was able to catch up to them without a lot of strain and pain.

I had the camera around my neck, turned on and zoomed out. I had a little feel for when and where they would surface and was prepared. When one surfaced I was able to snap off one picture.

I'm sure they saw me but didn't really pay any attention. What is more amazing is they didn't get run over by the powerboats. Nor did I.

After getting my picture, I thought it might be a good idea to get my butt out of the main channel.

Day 4: - Ho Hum. Just another one of those average New Year days. Temperature in the upper 70's, water in the mid 60's, bright sunshine, brilliant blue skies, beautiful fluffy white clouds, a 5 knot wind to keep the

heat down, the tide pushing me along, both going out and coming back, no bugs, lots of snowy white egrets, great blue herons, yellow topped pelicans, sting rays, dolphins, etc. Yawn!

On the map the Ponce de Leon Cut looked interesting so I paddled a couple of hundred yards against a mild tide to where it branched away from the Halifax River. Once through this channel I was able to point the kayak south and let the wind and tide move me along at their own pace.

"I saw a couple of dorsal fins coming right at me. Then a couple more a little farther out."

I mostly just watched the birds and a couple of motorized hang gliders. Well, one was shaped like a hang glider while the other was more like a sky diving parachute. Both had little go-cart type vehicles underneath

them and, presumably, a person coordinating things.

I began drifting over little puffs of sand again and soon was watching stingrays, mostly platter size, sliding by under the kayak. And then, coming the opposite way up through the cut I saw a couple of dorsal fins coming right at me. Then a couple more a little farther out. Then I saw a school of 6 inch fish jumping out of the water as the dolphins drove them right at me, all 4 of them working as a team, sometimes splashing and making a commotion to herd the fish into shore where they became lunch. Cool!

I followed the dolphins out into the center of the Cut where they milled around a little, one guy almost surfacing 5 feet from the

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"You are limited not by what you can do, but by what you believe you cannot do." Anonymous

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"Clyde..." (Continued from page 3)

kayak. They apparently had come up the Cut far enough and did an about face with me paddling along beside them as they dove and surfaced frequently on the way down river. When a powerboat came zooming by they wouldn't surface for a minute or so. Every once in a while, one of the dolphins would jump about half way out of the water. I started to wonder if it was trying to get a better view of the area.

Maybe the dolphins were watching out for powerboats or something. A couple of hundred yards from the end of the Cut, a half a dozen dolphins appeared, coming in the other direction. They all met right in front of me and I was surrounded by 10-12 of them. They seemed to be greeting each other like it had been some time since they last met. I was sitting there in my kayak as all these dolphins romped and frolicked within 10 feet of me.

I was so excited and dumbfounded I just sat there and watched with my mouth open. I didn't even think to take a picture until after one dolphin jumped completely out of the water just like in the shows, though maybe not as high. All I could do was sit there and say "Damn"!

So, these paddles were just happenstance. The Halifax River just happened to be there when I got my paddle wet. I bet you don't find it in any guide books or tourist brochures. But each of the 4 paddles was absolutely great.

Editors note: Thanks, again, Clyde for sending along a report of one of your great adventures! Take care.



SMSKN Board Meeting Notes from January 6, 2000

Submitted by Bob Murray

Those present were: Bob Murray, Dorry Shaw, Lee Bumsted, Bill Ridlon, Bob Arledge & Debra Nichols.

The meeting began with a review of the previous meeting. A date was chosen for the upcoming pot luck brunch at the home of Bob Murray and Marcia Feller.

Bill initiated a discussion on leader training. Should SMSKN subsidize the training of trip leaders? Should this training be linked with a commitment to leading trips? When and where should the training take place? Bob Arledge agreed to gather more information for the upcoming board meeting.

Bob Murray brought out the list of winter activities the board had put together at the December meeting. Options included: cross country skiing, winter paddling and ice skating. As often happens the board came up with more ideas than there are volunteers to expedite the plans.

Conversation moved to the upcoming pool sessions. Lee offered to ask Mark Daniele if he would be willing to organize two sessions for late spring.

Bob Murray agreed to look into contacting the Coast Guard to find out if there is a possibility of having them give a water safety class to the network.

General First Aid was another topic of discussion. It was felt there should be mention of the adult ed classes in the surrounding areas that offer courses in First Aid. The board generally agreed that it might be advisable for SMSKN members to avail themselves of the opportunity to learn more about dealing with paddling emergencies and that knowing some basic First Aid would be beneficial.

The conversation next turned to the April "Trip Planning" meeting. A large calendar has been purchased for the purpose of inspiring members to sign up to lead trips next season. Bill & Debra have been compiling a list of all the past

SMSKN trips. Also included in the trip options will be the list of places mentioned on the "E-survey". The hope is to have trips listed on "Sticky Notes", color coded by difficulty. Members can initial the note and post it on the date he or she would like to lead that trip.

Dorry mentioned the Stonington rental. She needs to know how many people are planning to join her this summer.

A lot of time was spent discussing the classification of trips. The intent is to create a "strawman" of guidelines to rate trips. The hope is that the rating system will be useful in allowing members to pick a trip that matches their ability and interest.

It was suggested there be a slide show for the March general membership meeting.

The next board meeting will be held February 10 at 6:30 PM at Bob Murray's house.

Salty Dog Talk

By Bill Beavis & Richard G McCloskey

Ever wonder why your young nephew is referred to as a "little nipper"?

Here's the explanation from Salty Dog Talk.

In the old sailing warships anchor ropes (known as cables) were huge, as much as 8 inches in diameter and much too large to bend around the main capstan. Instead smaller endless ropes were used. These were led to the capstan and attached to the cable with "nipping" lines—so called because they nipped the ropes against the side of the cable and no awkward knots were required.



Small boys were employed to do this work and inevitably they became known as the "nippers".

Island Use Limits Being Developed

By Bill Ridlon

On January 19th, the Island Capacity Advisory Committee met to discuss public island camping capacities. The committee grew out of the MITA / Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands (BPL) Island Stakeholders meeting held in November. The purpose of the committee is to recommend public island capacities to MITA and BPL. The meeting was well attended by commercial interests and MITA. SMSKN was there representing kayaking networks and clubs. The two-hour discussion centered around sustainable camping capacities of the state-owned islands on the Maine Island Trail.

BPL and MITA had put together a draft recommendation that was presented and, at times, modified. Some of the recommendations were: Crow Island in Casco Bay – one party

with a maximum of 8 people; Little Snow Island in Quohog Bay – 2 parties comprising a total of 8 people; Thief Island in Muscongus Bay – 2 parties of 8 people total; Harbor Island near Stonington – 3 parties, a total of 16 people; Hell's Half Acre near Stonington – 3 parties with a total of 12 people.

The committee will meet again in February to discuss the possible drawbacks of voluntary island capacities and what might be done to alleviate those drawbacks.

If you have an opinion about island capacities and would like it represented at the February meeting, send it along to Bill Ridlon, the SMSKN representative, at: outdoors@gwi.net or (207) 799-5161.

General Meeting Report : January 2000

by Dorry Shaw

Happy New Year! We had a good turnout for the first meeting of the year. Bob Murray went over some upcoming events, proposed skills practice sessions, and possible leadership training workshops.

Gregg Bolton shared some winter paddling tips with us, and led a discussion on cold weather paddling. Going around the room, each member shared his or her thoughts on winter paddling - it sounded like a Kayakers Anonymous meeting. It seems as though not being able to get out and ski has tempted even some fair weather paddlers to bring their boats out of the basement.

Gregg showed us different dry suits, discussed what to wear with them, and in a very impressive display of preparedness, gave a great demonstration of unloading his gear bag. Items included: bivy sack, emergency bivy sack, snacks, flares, backup flares, flare gun, self-powered air horn, tow rope, snacks, strobe light, VHF radio, cell phone, snacks, and first aid kit. The next best thing to having all the necessary gear is to just invite Gregg along on your trip.

Bob reminded us that as a club, SMSKN does not promote winter paddling. However, knowing people go out in the colder weather

regardless of the danger, he stressed the importance of paddling safely and with a partner.

After the meeting, we had refreshments, perused the SMSKN library for winter reading material, shared photo albums, and caught up with paddling friends.

Lucy Wendell-Thorpe may share some slides with us of her trip to the Galapagos Islands at an upcoming meeting. A fellow member has already viewed them, and assures us they're incredible. Please bring your trip suggestions to the next meeting.

Rippleeffect... "every new beginning is some other beginning's end..."

2000x2000

Our goal is threefold: heighten awareness to the ceaseless AIDS pandemic, develop a network linking AIDS organizations along the Eastern shoreline of our nation, and encourage individuals to act as stewards to those living with AIDS by volunteering time and resources-enabling them to live a full and dignified life.



In the June, 1999 newsletter we published a message from Ted Regan...a fanatic paddler who was about to set out on a fund raising adventure to raise money for AIDS research.

You may have heard in the news last month that his team arrived safely in Key West. Here is a message from Ted. I would encourage you to check out their web site and read about their victory. (www.rippleeffect.net)

Perhaps Ted will come share his story with us some time in the future.

Editor

Dear Everyone,

January 9, 2000

After a grueling final week, the team beached at Key West, landing at 5 PM two city blocks from the Southernmost point in the US. Kelly Munson and Joe Clark, two outdoor educators from Maine joined us for the final push, and withstood some big miles and long hours like heroes. We're grateful they could join us, and proud to have achieved our goal of Key West by New Year's Eve.

For all of you that have kept the trip in the back of your mind all these months: Thank You and God Bless!

This trip was a pyramid of effort with first six, then five, then two boats at its zenith. It was a team effort, you all are members, and we hope that you like the stories and images that we've gathered along the way. I sure hope so, because we won't be talking about anything else for the next ten years.

"Hey, did I ever tell you about the time I paddled from Maine to Key West?" We'll be sending out another newsletter soon with a synopsis of the finale and projections for ripple effect 2000.

The web page is running a short novela about the final week if you'd like the lowdown, and we'll be updating it through the first weeks of January.

Thank you all for the spiritual, technical, and financial support over the last seven years (uh, months). It has been an amazing journey.

Happy New Year!

Ted Regan and Aaron Frederick



Pot Luck Brunch

You are cordially invited to Bob & Marcia's on Feb. 27th for a Pot Luck Brunch. 11:30 AM - 2 PM

For details call: 846-3997