


# ATLANTIC COASTAL KAYAKER

September 2019 Volume 28, Number 6



*Traditional boats and houses of local stone thatched with heather held down by fishing nets weighted with boulders. Isle of Skye, Scotland. Photo by David Eden.*

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## Flip That Kayak!



**STELLAR SES SURFSKI:** In very good condition. Advantage layup. [See it here](#). Length: 20'4", Beam: 16.4". Designed for paddler 5' to 6'3" with 200 lbs capacity. \$1,450. Email to [nelowk2@gmail.com](mailto:nelowk2@gmail.com) (please put "Stellar" in the subject line) (7)

**BETSIE BAY VALKERIE:** Boat is Inuit style, 17 feet long and 20 1/2 inches beam. It is fast with a medium weight paddler, and very controllable in challenging conditions. Comes with cockpit cover, spray skirt and Betsie Bay very light weight Greenland-style carbon fiber reinforced paddle and other accessories. Always stored indoors. Boat and paddle are in excellent condition. Boat is currently in eastern Florida, but could be brought to Ohio or eastern Penn. in mid-April for a sure sale. \$1000. Contact Jim at [jbedford46@gmail.com](mailto:jbedford46@gmail.com). (6)

**WANTED TO BUY:** One used L.L. Bean Calypso kayak, Eddyline Skylark kayak, or similar used recreational kayak in the 12-foot range. Must be near Rhode Island for my pick-up. Mike Rubin, Pawtucket, R.I. [mike.rubin54@gmail.com](mailto:mike.rubin54@gmail.com) (6)





**EPIC V10 SPORT SURFSKI:** Excellent condition - Performance layup. <https://www.epickayaks.com/v10-sport> \$1,950 Custom padded insulated cover cover available - \$200 (cost new \$350). Pictures available. Email to [nelowk2@gmail.com](mailto:nelowk2@gmail.com) (please put "Epic" in the subject line). (6)

**PRIJON SEAYAK:** with rudder; 16 ft, very good condition; best offer. Paul Foster-Moore, Florence, Mass. [pfostermo@gmail.com](mailto:pfostermo@gmail.com). (6)

**QCC 600X:** 16'8"x 21", 43 lbs. in kevlar, rope skeg, narrow but not twitchy and fast, good for a woman or slender man to 6'3". Foot pegs adjust while sitting. Second hatch cover with compass. Light blue and maroon over white. Bought new in 2008, used about 30 weeks over nine years. Stored inside. Plus professionally-made Greenland paddles, helmet, NRS titanium wet-suit, NRS eVent dry top (gaskets replaced last year), Immersion Research spray skirt, Aleutian deck bag, Kokatat Poseidon PFD with customizable pockets, custom canvas cover, and more. \$2,000 OBO. [vhme.137@gmail.com](mailto:vhme.137@gmail.com). (6)

**BETSIE BAY RECLUSE:** Greenland-Style. 2007-original owner; 19' long and 20 1/2" wide; weight 32 lbs. For paddler 175 lbs. & greater; spray skirt, cockpit cover, Tuktu Greenland Paddle, and other accessories; Excellent Condition (stored indoors/only fresh water use); \$2175 (\$4300 value); Photos available on request; Contact Charlie [ccummins55@gmail.com](mailto:ccummins55@gmail.com) or 518-234-9235 in Albany, NY area; Meet half way possible. (6)

**NDK EXPLORER:** Navy over White 2002. 17' 6" Overall Length. 21" Beam. 10" cargo hatches and 8" day hatch. Fiberglass, drop down skeg, deck lines, deck compass. Custom foam seat, or original seat can be reattached. Cockpit cover and spray skirt. Stored in garage, usual scratches from use, two small punctures fixed with fiberglass patches. Still very seaworthy craft. Located in Sloatsburg, NY. Asking \$1000. More pictures available. Contact Greg Sullivan at [gregsullivan1@mac.com](mailto:gregsullivan1@mac.com) (6)

**KOKATAT DRY SUIT:** Men's XL Front Entry Gore-Tex with relief zipper and integrated socks. Cobalt/mango. Excellent condition, used 4x's. \$500. Located in Springfield NH. Contact Linda 603-763-4824 or [4LindaHowes@gmail.com](mailto:4LindaHowes@gmail.com) (6)

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The Northern Forest Canoe Trail (NFCT) links the waterways of New York, Vermont, Quebec, New Hampshire and Maine.

**HUDSON RIVER WATERTRAIL ASSOCIATION**

The Hudson River Watertrail Association is a coalition of small boaters, primarily human and wind powered, who are actively interested in the Hudson River as a treasure of natural and human history.

HRWA.org

**NECKRA**  
New England Canoe and Kayak Racing Association

NECKRA.org

**Southeast Coast Saltwater Paddling Trail**

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**secoastpaddlingtrail.com**

**floridapaddlingtrails.com**

**Florida Paddling Trails Association**

Florida Circumnavigational Saltwater Paddling Trail  
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Chesapeake National Water Trail

smithtrail.net

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## The Editor Goes On About This And That

After many years of wishful thinking, Tammy and I planned a whirlwind visit to Scotland at the end of August. Kevin Mansell's article about kayaking the island of Jura that issue made it clear that kayaking possibilities was a subject we needed to look into.

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# News & Notes



Paddle Florida trips, Everglades entry fee changes, MITA fall cleanups, and more.

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# Coast Guard News



Read the latest coast guard news as it relates to kayakers and SUPers from USCG command sectors across the country.

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# Features



## Five Days, Five Paddles in the Adirondacks

*By Tamsin Venn*

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## Paddle the New Great Glen Canoe Trail in Scotland

*By Tamsin Venn. Photos by David Eden.*

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*One of the four locks dropping the River Oich into Loch Ness.*



## Padding Canada's Rideau Canal National Park

*By Ralph Heimlich*

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## BOOK REVIEW

### **The Frayed Atlantic Edge:** *A Historian's Journey from Shetland to the Channel*

by David Gange

*Review by Peter Jones*

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## The Gear Bag



**Review of the GearLab Carbon Fiber Greenland-Style Paddles**





by David Eden

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## Creatures of the Ocean



*Grimpoteuthis* is a genus of pelagic umbrella octopuses known as the dumbo octopuses. The name "dumbo"

originates from their resemblance to the title character of Disney's 1941 film Dumbo, having a prominent ear-like fin which extends from the mantle above each eye. There are 13 species recognized in the genus. Prey include crustaceans, bivalves, worms and copepods. The average life span of various *Grimpoteuthis* species is 3 to 5 years.

Most species of *Grimpoteuthis* live at depths of at least 3,000 to 4,000 metres (9,800 to 13,100 ft) with some living up to 7,000 metres (23,000 ft) below sea level, which is the deepest of any known octopus. They are some of the rarest of the Octopoda species though they occur worldwide including in the waters of New Zealand, Australia, Monterey Bay, Oregon, Philippines, Martha's Vineyard, Papua New Guinea, and Azores. The largest dumbo octopus ever recorded was 1.8 metres (5.9 ft) in length and weighed 5.9 kilograms (13 lb).[4] The average size for most species is 20–30 centimetres (7.9–12 in) in length. The average weight is still undetermined.

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## Eddy Lines



### A Flash Trip To Scotland

*By David Eden, Editor*

After many years of wishful thinking, Tammy and I planned a whirlwind visit to Scotland at the end of August. Kevin Mansell's article about kayaking the island of Jura that issue made it clear that kayaking possibilities was a subject we needed to look into. It would be difficult to schedule anything significant, but we were planning to visit the isle of Skye, where we knew some of the most forbidding and beautiful coastlines were beckoning.

Unfortunately, our hopes were dashed by a significant factor in any visit to Scotland: the weather. The entire time we were in Skye, gale-force winds accelerated to unbelievable intensity by the wind tunnel effect of the Highland mountains and torrential rains made heading out a very foolish activity. Even though there were occasional breaks in the weather, and although we saw several cars with kayaks, we saw none on the water during our stay. We saw only one recreational vessel, a largish sloop, on the water during our two days on the island.

As you will find in Tammy's story about the Great Glen Canoe Trail, we did manage to run into some paddlers, inland at least. Again the weather was hard to predict. We met a group canoeing and kayaking the trail as they finished their portage from the River Oich to Loch Ness, about a mile past the set of four locks that avoids the rapids entering the loch. They were dressed in coats, rain gear, and generally looked as if they were paddling during the winter. We were dressed pretty warmly as well, so their outfits did not seem strange. Within an hour, however, the wild Highland winds had blown the clouds away for a while, and the temperature rose by at least 10 degrees, and we swiftly stripped down to T-shirts.

So our Scotland trip ended up with no time on the water, just longing looks over the seas surrounding this incredibly beautiful coastline. Definitely plan to return to paddle some day soon!



*L: Kayakers awaiting the ferry to Skye. R: The Highlands coast from the ferry from Mallaig to Armadale, Skye.*



*L: Caisteal Maol (Gaelic: "Bare Castle") and Kyleakin Harbor, Skye. R: Talisker Distillery on sea Loch Harport, Skye.*



*L: Harbor of Portree, Skye with Isle of Raasay in the background. R: Eilean Donan and its castle at the junction of three sea lochs near Skye.*



*L: A sea loch in the distance. R: Mealt Falls with Kilt Rock in the distance, Trotternish Peninsula, Skye.*



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## News & Notes



### 2019 DelMarVa Paddlers Retreat

Here is a quick update of all that will be happening at the 31st Annual Delmarva Paddlers Retreat, Oct 10-13, 2019. It's looking to be another great year with excellent guests. Details are on [delmarvapaddlersretreat.org](http://delmarvapaddlersretreat.org).

**The Retreat is loaded up with Guests this year. This is the year of strong women paddlers.**

- o Susan Conrad is the guest speaker. She is a "Women Who Paddle Ambassador" and among many other paddling achievements she has paddled the Inside Passage and written a book about it.
- o Helen Wilson is joining in. When she's not being installed as the new Qajaq USA President here at its annual board meeting she'll be instructing on the beach.
- o Kevin and Nicky Mansell from Sea Paddler in the UK will be participating and have offered a very generous and intriguing donation to the auction. Details will be posted soon on the website.
- o Jannie Heegaard's back this year helping Anders with the kayak build and then instruction. Come join her in kayak ballet!
- o Yoga, lead by Jaqueline and Christopher Crowhurst. Bring your mats.

**Historically, Inuit communities made mostly everything that they used. The Retreat continues this year with maker workshops to support and honor these "handcrafted" traditions.**

- o Anders' Skin on Frame building class is full.
- o Chuck Smith will be leading a Harpoon Making class. You know you've always wanted one!

- o Don Beale of Beale Paddles is leading a paddle making workshop.
- o Jane and Kathy are doing an aquillisaq making workshop. Sign up at the website.
- o Look for a floating class on making float bags. If you have ever swamped your SOF then you know how important either a seasock or a float bag can be.
- o There will be a steam bending workshop and a skinning demonstration.

**Mike Hamilton is again heading up the mentors at this very mentor rich event. The retreat is the last of the yearly Qajaq USA events and all mentors are encouraged to attend. There are generally about twice as many as needed, so they also get to learn from each other. Rolling classes are often 1:1**  
**Some of the classes that are being planned; the final schedule will be posted on the website closer to the event.**

- o Forward and Advanced Stroke
- o Kayak Ballet or Fun with Greenland Paddle w/ Jannie Heegaard
- o Rescues without wet exiting
- o Rescues and towing
- o Kayak Repair and Maintenance
- o Edging and Bracing
- o Getting into Skin on Frame Qajaqs
- o Combat Rolling
- o Hunting Strokes and other variations
- o And of course Rolling in 30+ flavors

· Tentative schedules will be posted on the website; they are being regularly updated as things change or get added.

**Look for the Sides Bros, Dubside and Dave, on the ropes.**

**Dogfish Head Brewing and Eats is expecting early arrivers for dinner Wednesday. 7:00 pm sharp at the brew pub.**

**Peter Gengler' "Getting into Peter's Shorts" returns. He's always looking for videos, contact us or bring them with you.**

Delmarva Paddlers Retreat- October, Rehoboth Beach, DE. The original QUSA event, you will find all of the best here. Beautiful paddling, a high energy event. The skilled staff has an incredible knowledge base for all things Inuit. Pick your area of interest, there will be someone there who knows!

## Steve Chard Has Finished!

On Friday, August 16, 2019, Steve Chard completed his epic voyage, kayaking more than 5000 miles to finish his "Great Loop" adventure. The final leg was a short, 5.9 nm trip up Halifax Harbor, N.S. We have followed Steve's adventures since even before he started in June, 2018. Steve asks us to remember he is doing this for charity and to please donate:

**Steve's Charities** [HMCS Sackville Memorial Trust](#) (CAN)

[Kidney Foundation of Canada](#)

[Dorset & Somerset Air Ambulance](#) (UK)

[Weldmar Hotopspicecare Trust](#), Dorchester, Dorset (UK)

[Kidney Research](#) UK

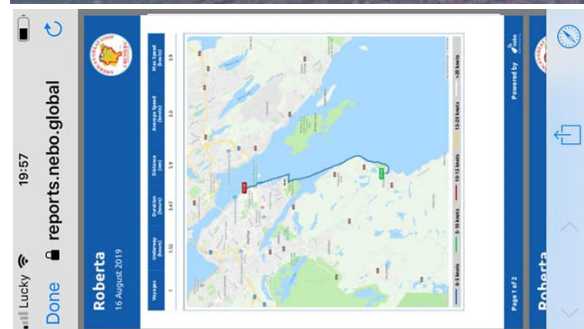
[Walking With The Wounded](#) (UK)

[Disabled American Veterans](#) (USA)

[American Kidney Fund](#) (USA)

[USN Submarine Force Library and Museum](#), Groton, Conn.

We here at *Atlantic Coastal Kayaker* congratulate Steve on his amazing achievement.







## Explore Florida's Scenic Waterways

Paddle Florida is a non-profit organization that is dedicated to promoting water and wildlife conservation, spring restoration, and waterways protection across Florida. It offers several paddling trips every year on Florida's wild and scenic rivers and coastlines. Many fill early so be sure to register far ahead of the deadline. Here are the 2019-20 trips starting in October.

[Suwannee River Wilderness Trail](#) October 18-23, 2019: Celebrate Florida's version of autumn on its most famous river. The trip spans 65 miles of the scenic Suwannee and a portion of the (northern) Withlacoochee, from Madison Blue Spring to Branford. This section features dozens of clear blue springs perfect for swimming and snorkeling. Register by: October 4

[Flagler Coastal Wildlife Festival](#) November 1-3, 2019: Paddle with dolphins, meet rescued sea turtles, and float by historic forts as you immerse yourself in the rich cultural history and natural beauty of Florida's northeast coast. Register by: October 18

[Wekiva/St. John's River Ramble](#) December 5-8, 2019: Join us for a paddle down the iconic Rock Springs Run, back to Wekiva Springs State Park, and on to Wilson's Landing in Seminole County as we camp in rustic cabins for the first two nights and at Wilson's Landing on the way to the finish at Blue Spring State Park in Volusia County. At a total of less than 30 miles, this trip is perfect for beginners to paddle camping. Register by: November 21

[Florida Keys Challenge](#) January 15-22, 2020: Paddle the azure coastal waters of the Middle Florida Keys, including the length of the famed 7-Mile Bridge, explore mangrove tunnels, and watch sea turtle surface beside your kayak, and enjoy a snorkeling trip out to Looe Key. Register by: January 1

[Wild, Wonderful Withlacoochee](#) February 13-18, 2020 : Beginning at Lake Panasoffkee, paddlers will thread their way through hardwood swamps and tannic streams on a 60-mile journey to the Gulf of Mexico. The adventure includes a side trip to the colorful Rainbow River and its world class first magnitude spring. Register by: February 1

[Choctawhatchee Challenge](#) March 13-19, 2020: Get away from it all into the heart of the Panhandle as we paddle 86 miles of the mighty Choctawhatchee. This is a journey into Wild Florida where wildlife far outnumber humans, and paddlers can stumble upon spectacular springs. Register by: February 28

[Suwannee River Paddling Festival](#) April 3-5, 2020: With camping atop the bluff overlooking two beautiful rivers, our season-capping festival takes place at Suwannee River State Park near Live Oak. The weekend will offer supported 8-12 mile paddling options on both the Suwannee and Withlacoochee Rivers, a concert featuring Paddle Florida's favorite musicians, and educational presentations from regional waterway experts. Register by: March 20

[Earth Day Celebration: Flori-Bama Expedition on the Perdido River](#) April 11-16, 2020 : Paddling the Florida/Alabama border, enjoy beach camping along a cozy meandering river to the more open waters of Perdido Bay as we explore the most diverse set of ecosystems of the season. Register by: March 28

[Earth Day Celebration: Springtime on the Ochlockonee](#) April 18-22, 2020: From wild Tupelo honey to fresh Gulf oysters, experience the Panhandle's Ochlockonee River which winds through state and national forest lands on 76 miles of Florida's most remote wilderness river trail. Register by: April 2



*Photo courtesy of [Pocono Mountains Visitors Bureau](#).*

## Delaware River Sojourn Plans for 2020

The Delaware River Sojourn combines guided paddling excursions with interpretive programs, camping, and camaraderie. Participants may sign up for the entire trip or for the days of their choice; all skill levels welcome. It takes place over an eight-day time frame every June and has been offered for 25 years. Planning has already started for the 2020 season and signing up partners. One such partner is the Delaware Highlands Conservancy, which helps plan the Upper Delaware days. The Conservancy is an accredited land trust working in Upper Delaware River region of Pennsylvania and New York. Since the organization was founded in 1994, it has protected more than 15,000 acres of working farms and forests, clean waters, and wildlife habitat. The Conservancy is dedicated to conserving the natural heritage and quality of life in the Upper Delaware River region in partnership with the region's landowners and communities, and offers year-round quality educational programs to connect people of all ages to the land and support a sustainable local economy. For more information, [delawareriversojourn.com](http://delawareriversojourn.com).



*Dad's Bay, Everglades National Park. Photo by Tamsin Venn.*



## Entrance Fee for the Everglades

The fee changes at Everglades National Park are part of a broad National Park Service initiative to standardize fee rates across the country. As part of ongoing efforts to address aging park infrastructure and improve the visitor experience, entrance fee changes will be phased in over the next two years. In response to public comments on a national fee proposal released in October 2017, there will be a modest increase for all entrance fee-charging parks, rather than the higher peak-season fees initially proposed in 2018 for 17 highly-visited national parks. Starting Jan. 1, the fees are as follows: vehicle \$35 (7-day pass); human-powered paddlecraft \$20 (7-day pass); Everglades Annual Pass \$70 (12 months); backcountry permit \$15/permit plus \$2 per person a night. Boat launch fees have been eliminated. Entrance is free for persons 15 and under and those who hold the America the Beautiful National Parks and Federal Recreation Lands Pass.



MITA cleanup. Photo by Tamsin Venn.

## MITA Fall Cleanups

The Maine Island Trail has scheduled a fall clean-up for Saturday, Sept. 21 – Muscongus Bay. Visit [mita.org/cleanups](http://mita.org/cleanups) to sign up. There is also a work day at Petit Manan Point on Sept. 14 with a weather date Sept. 28. Check status and sign up directly with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at (207) 546-2124 x 10 or [teressa\\_cultrera@fws.gov](mailto:teressa_cultrera@fws.gov)

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## Enjoy Fall Colors on the Mystic River

Charles River Canoe and Kayak in the Boston area opened a new venue this past summer in Medford to explore the Mystic River. You can paddle the full seven miles of the river, including skyline views and access to scenic lakes and the Shannon Beach swimming and picnic area or head in the opposite direction toward the Blessing of the Bay Boathouse. The Mystic River has long had pollution issues, but in an urban renewal miracle story, it recently received an A plus rating. In the fall, the boathouse is open on weekends and last boat goes out at 5:30 pm. For more information, [paddleboston.com](http://paddleboston.com).

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## Coast Guard News



### Coast Guard's top 5 recommended communication devices to take with you underway

Going out on the water can be dangerous, especially if you don't have the right equipment. If you do find yourself in trouble, being able to communicate that you need help can be a lifesaver—literally!

Here are the top five items the Coast Guard recommends you take with you on your boat so you can call for help if you need it.

**1. VHF-FM marine radio: It's the most versatile piece of communications equipment you can have!** If you find yourself in distress, calling for help on the radio not only alerts the Coast Guard, but it also alerts all other vessels in your surrounding area who may be able to assist you. In addition to being able to call for help, it also allows you to receive important weather information, safety updates, and call bridges to request openings.



*Seaman Christian Green, of Station Manasquan Inlet, made a radio call during training operations aboard a 47' Motor Lifeboat, while Petty Officer 3rd Class Vaughn Yarnall looks on, February 24, 2017. U.S. Coast Guard photo by Auxiliarist David Lau.*

**2. Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon: They let us know where you are via satellite!** Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacons can also tell the Coast Guard who the beacon is registered to

and how to contact you! Register your beacon and verify your information before heading out.



Seaman Asleigh Wilson, a boatcrew member at Aids to Navigation Team Baltimore, holds a personal emergency position indicating radio beacon on a pier located in Curtis Bay, Md., Dec. 9, 2010. Crewmembers at ANT Baltimore carry PEPIRBs while servicing aids throughout the upper Chesapeake Bay. U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Robert Brazzell.

**3. Air horn, whistle, or other approved sound-producing device: Sound producing devices work for day and night emergencies.** The good thing about sound distress signals is that they're good during any time of the day. Just like on a car or bicycle, boaters should always carry a sound signal to get the attention of other people on the area.



Coast Guard Seaman Samantha Randall, 20, of Coast Guard Station King's Point in King's Point, N.Y., displays a signal whistle and mirror required to be carried by U.S. Coast Guardsmen who are underway April 15, 2009. The Coast Guard strongly urges mariners to be prepared in case of emergencies and to bring survival equipment such as signalling and sound devices, a personal Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB), cell phone, radio and lifejackets while underway to increase chances of survival in the event something goes wrong. (U.S. Coast Guard photo/PA3 Barbara L. Patton)

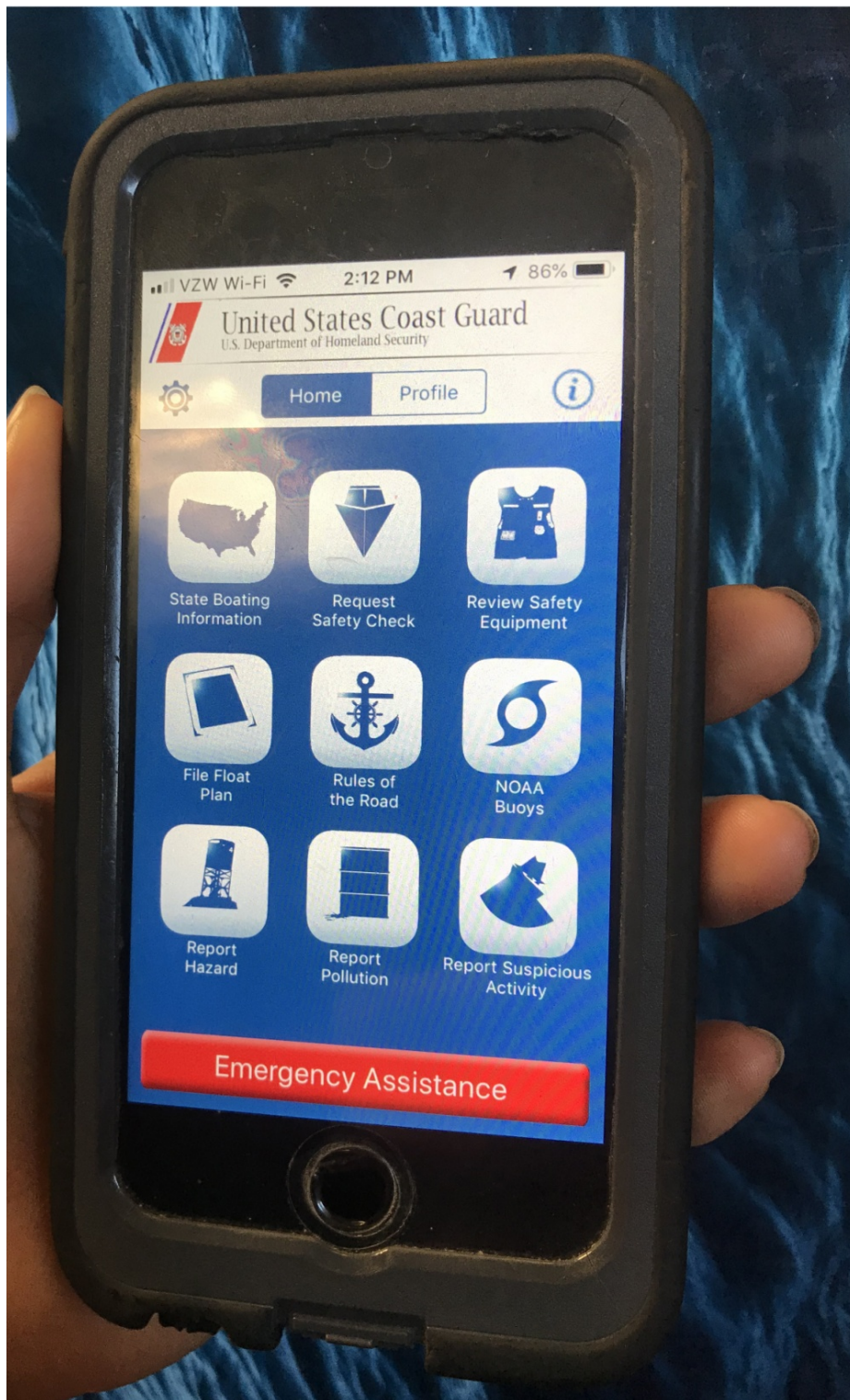
**4. Visual distress signals: To pyro or not to pyro?** Nine of the sixteen internationally recognized distress signals are visual distress signals. Three are three pyrotechnic distress signals, and the other six are non-pyrotechnics. While visual distress signals can be extremely helpful when operating in a well-populated area, they should not be relied on as your only method of communicating distress. If you need to use a pyrotechnic distress signal, be sure to point the pyrotechnics in a safe direction, away from yourself and other people.





*This is a graphic of the international distress signals found in the Aug. 2014 edition of the Coast Guard Navigation Rules and Regulations. The graphic can be found in the handbook on page 106. (U.S. Coast Guard graphic)*

**5. Cell phone: Not a primary, but a good back-up.** While not reliable enough to be used on its own as an on-water communication device, it's a good back-up in case your radio isn't functional, you don't have a radio, or you don't know how to use one. The Coast Guard recommends mariners download the official Coast Guard Boating Safety App. One of the many features of the app allows mariners to place an emergency call to the U.S. Coast Guard or 911, and provides you with your current location to provide to emergency personnel over the phone.



*A Coast Guard member displays the home screen of the Coast Guard boating safety app on Aug. 9, 2019, in Portsmouth, Virginia. The Coast Guard app is available for free on every app store, and one feature of the app allows mariners to place an emergency call to the U.S. Coast Guard or 911 while providing the user with their current latitude and longitude to provide to emergency personnel over the phone. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Shannon Kearney)*





*U.S. Coast Guard cutter Crocodile.*

### **Coast Guard locates body of missing kayaker near Heislerville, New Jersey**

PHILADELPHIA: Wednesday, August 21, 2019 – A Coast Guard response boat crew recovered the body of a missing man in the vicinity of Thompson Beach near Heislerville, New Jersey, this morning.

"We extend our sincerest condolences to the family and friends impacted by this loss," said Capt. Scott Anderson, Coast Guard Sector Delaware Bay commander. "We would also like to thank our state and county partner agencies and first responders for their extraordinary efforts during this search."

A combined effort of air and surface assets from the Coast Guard, New Jersey State Police, and Cumberland County Fire/Rescue teams began searching early Tuesday morning following a report of a missing kayaker who set out Monday afternoon.

The search started after Watchstanders at Coast Guard Sector Delaware Bay received a missing person notification from the Cumberland County 9-1-1 Emergency Communications Center. The kayaker reportedly left at 5 p.m. Monday from East Point and was reported overdue at 12:30 a.m. Tuesday morning. The man was reportedly wearing a camouflage color life jacket. Conditions were reported as very rough.

The Coast Guard initially committed a MH-65 Dolphin helicopter from Air Station Atlantic City; the cutter *Crocodile*, which stayed out overnight Tuesday; a 29-foot Response Boat-Small Crew and a 45-foot Response Boat-Medium crew from Station Cape May; and a 26-foot Trailerable Aids to Navigation Boat crew from Aids to Navigation Team Cape May.

Downe Township and Leesburg fire departments also sent rescue boats. Heislerville Fire Department is ashore assisting state police.

State police boats from Burlington were deployed using side-scanning sonar. A K-9 unit also searched the shore.

Coast Guard search and rescue team members collectively searched 582 square nautical miles before the search ended.

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## Places



Tammy approaches an Adirondack-style rustic bridge on the eastern end of Eagle Lake.

### **Five Days, Five Paddles in the Adirondacks**

*By Tamsin Venn. Photos by Tamsin Venn and David Eden.*

We toss a coin. Forked Lake or Blue Mountain Lake. It is tails – Forked Lake it is. This kind of flippant decision making can be part of the paddling experience in the Adirondacks in upper state New York. So many possibilities – lake, pond, river, brook, flow, portage, loop, out and back – allow for low risk adventures. Any choice is a good one.



We are on our annual trip in August with the Rhode Island Canoe and Kayak Club (RICKA), where a group of paddlers, ranging from ten to 20 people, bonded by paddling experience in Rhode Island waters, shift north for a week of paddling in the water wonderland here. The trip is well organized by Henry Dziadosz and Chuck Horbert. Dziadosz was a Boy Scout leader for many years so he knows how to keep a group together. This year there are enough participants that Henry and Chuck decide to split the group and lead separate paddles on most days.

Base camp is the Lake Eaton state campground, just outside the village of Long Lake. We all try to make our reservations for sites nine months in advance. Our group gathers each morning at 8:30 or 9 then caravans anywhere from 15 to 50 minutes to a launch site. At the end of the day everyone returns to their own camp site already set up, hot showers. There is usually a group campfire gathering after dinner for tall tales and S'mores.

## Forked Lake



Forked (pronounced FORK-ed) is only seven miles southwest of Long Lake. You take Route 30 to the sharp turn off for Buttermilk Falls on the Raquette River, follow a paved road past the falls, then a gravel road to a large parking area, access area, and ranger's hut.



*Staying close in gives a more intimate sense of the lake and offers both lovely long views and shoreline jewels.*

At Forked Lake State Campground, lots of people rent aluminum canoes to go out to one of the nearby campsites, 80 in all, dispersed along the shore and islands, near the put in. Amidst a carpet of pine needles and canopy of cedar, the campsites are equipped with fire ring, pit toilet, and a steel bear box, clipped on with chains (no keys necessary), some have lean tos, several have rough docks. Cost is \$23 a day for out of staters. The lake also sees a lot of day use.

David and I are here without the rest of the group. They had paddled the lake while we were still driving from Ipswich, and we had already paddled the Bog River. (RICKA is flexible about splitting off.) The ranger tells us there would either be a thunderstorm in an hour or at 4:00 p.m. Anxiously we set off, hoping it's the latter. The skies are smudged in gray clouds but nothing really dangerously black-looking and no thunderheads. We have gotten used to being in the Adirondacks with predictions of thunderstorms and have learned to live with it. They can be very localized, so key is to follow the radar.





*L: A typical camp site along the shore. R: A large lake like Forked will support several pairs of loons.*

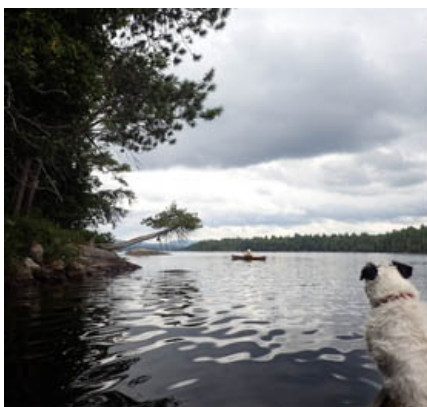
Forked is a seven-mile-long narrow lake shaped like an inverted T, hence the name, with two islands. The narrowness makes for an intimate feel and draws you down to the west end. (We do not explore the northern T section.) We follow the shoreline to the end of the campsites at which point private land is posted with No Trespassing signs. Once we pass beyond the camping sites, the boat traffic dies considerably.

A few motorboats ply the water, nothing too big or noisy, and mostly we pass others in canoes or kayaks, many are fishing. The shoreline is lined by cone-shaped cedars and smooth boulders, some branches overhang creating reflections in the still water, like a Japanese watercolor. Several groups of loons allow us a close look at their ebony necks and white spotted backs, a living tuxedo with red eyes, dipping to moisten their eyes. We see two buzzards, some fish jumping, and a beaver crossing to the other side. Some young kids, possibly Mennonites, are fishing from canoes at the end of the lake.



*L: The path on the left leads to an illicit campsite and fire ring. R: Another of the several pairs of loons we saw.*

At the lake's end, a boggy swamp signals turn-around point, and we follow the other shoreline back. We stop at site 80 for lunch along Plumley Bay (Plumley Pond sits behind), at a shaded picnic table. Getting out on the dock is a little tricky from the Hornbeck canoes but doable, if you don't mind splaying yourself flat on the dock, twisting up, while trying to hold onto the boat with a foot or a hand. Milly, our Jack Russell terrier, is happy to get out of the boat for some sniffing and exploring. After lunch, we start heading back to the launch, just poking our bows into the other fork of the lake. We make it back after a four-hour, 8.93-mile out and back, just as the rain starts. We think wow perfect timing, but then the rain stops, as the variable weather does here in summer.



*L: Milly watches anxiously as David turns a corner. Mid: The basic float and dock access at our lunch spot. R: It's always nice to lunch at a table.*

It's \$8 for a day parking pass, free for seniors 65 and over Monday through Friday. Check in at the ranger station. If he's out on the water in his motorboat checking campsites, he will soon be back, the sign reads.

## Blue Mountain Lake



Today, more thunderstorms and showers are predicted throughout the day, but as ever, life must go on, so we decide on Blue Mountain Lake, never having paddled there before. It is not really a group friendly option due to parking limitations (side of the road next to the town beach) and tiny launch area. The group is going to the Raquette River, which we have done several times so thought we would try something new.



*The skies promised both torrential rain and lovely sun. We got both, sometimes at the same time.*

On Rock Pond, I had met a fellow training for the Ninety-Miler, a three-day paddling race through the Adirondacks in early September – it's a grueling 30 miles a day. He suggests his training route as a good option, for the type of paddling we like to do, move from lake to lake via short carries. The farther out you go on the carries, the friendlier the people.

This fellow leaves a car at Blue Mountain Lake, his wife drops him off at Raquette Lake, and he paddles the 12 miles back to Blue Mountain Lake via Raquette Lake, the Marion River, Utowana Lake, Eagle Lake, and finally Blue Mountain Lake, a total 12 miles miles. We would do it in reverse

We put in at Blue Mountain Lake at the public access next to the public beach (look for the lifeguard chair across from the fire station). Skies are threatening, but patches of blue here and there look promising. The lake is very busy with all types of craft. We turn left, follow the south shore of Blue Mountain Lake for 1.5 miles to Eagle Lake, marked by the red and green buoys. Entertainment is provided by teenagers who have hauled their kayaks up a nearly vertical rock island, then run and jump out into the water about 18 feet down and scramble



back up. Then they do it again. And again. Ah youth.



*L: The shores of these lakes may once have been lined with similar wigwams. R: Paddling the river sections between the lakes was a totally different vibe.*

We follow a tree-shaded, no-name stream (a section of the Marion River perhaps) into Eagle, a beautiful narrow lake with few houses. It is lively with waves beyond the protection of the arched bridge. An older kayaker comes along and says, OK, what are your plans? Then he chastises us for not having brought a raincoat for the dog, as the heavens open up and huge droplets bounce off the black water. We hope it doesn't turn into hail. The only rain clouds surrounding us hover square over Eagle Lake. We can see sunny skies over the mountains on both sides of us. But after a half hour, the deluge dissipates, due to wind or mountain interactions, and we are paddling into a mere cloudy day with occasional spitting. Milly is happier.

Eagle Nest Great Camp is situated on the north shore of Eagle Lake on its own 2,000 acres, available for rent for family reunions. At the boat house a phalanx of Adirondack chairs line the deck, waiting the noisy crowd that can be heard above in the house.



*L: The worst weather hit us on Eagle Lake. R: By the time we hit the last river segment into Utowana, the rain had lessened considerably.*

Our attention is diverted, though, by a mother loon ferrying a baby on its back, our first view ever of this enchanting behavior. It tolerates us, and the frat party, rather well.

We enter our third lake, Utowana, two miles long and change, via a short boggy stream. Both lakes are ringed by private property, so no getting out to stretch. We head to what is marked as a lean to or campsite on the map at the west end of the lake on a short wedge of public land. That expands northward to Sargent Ponds Wild Forest and the remote Sargent Ponds. Just beyond the lean to, is the 992-meter portage to the Marion River, which leads you to Raquette Lake. You can hear the sound of trucks on Route 28, belying the sense wilderness. The road is very close to the shore, although it is completely hidden behind a screen of trees.



*We had sun and nice breezes for lunch. Milly had a good stretch. The trees across the lake from our knoll hid Rt. 28, but you could hear the roar of traffic. We spotted several canoes coming out of the Marion River, probably all the way from the town of Raquette Lake.*

We find an inviting clear hillock carpeted by dry pine needle with a fire ring, on an island just short of the leanto but still on public land. We are relieved to stretch after 5.8 miles of paddling and watch a number of canoes coming out of the Marion River. Milly is overjoyed to run free and disappears into the blueberry bushes and scrub. It is a gorgeous site for lunch. Our contentment is complete as the sun comes out, the day warms up, and we begin to steam dry.



*Back on Eagle Lake, heading home. We had fairly strong tail winds all the way back, which led to some serious weathercocking.*

We try to check out if they have taxis in Raquette Lake so we can just paddle the rest of the way there, another six miles, and get shuttled back to Blue Mountain Lake, but get no signal on the phones so we must turn around and retrace our route. The rewards are several: strong wind pushing us swiftly back; sighting of a bald eagle and kingfisher; and cloud shadows shifting across the flanks of Blue Mountain hovering over the lake.

Blue Mountain Lake is a score and well worth the strong headwinds and torrential rains that spiced up our morning. It has a free launch, convenient parking on the street, a public restroom, and sheltered swimming area at the beach. Plus it has several public islands, definitely worth exploring next time.

## **Polliwog Loop**



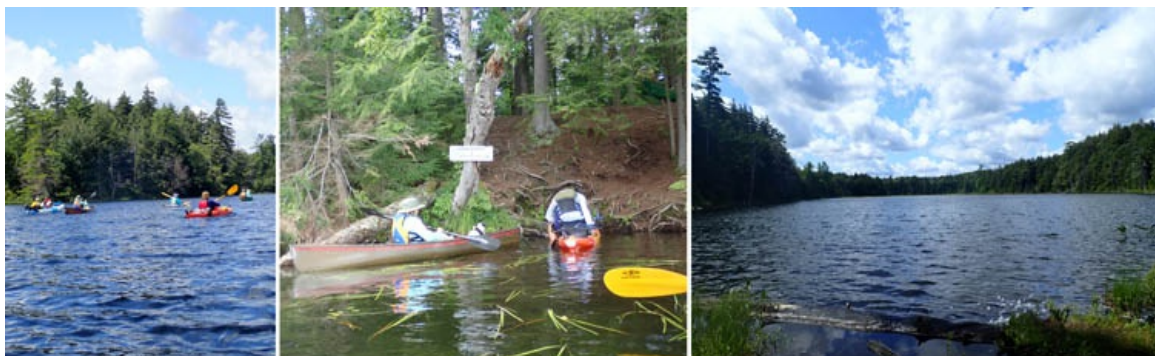


Today we rejoin RICKA to head north to the Fish Ponds area, to do the Polliwog Pond Loop. This is a protected, round-trip circuit of four ponds with four portages that can be run in either direction. None of us have done the trip before so we are relying on leaders Chuck and Cindy Horbert's map-reading to find the way.



L: Launch next to Rt 30. Mid: Follansbee Clear Pond R: The carry signs, though kept up, are small and hard to see from a distance.

The portages seem easy in terms of distance, all less than .25 miles. As it turns out, several have steep segments. Although Adirondack guidebook author Dave Cilley says the portages are not wheelable, several of us use wheels with a lot of bouncing involved, due to exposed roots from much use. Those with lighter plastic kayaks just drag them along the ground, no rocks.



L to R: Polliwog Pond. The carry to Little Polliwog. Little Polliwog in its entirety.

More problematical is finding the portages, which our leaders do with great skill, and occasional help from other

paddlers we run into. The portages are well marked with signs, but you have to find them first. It helps to have binoculars. Look for well trodden paths among the hanging branches.

Launching at the put in at Follansbee Clear Pond Access, just off Route 30, 1.75 miles south of Floodwood Road, we head west across the pond, paddling into a strong wind, past a few islands, and turn almost due north, around a peninsula to the northwest corner of the lake where the carry is located. The carry from Follansbee into Polliwog Pond is the trip's longest portage at 600 feet, and is quite steep both up and down. We travel south down Polliwog Pond, about ¾ mile long, and not more than a few hundred yards wide. It has a shape like a squished together S. Half way along Polliwog's bottom southwest shore we carry over into Little Polliwog Pond. We have lunch at the top of the carry, a nice open spot with moss and pine needles, a trail passing through. We carry downhill to Little Polliwog Pond, which is tiny, and joke that the pond is shorter than the carry. Little Polliwog is about ¼ mile long and 100 yards wide.

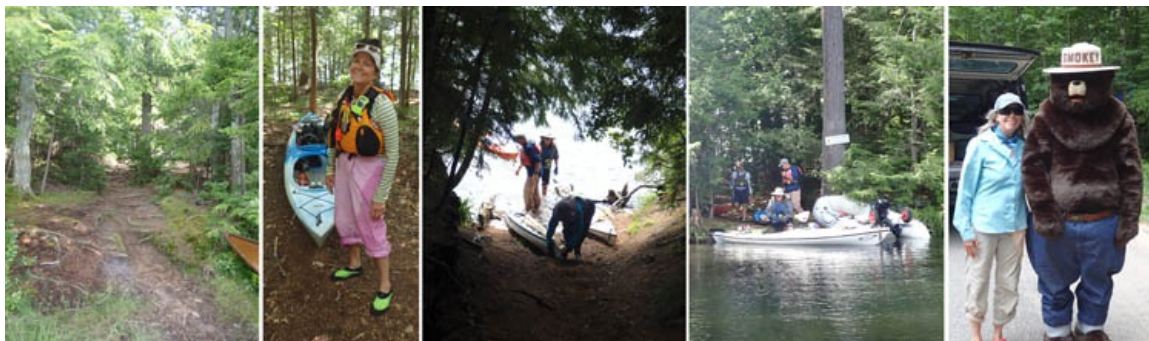
About half way along the southeast shore is the carry into Horseshoe Pond. A paddle along the north shore of Horseshoe Pond, brings us to the carry at the northeastern tip back into Follansbee Clear Pond. This is the shortest and muddiest carry, and one of our trip members has a leech attach itself (leeches are actually a sign of clear water). She is very calm as she removes it.



*The four ponds give a variety of paddling experiences. Together with the carries, it makes for a rich Adirondack experience.*

Back on Follansbee we turn right to the south and come out the narrows into open water and very strong winds, back to the put in.

Follansbee has a lot of boats including several small motorboats, plus several parties of canoeists and kayakers. It can be tough paddling when the wind comes up because it is so wide. But when you drop into the smaller ponds they are small and scenic and invite lingering.



*Various portage scenes. RICKA president Pat Lardner adds a spot of color to the carry. You have to admire the folks that schleppd the inflatable and its motor all the way out here. And when we got back to camp, we found Smokey Bear!*

We see and hear several loons, including two very small babies. We learn later from the ranger that it has been a difficult year for loons because of high water flooding earlier in the summer on the marshy shorelines where the loons tend to nest. The birds can't walk well on land so they like to nest on the edge, where they can launch into the water. The eggs get cold from the flooded water and don't hatch. The chicks we see are small because the parents had re-nested. It is questionable whether they were going to make it, the ranger says.

## **Middle Saranac Lake**





Middle Saranac Lake to the Upper Locks is one of RICKA's favorite trips along with the Bog River Flow. We put in on the public access point on Route 3, which puts you onto to the southern shore of Middle Saranac via a winding, marshy stream. Route 3 borders the High Peaks Wilderness area so you see some peaks here off in the distance. Fortunately a big boulder right off the end of the creek makes the stream easy to find on the way back.



*L: Launch next to Rt 3. Mid-R: The stream out to the lake.*

Today is beach day, Henry promises, but first a trip to the Upper Locks. We skirt the southern shore, pass several islands with inviting looking campgrounds. We enter Bull Rush Bay at the eastern end then the Saranac River (follow the buoys). The river twists and turns, mergansers and ducks scoot along.



*L: Entering the lake. R: The large rock marking the stream access, very helpful on our return.*

At the Upper Locks, the lockkeeper is present to help us out, but operating instructions are posted if no one is there. If one of your party does this, someone has to hang onto the lone boat tightly in the lock as water surges in as you rise and fall creating a washing machine. Our boats take up the whole lock, which is very fun, as we hang onto each other. The alternative is a scratchy 2 + rapids the right of the lock.



*L: Paddling into Bullrush Bay. R: On the Saranac River segment.*

On the downstream side, you follow the Saranac River into Lower Saranac Lake, well worth a look before turning around, filled as it is with many beautiful islands, many with camping spots. Kelly Slough, a quiet little bay, is also an option.



*Into the Lower Locks.*

We paddle back through the locks, this time having to wait our turn, and have lunch on a beach in Bull Rush Bay, then paddle south farther along the beach with more clear access from bull rushes, and go for a proper swim, although you have to wade out fairly far. Many people are picnicking here. We then make our way back along the southern shore to the aforementioned boulder. It's a long day at ten plus miles but worth every moment.

## **Round Lake**





We did Round Lake last year, but it is definitely worth a return trip. Next to Little Tupper Lake and tucked away into the William C. Whitney Wilderness Area, the 740-acre Round Lake is a quiet gem that sees little other paddling traffic. Motorized vehicles are prohibited. Round Lake is actually a triangle, and to make it around the lake is about a seven-mile trip. We clocked 6.9 miles in three hours and 22 minutes, including lunch and swimming.



*Out on Round Lake.*

A small, boggy access point puts you into a pleasantly meandering stream, good for wetland bird watching, then into the lake itself. We follow the east shore to a long beach at the northern end, which has a convenient

thunderbox (an outhouse without walls or a roof). To swim you go out beyond the logs and plants and swim back and forth along the shore, the water temperature is ideal. As we leave a group of pre-teen boys in three canoes and their leader arrive for lunch. The leader is still smiling and cheerful, so they couldn't have been out for too long. David douses a smoldering fire at a campsite. Who leaves a campsite that way?



*Milly always takes a lot of interest in what's going on, in this case, Pat Lardner and her doggie barge.*

After lunch we take off into strong headwinds, gusting higher, but the western shore provides a lee. Here we paddle along, an eagle following us; farther on a loon family to which we give wide berth. Round Lake is also home to a unique heritage strain of brook trout known as the Little Tupper strain.



*L: Heading in for lunch. R: The lunch beach on Round Lake.*

Close to the put in you can paddle under the bridge to Little Tupper Lake and explore that area. Also nearby is Lake Lila, another enticing lake that is part of the Wilderness Area, which is on my bucket list. You can make the Round Lake circuit in an afternoon but many make it a day or overnight trip. It has 11 Department of Environmental Conservation campsites, first come, first served.





*Every half hour or so, Millie demands to change boats.*

David comments, "There is so much paddling, hundreds of miles of lakes and rivers and portages and loops. I've always had a thing for the Adirondacks since I got shipped off to Camp Adirondack at age five."



*On Round Lake's southwestern shore, there are a couple of islands for visual interest.*

Indeed it is like being back at summer camp. To join the fun, contact RICKA, [www.ricka.org](http://www.ricka.org)

### **Campground Reservation**

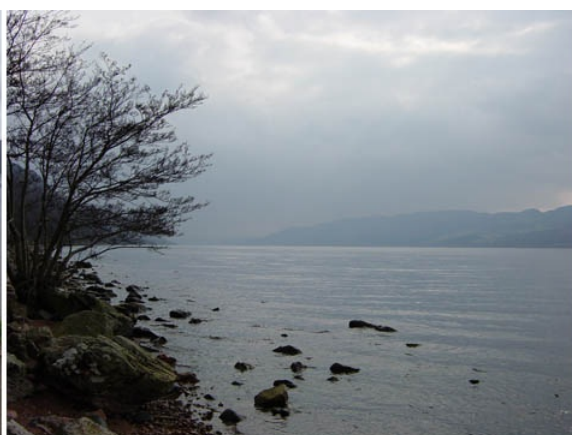
If you plan to visit the Adirondacks and stay in a N.Y. state campground, make a reservation using <https://newyorkstateparks.reserveamerica.com/>. You can make a reservation nine months in advance. For the best sites (read:waterfront), do it as early as possible.

# ATLANTIC COASTAL KAYAKER

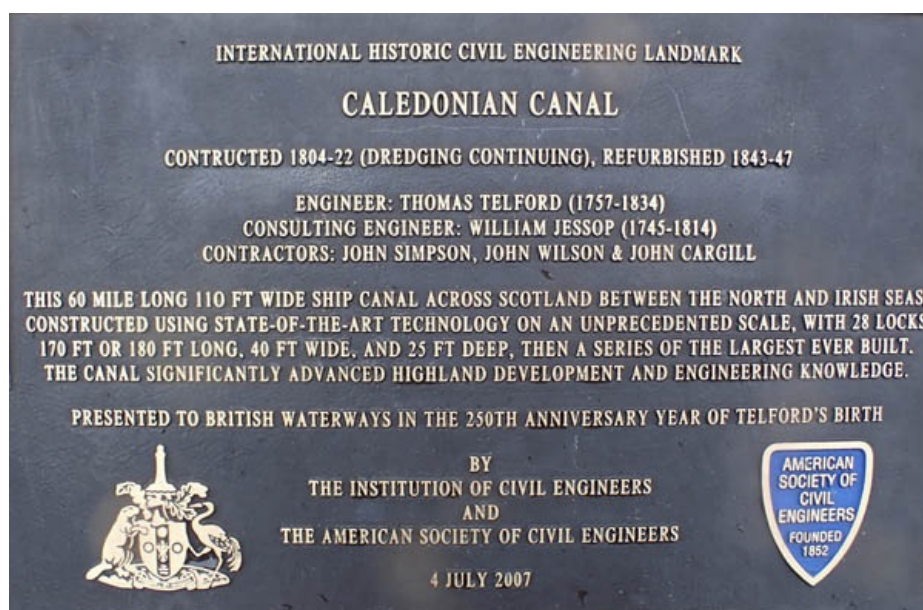
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## Places



*L: Point Augustus on Loch Ness. M: Along the Loch Ness Shore. R: Locks on the Caledonian Canal.*



## Paddle the New Great Glen Canoe Trail in Scotland

*By Tamsin Venn. Photos by David Eden.*

We were in Scotland in August on a reconnaissance trip to check out paddling options. While taking our required



tourist photo of Loch Ness at Point Augustus in the town of Fort Augustus, we ran into several canoeists and kayakers paddling what is known as the Great Glen Canoe Trail. Point Augustus is a peninsula formed by the River Oich tumbling into Loch Ness on one side and four locks of the Caledonian Canal on the other.

This trail follows what is known as the Great Glen, an ancient fault line in the Highlands through which the Caledonian canal runs almost directly from southwest to northeast. Most people paddle from Fort William in the west to Inverness in the east with the prevailing wind behind you and take three to five days. These lads were doing just that, running their rented canoes along the portage from the River Oich to the Loch. At the loch-side launch, they were joined by a group of lasses in kayaks for the remainder of the trip.



*The lads finish their carry. Much faster and less red tape than waiting to drop through four locks.*





*The women were not overdressed for this August day in Scotland. In less than an hour, they would be.*

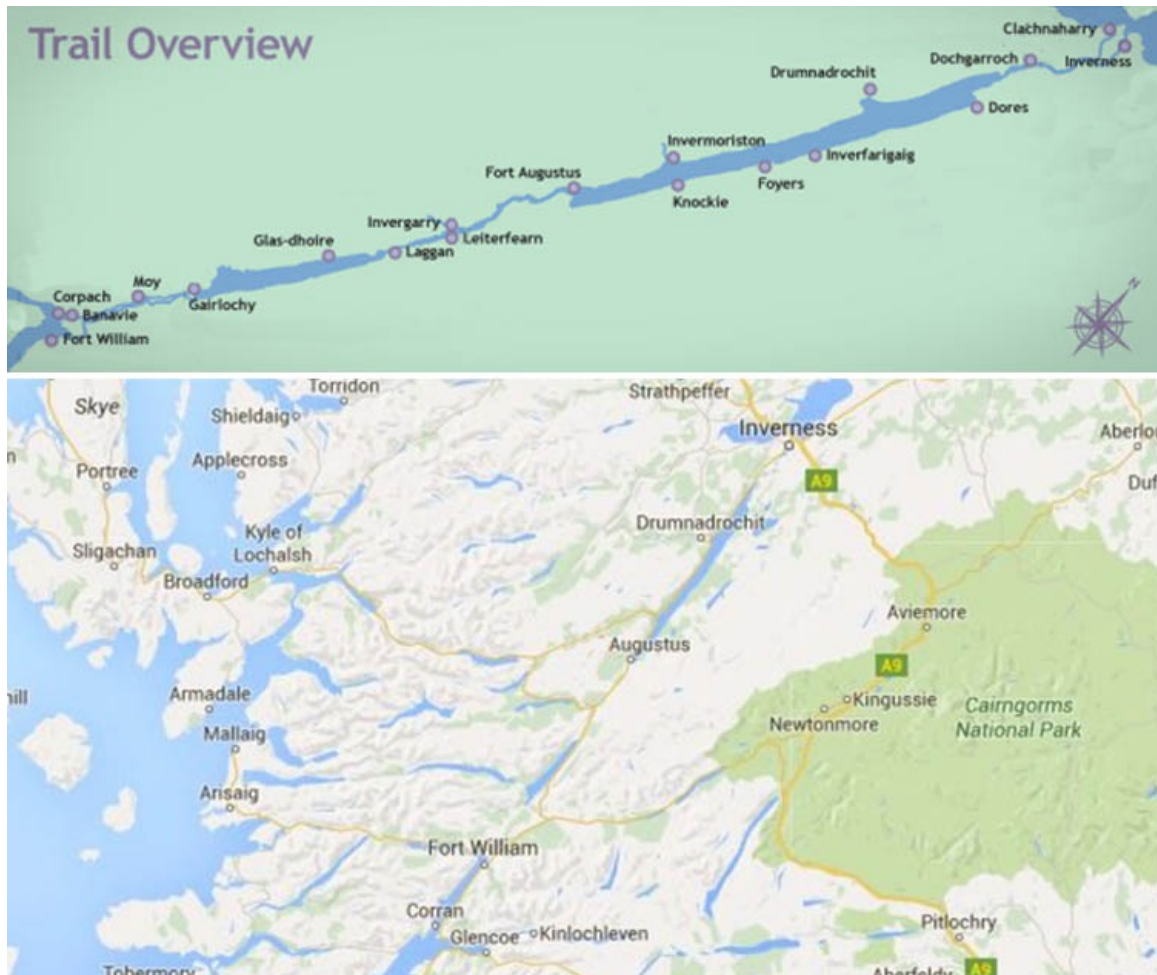
A recent development, the trail opened in 2010 and was an instant hit with about 4,000 paddlers taking on Scotland's first formal canoe trail that first year.

The canoe trail takes you from coast to coast through natural lochs – Loch Lochy (12 miles), Loch Oich, Loch Ness (22 miles), and Loch Dochfour, all connected by the 22 miles of man-made Caledonian Canal.

One reason for the popularity is the location in the scenic mountains of the Highlands (including the highest peak, Ben Nevis) plus the engineering feat that made the canal possible. In the early 19th century, Scottish engineer Thomas Telford, designed the canal so ships could avoid going around Cape Wrath (the name speaks for itself). He strung together 29 locks, four aqueducts, and ten bridges.

The website warns you to be prepared. You've got open water paddling on Loch Ness and Lochy (they are long and narrow and you can hug the shore), and waves can reach as high as 13 feet. Although this may seem unbelievable for lakes never much more than 1.6 miles wide, we can attest that the winds in the Highlands can be amazingly fierce. For experienced kayakers, the trail website has resources to help you plan your route, including maps, safety advice, suggestions for accommodations, even places where you can pre-order fresh food supplies. It also provides the form to apply for a canal license if you need it (not sure what that involves), and lists local providers who offer guided trips and equipment and take care of the shuttling.





Accommodations range from hotels to commercial camping sites. "Wild" camping is not permitted on the canal banks as it is a scheduled ancient monument, but the trail has designated some informal campsites along the banks, and wild camping is possible on the shores of the lochs. You are asked to follow the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.

The code provides detailed guidance on the use of the ancient tradition of universal access to land in Scotland, which includes inland water, for recreation, education, and going from place to place as long as you act responsibly.

Plan, stay safe, enjoy, and leave no trace, the trail literature says. For more information, [GreatGlenCanoeTrail.info](http://GreatGlenCanoeTrail.info).

# ATLANTIC COASTAL KAYAKER

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## Places



First night sunset over the River Styx on the Canal. Heimlich.

### **Paddling Canada's Rideau Canal National Park**

*By Ralph Heimlich. Photos by Ralph Heimlich and Greg Welker.*

When they hear the word "canal," most people think of a boring, straight-sided, man-made stretch of water that holds no intrinsic interest for the paddler. Canada's Rideau Canal National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is none of those things. Designed as a





slack water canal system (fed by many dams and weirs that back up rivers into natural and man-made lakes), the system stitches together broad lakes, narrow rivers and widely flooded wetlands over 126 miles between Kingston and Ottawa, joined by short sections of narrow dug canals, often in steep-sided troughs. The Rideau system, in Ontario Province, combines rocky and bucolic scenery, crystal clear water, abundant submerged aquatic vegetation, history, and small-town ambience into a seamless paradise for boaters, equally appealing to small and large craft alike.

As many of our jaunts do, this trip began with a late winter email from inveterate paddler Greg Welker, wanting to know if I'd ever heard of the Rideau Canal. Always on the lookout for new paddling venues, Greg had heard about the Rideau on one of his trips into Canada. After doing some research, Greg recruited several of us (Dave Isbell, John Garon and myself) for a 10-day early July trip to do as much of the waterway as possible.

We traveled to Canada in three vehicles: Greg from Maryland, John from Maine, and Dave and I the following day, convening at the Rideau Acres Campground at Kingston Mills.

Set amidst RVs and permanently moored unmobile homes, our grassy campsite was right on a flooded wetland forbiddingly known as the Styx River. There is no demon Charon guarding the crossing here. The river got its name from the standing timber killed by the rising waters of the dammed Cataraqui River.

The only outfitter we could find to assist us with the shuttle could only haul two boats, so one day was devoted to four hours of driving from Kingston to Black Rapids, Lock 13, to leave my truck with four kayak racks for the return shuttle. We had sought secure parking closer to the systems terminus at Ottawa's famed Seven Steps lock, but repeated inquiries indicated the last usable parking was at Black Rapids. A self-service parking fee machine (\$5.00 CND/day) was out of order when we arrived, and the Lockmaster said he wasn't collecting the parking fees, but would keep an eye on the truck. We arranged with Rideau Acres to park the other two vehicles there during our trip.

Looking at the flat, swampy terrain and dense scrubby tangle of trees bordering the road back to camp, one wondered at the perseverance of the early canal builders and settlers to this area. The Rideau canal was an out-growth of the War of 1812, when American forces along the St. Lawrence River threatened to cut off Canada's important Great Lakes naval base at Kingston from Montreal and Quebec. After the war, a survey of the old canoe route from Kingston to Ottawa along the Cataraqui and Rideau Rivers indicated that a canal could be constructed enabling a supply line from Montreal up the Ottawa River and then down to Kingston in the event of renewed hostilities with the upstart Americans. In 1819, the Duke of Wellington, then serving as Master-General of the Ordnance in charge of military construction, recommended creating the Rideau Canal, and in 1826, a commission of the Provincial legislature approved construction, handing the task to Lieutenant Colonel John By of the Royal Engineers.

After much hardship, trials, tribulation, and "adaptive engineering," the canal was completed in 1832. Never needed in war time, the canal served peaceful commerce and was a major factor in settling the area. Forward-looking design by Colonel By led to increasing use of steam boats rather than draft animals on tow paths to haul barges through the system and resulted in multiple luxury steamships making the passage from Kingston to Ottawa and back each week by the end of the 19th century. As railroads supplanted barge traffic, the Rideau became known as a recreational waterway, famous for bass fishing and summer cottages. In 1972, it was transferred to Parks Canada, designated a heritage river in 2000 and as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2007.

We packed up everything, including our kayak wheels, and launched from our campsite early on Friday. We had planned an easy day, paddling only 10.5 miles on the River Styx, which narrowed down as we paddled north, to our first lock, Lock 45 at Lower Brewers.

Negotiating a lock is a pretty easy process. There is a fee for locking through, but we had all paid in advance for a season sticker, affixed to front deck of each kayak. The sticker price is based on the length of each boat. At most of the locks, staff took down our sticker numbers, which we all soon memorized. There is a dock or quay with the edge painted bright blue, known as the Blue Line, where you pull up and wait in line in company with

everything from canoes to yachts for the lock to open. This can take as much as 30-45 minutes, depending on traffic coming from the other direction. When the lock gate opens, oncoming traffic exits and you are directed into the lock. Small craft are usually put at the back of a lock because of the turbulence caused by letting water into or out of the lock at the gate. We nested up and the kayak nearest the wall held onto rubber-coated wire ropes set into the dock wall. Once the gate was closed behind us, lock staff opened gates in the upstream lock and water started to fill the lock, lifting us as much as 12 feet. As soon as the water reaches the level of the upstream section, the lock gates can be opened and all the boats in the lock are ushered out.

Many locks are arranged in sets or "flights" which accomplish multiple lifts in several steps. Lower and Upper Brewer locks are joined by a section of the Cataraqui River that skirts old farms and orchards. We paddled on to Upper Brewers (Locks 44 and 43 in a two-lock flight) and locked through to camp on the upstream end of the flight since the locks do not begin to operate until 9:00 a. and we preferred an early start in the cooler morning air. All together, the three Brewer locks lifted us 31 feet.



*Negotiating Brewer Locks. Credit: Ralph Heimlich.*

Camping is available at all the locks we passed, for a fee of \$4.90 CDN per person. Grassy areas with picnic tables and charcoal grills are available along one or both sides of the canal at one or both ends of the lock. There are nicely appointed washrooms at each lock house, including some with showers, and potable water available at nearly all of them. Landing at the camping areas can be a bit of a challenge since there are seldom beaches or shallow areas to disembark. Instead, floating docks, or more often, rafts of the large timbers used to isolate the locks for maintenance are available, requiring sometimes ungainly dock landings (we often looked like large seals flopping belly first onto the timbers), and feats of strength and balance to pull loaded kayaks up and onto the docks.





*Our camp at Upper Brewer Lock. Credit: Ralph Heimlich*



*Landing at a canal dock. Credit: Greg Welker*

There are numerous red and green buoys marking the channel through the lakes and rivers of the system (more than 600 from Newboro to Kingston and another 500 or so from Newboro to Ottawa). The buoys change “hand” at Newboro (red right returning in each direction to Newboro). The buoys are necessary for larger boats because the channel is only dredged and maintained within the buoys and, especially in early days, the stumps of drowned trees littered the flooded lakes bottoms. Navigating by kayak requires careful consideration of your



destination, winds and wind shadow, and points of interest since it often pays to leave the channel with our shallower draft.

Upper Brewers Lock has a defensible stone lockmasters house (now a private residence) with gun slits still visible in the stone blockhouse walls. It also has a 19th century houseboat called the Ark, hauled ashore now for use as a summer cottage. Many of the locks have swinging bridges for road crossings, and Lower Brewers has one of the best examples of an Unequal Arm Center bearing timber bridge so well balanced it can be swung by a single person.



*The lockmasters' houses on the Canal were made defensible with rifle slits, now often boarded or bricked up. Photos courtesy of Parks Canada.*

This area of Ontario is far enough north that twilight lingers until nearly 10:00, but we eventually turned in and spent a peaceful night listening to the water flow through the locks, which are drawn down at night.

Saturday morning we awoke and packed our dewy tents, launching onto the misty river well ahead of the boat traffic that we expected would get heavier later in the day. Our target for the day was Chaffey's (Lock 37) 17.1 miles away. We would be passing through Cranberry Lake, under the Brass Point bridge, Whitefish Lake, Sand Lake, and the Jones Falls (Lock 39-42) and Davis (Lock 38) locks. As we passed out into Cranberry Lake, we passed through the "Court of the Duke" where a rock outcropping resembles the profile of the Duke of Wellington, a proponent of the canal. Paddling north, the terrain became rockier, water became clearer and chillier, and the forest increasingly dominated by cedar, spruce, and white pine, resembling the Adirondacks.



*At the "Court of the Duke" with Wellington's profile in stone. Credit Ralph Heimlich.*



Jones Falls is a flight of four locks, totaling 58 feet of lift. It is the site of the Great Stone Arch Dam, the world's highest at 60 feet when it was completed in 1831, and a particularly pretty Lockmaster's House set on a hill over the lock. After passing through Davis (Lock 38, 9 foot lift), we entered Opinicon Lake, with Chaffeys Lock and the Opinicon Resort at its head, where we again locked through.

Chaffeys Lock is a bit more urbanized, with houses facing our campsite on the opposite side of the lock and street lights lining the walk along the canal. It also has the somewhat swanky Opinicon Resort, where we eschewed freeze-dried food for cold draught beer and ice cream and mingled with the power boaters and golfers. After we turned in, the night was shattered with the laughter of children as a local family had an impromptu swim party in the closed lock, a tradition we observed at several locks along the route.



*L: Arched masonry dam above Jones Falls. R: Opinicon Resort at Chaffey's Lock. Credit: Greg Welker*

Our Sunday route was 13.6 miles through Indian, Clear and Newboro Lakes, and through a narrow cut into Upper Rideau Lake, where the wind had increased to 10-15 mph, raising whitecaps and making for a slog dead ahead into the wind. We were glad of our decision to paddle kayaks here since these waves would have been tricky for our low-volume solo canoes. Newboro (Lock 36, 7.7 feet) is the height of land, so the buoys changed "hands" here. We had been lifted 118.2 feet coming from our start. We were now locking "downstream" a total of 163.3 feet. I had always thanked the lock staff for giving us a "lift," but now started thanking them for letting us "drop in."

After beating across the obstreperous wind, we finally entered the approach to Narrows (Lock 35, a mere three-foot drop). This lock in the middle of a lake was built to accommodate a dam which artificially raised the level of both lakes, reducing the amount of excavation required. A well-preserved blockhouse, one of a chain that "defended" the canal, is located here and houses a museum. After locking through, we hugged the northern shore of Big Rideau Lake, although the wind died off. We dropped down to Colonel By Island, one of our few non-lock campsites.



*Heading into the wind at Upper Rideau Lake. Credit Ralph Heimlich.*

Colonel By Island, in the middle of Big Rideau Lake, was formerly the Wag's Lodge, owned by Danny Arnstein, a New York taxi-cab mogul. The flat-topped inn building is still there, but falling to ruins. We camped on the grass in front of the old lodge and shared the space with several garrulous power boaters docked at the pier, who exhibited great interest in the American paddlers. There is a two-km walking trail around the island, so this was one of the few stops on our tour where we could stretch our legs.



*Our campsite at Colonel By Island. Credit: Ralph Heimlich.*





*Paddling heaven on the Rideau Canal system. Credit Ralph Heimlich.*

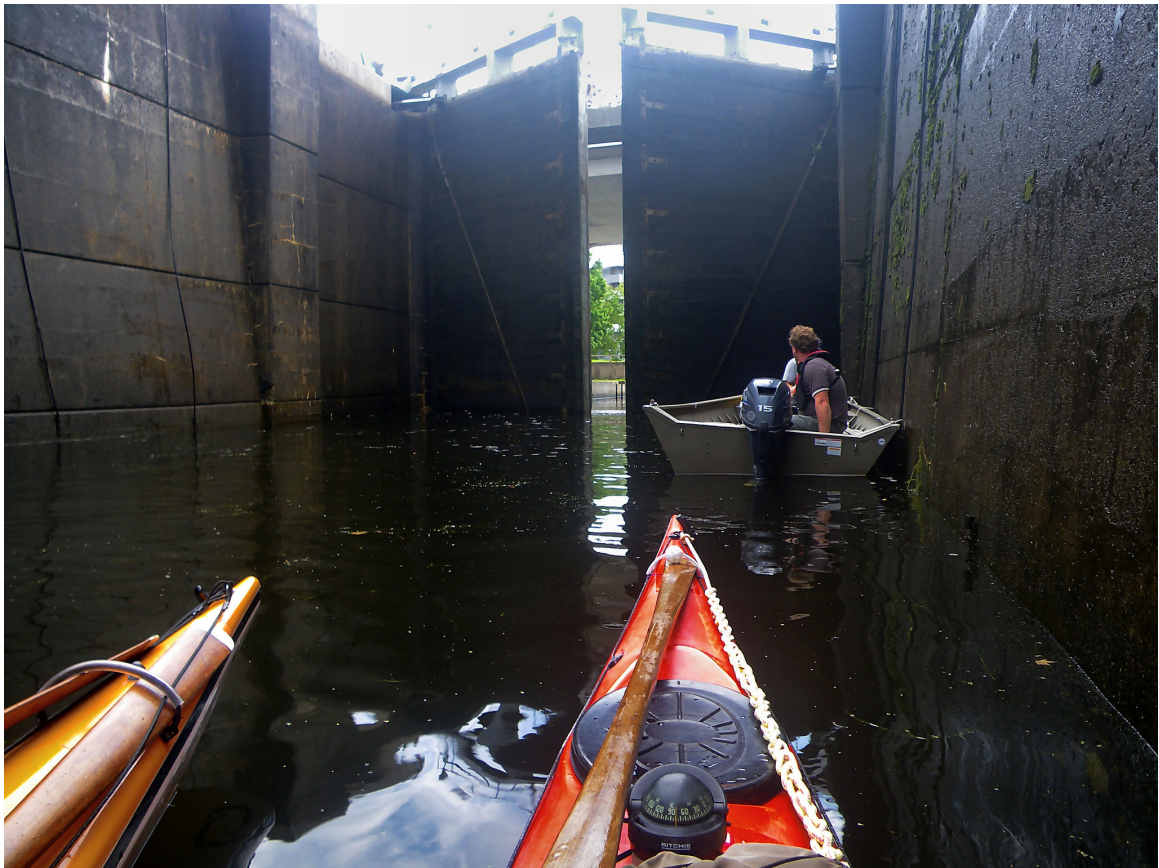
Monday was another long paddling day, 16 miles from Colonel By Island to Poonamalie (Lock 32, 5.7 foot drop), passing out of Big Rideau Lake to Lower Rideau Lake, and by the Tay Canal, an offshoot that locks up to the town of Perth. Poonamalie was named by a British engineer because the terrain reminded him of a hill town in northern India where he had served. In addition to the usual camping facilities, there was a newly rebuilt one-km concrete and rock dam and weir that borders the canal on the north side. In 1904, a 300- by 75-foot ice floe off the Rideau Lakes knocked a huge hole in the old dam and nearly flooded the downstream town of Smith Falls.

On Tuesday, we awoke to our most heavily locked day: 16.8 miles to Merrickville, passing through the combined locks at Smiths Falls (Locks 29a and 31, 34.5-foot drop), the double lock at Old Slys (26 and 27, 16-foot drop), Edmunds (Lock 25, 9-foot drop), Kilmarnock (Lock 24, two-foot drop) and the three locks at Merrickville (Locks 21-23, 24.7-foot drop). The lockmaster at Poonamalie touted a good restaurant in Smiths Falls that opened at 6:30, so we packed up early and did the half-hour paddle on empty stomachs. We ran into our first group of paddle tourers, a party of three Canadian military officers canoeing a short stretch from Smiths Falls to Burritts Rapids. They told us the big story for Smiths Falls: A defunct Hershey chocolate factory was getting new life growing legal marijuana and producing Mary J edibles.

After chatting with the officers, we went on to the "Roosterant" in our dripping paddling clothes for a hearty Canadian breakfast, then got back into the boats in time to lock through Smiths Falls. This set of locks is the largest single change of level on the canal system, with one lock dropping 26 feet. We felt trapped in a deep canyon when the gates finally opened at the bottom of that drop.



*Waiting in the "Blue Line" at Smiths Falls. Credit: Ralph Heimlich.*



*The big "drop" at Smiths Falls. Credit: Greg Welker.*





*One of the narrower stretches. Credit: Ralph Heimlich.*

Merrickville is the most scenic town on the Rideau Canal, with a pleasant main street fronted by antique stone buildings. After setting up camp, we strolled into town to resupply with fresh fruit, snacks, and ice cream. We also toured the block house museum, getting fresh insights into the building and history of the canal.

After Smiths Falls, the scenery gradually transformed from rocky evergreen lakes to broad, slow-moving sweeps of agricultural land, dotted with large dairy farms perfuming the air. Reminiscent of New York's Ontario Lake plain, the heat and humidity intensified as we paddled along 15 miles through Lock 20 at Clowes, Upper and Lower Nicholson (Locks 19 and 18), and Burritts Rapids (Lock 17). Even cutting off some of the longer bends in the channel, we were happy to finally arrive at our campsite at Rideau Provincial Park. We used our wheels to roll to spots as near the water as possible, and enjoyed the showers and ice cream at the camp store.



*Invading Merrickville in search of groceries and ice cream. Credit: Greg Welker.*

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*The Block House museum at Merrickville. Credit: Ralph Heimlich.*





*Agricultural scenery below Smith's Falls. Credit: Ralph Heimlich.*

Friday was our final day on the canal system, with a scant five miles to our terminus at Black Rapids (Lock 13). We arrived after only a couple of hours and put in at the upstream end of the lock, loaded our boats on kayak wheels, and pulled them into the parking lot. The parking fee machine was still out of order, so we loaded all four kayaks, all the gear, and our sweaty bodies into my truck for the two-hour drive back to Rideau Acres.

After setting up camp and getting much-needed showers, we climbed in the truck to explore downtown Kingston. On this hot, busy Saturday, we fit right in with all the other tourists, gawking at the retired Canadian Pacific Locomotive, the War of 1812-era fort and four Martello towers guarding the harbor, the monument to the Irish quarantine victims, and posing with the "Kingston" sign. After walking around the city's waterfront, we got dinner at a typically Canadian restaurant, Diane's Fish Shack and Smokehouse, right on Ontario Street. I ordered the Seafood Poutine, which ought to be Canada's national dish (fries, coconut green curry, shrimp, haddock, calamari, mussels, queso fresco).



*Who is the "I" in Kingston? Credit: Ralph Heimlich.*





*The Canadian National Dish, IMHO. Credit: Dianne.*

After one more night of camping at Rideau Acres, we packed up in the early morning as quietly as possible, and made our separate ways back to the U.S. Our 110 miles paddling the Rideau Canal, we found it interesting, and our lockmasters and staff friendly and welcoming. If you are looking for your next kayak touring trip, look no further than the Rideau Canal.

#### **RESOURCES:**

[Parks Canada's online guide to the Rideau Canal.](#)

An invaluable guide is *Watson's Paddling Guide to the Rideau Canal* available as a [down-loadable PDF file](#).

Lock stickers are available by mail from [Parks Canada](#). We paid a cut-rate of \$4.40 CDN per foot of boat length for our kayak stickers. Be sure to have sufficient Canadian currency on hand for the \$4.90 CDN camping fee per person (plus ice cream and beer).

Long term parking at the locks near Ottawa required prior approval from the Park Administrator, who was very helpful in suggesting we terminate at Black Rapids, the nearest lock to Ottawa with adequate and secure parking.

All photos are available online. [Ralph's photos](#). [Greg's photos](#).

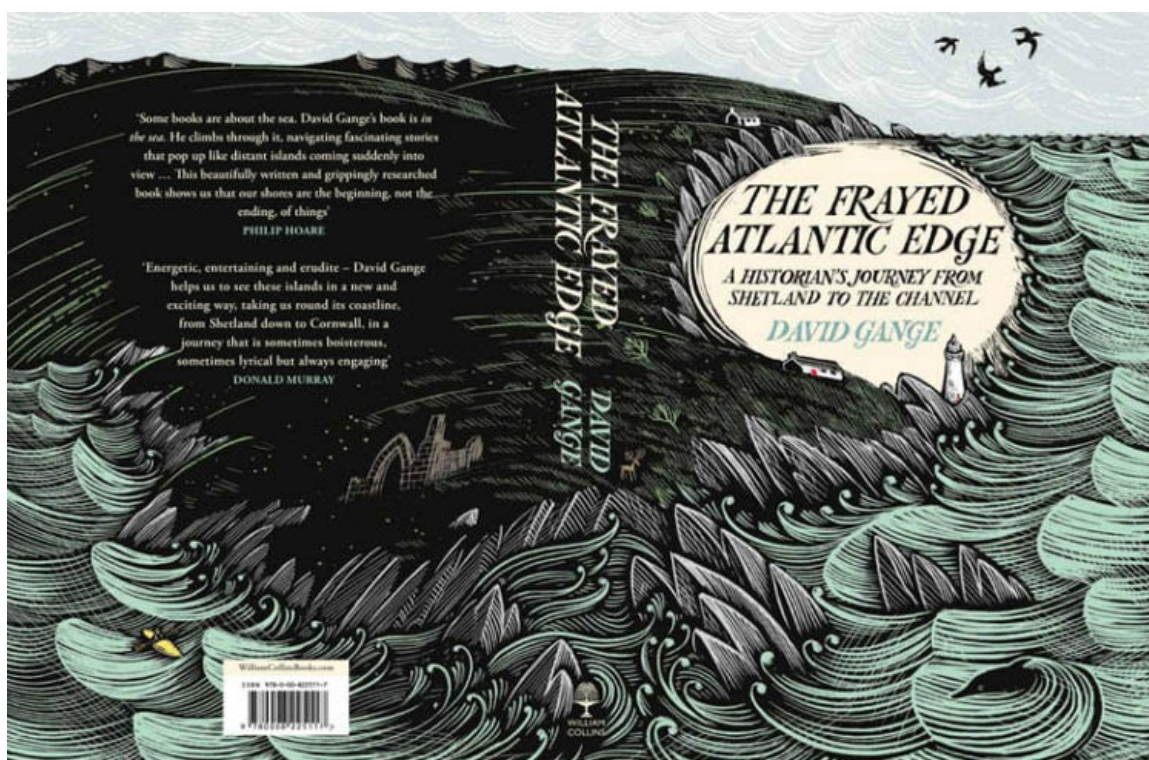
# ATLANTIC COASTAL KAYAKER

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## The Frayed Atlantic Edge A Historian's Journey from Shetland to the Channel

By David Gange    Review by Peter Jones



Published by Williams Collins, London, England

1<sup>st</sup> Edition 2019

388 pages with maps and photos

\$20.44 Hardcover (Amazon)

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The author, David Gange, Professor of Modern History at the University of Birmingham (England), is a seeker of the past as well as a kayaking adventurer who paddled solo for a year down the west coast of the British Isles. His book is both an account of the region's cultural history and of the sea kayaking journey itself. The route begins at the northernmost point of Scotland, follows the west coasts of the Scottish Isles of Shetland, Orkney, and the Outer Hebrides on to the west mainland coasts of Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and finally to Cornwall in the southwest of England. Though the straight line distance is around 600 miles, Gange kayaked several times that distance along a meandering path in what are some of the harshest waters of the Eastern Atlantic.

His goal was not simply to travel the distance or reach a destination. More than that, it would be, in his words, "a quest to comprehend and articulate the intense peculiarity of the places on this coastline," and in that way he hoped to become a more "in touch" historian. The kayak was merely the vehicle for his historical explorations.

First, some historical context: Until the early 1800s, much of the culture of Britain was defined by its coastal communities and not by its inland towns and cities. West coast Gaelic and Celtic coastal communities in Britain



were then more connected by trade with similar communities in, for example, France and Spain than they were with the towns and cities of inland Britain. Coastal communities were thriving and successful regions of the British Isles where dependence on the sea, on fishing, and on unique forms of coastal agriculture resulted in the development of a highly productive and successful society with a rich cultural heritage. I was astonished to read, for example, that at that time the value of land there was similar to that in London, compared to the thousandfold differential today.

As aficionados of "Outlander" know, from the early 1700s onwards "resettlement" (ethnic cleansing, in today's parlance) of large parts of Scotland and Ireland was the government policy and the islands and coastal communities went into steep decline. This led to universal poverty, subsistence living, and ultimately mass migrations - principally to the Americas - from which it took more than 200 years to recover. Today many of these communities are seeing a resurgence of Gaelic and Celtic culture. David Gange in this journey by kayak wanted to experience firsthand the history of these coastal communities and understand and explain the changes that they have endured over the centuries stretching back to the Dark Ages.

The book is filled with lyrical descriptions of the coastal environment - its physical appearance, its weather, its geology, its flora and fauna, as well as its literature and cultural traditions. Throughout the journey, the author talks to archaeologists, ecologists, naturalists, geographers, anthropologists, artists, poets, novelists, and musicians he meets on his journey and it is their stories which enrich this book. The book is illustrated with some captivating photographs by the author and detailed maps so you can easily follow his route. A common theme throughout the book is the ever-changing effect of the sea on the physical and societal realms. As he says, "If timelessness exists anywhere on earth, it is not in sight of the sea."

And if you're looking for some heart-stopping descriptions of kayaking conditions, it's all here, scattered through the book - "a wall of breakers," "crests hitting the boat from both sides," "the 'sensation that I'd walked through a brine carwash," "afraid that the huge overfalls might bury or even break the kayak!" Then finally, in the last days of the journey, relative calm until Cornwall where "the reef was less like a wall in front of the waves and more like a knife blade thrust into ocean, violence on every edge. Landing was impossible. I was forced, for the first time in my life, to overnight on the water."

The following quotation gives you a sense of the fine literary skills of the author when he describes the habitat of the migratory bird, the petrel, which spends most of its life in or on the water, only returning to land to breed, "...petrels live lives apparently defined by air. Their acute sense of smell guides migration and directs foraging through the vaporous worlds they occupy. Yet the main ingredient of their odor map is a sulfur given off when the smallest subaqueous vegetable plankton are eaten by animal plankton. These organisms bloom at the top of seamounts, where tide-borne nutrients rise from the deep, in the same way that wind-borne moisture rises into cloud when it hits a hillside. These clouds of seamount plankton don't just attract predation but trap carbon and therefore slow climate warming." The book is just packed with insightful nuggets such as this.

David Gange is meticulous in providing background material: This is an academic who paddles with a dry bag full of reference books, and who writes during his journey ("six hours when I sleep, eight hours when I paddle, and the rest for thinking, reading, and writing"). Many nights are spent in a waterproof sleeping bag with no tent. His descriptions of the ocean, its swells, its currents, its streams, rival any I have read and reflect the multiplicity of water/ land interface conditions and the complexity of surface water movement in this most rugged of coastlines.

The book could also be seen as a reference book worthy, in my opinion, of any sea kayaker's bookshelf - complete with 35 pages of notes, references, and a comprehensive index, though anyone with an interest in the cultural history of the British Isles will also treasure this book. Though intended for the general reader, the book is somewhat scholarly and if you're looking for an easy read then this may not be for you. But if you're a long distance kayaker with an interest in methods of cultural discovery on a coastal journey (water trails of indigenous peoples and present-day urban waterways come to mind) you'll not find a better primer for your journey than *The Frayed Atlantic Edge*.

*Peter Jones is the owner and principle guide at Driftwood Kayak and leads one-day and multi-day trips out of Stonington, Maine. Peter spent his childhood in Wales where he built his first kayak at his high school 'canoe club'. He is a registered Maine Guide, a former American Canoe Assoc. Instructor and a certified Wilderness First Responder. Peter and his wife, Christine, a children's author, live in Gloucester, Mass. and Deer Isle, Maine. You can reach Peter at [www.driftwoodkayak.com](http://www.driftwoodkayak.com).*









Top L: The route. Top R: Off Eshaness.

Gannets off Hermaness, Unst.

Havera Harbor in Shetland.

Waves on Uist.

Photos courtesy of David Gange.

# ATLANTIC COASTAL KAYAKER

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## The Gear Bag



### Review of the Gearlab Carbon Fiber Greenland-style Paddles

By David Eden



*The Aukanek. Notice the broader blade end and the pronounced shoulder.*



*The Akiak. Smooth shoulder and narrower blade at the tip.*

Earlier this summer, Tammy and I were sent a pair of Gearlab's breakdown, carbon fiber, Greenland-style paddles to review. After spending some considerable time with the paddles, we have found that we really enjoyed the experience of paddling with them.

Gearlab is an innovative gear engineering firm based in Taipei, Taiwan. According to their website: "Gearlab engineers and staff are avid kayakers, cyclists, hikers, rock climbers, surfers and paragliders. We are passionate about exploring the hundreds (yes!) of 10,000+ ft peaks—including the highest peak in Northeast Asia - and the incredible waters that surround the beautiful island. Our wild passion with nature coupled with relentless engineering has led to the development of ingenious, efficient gear that make paddling and outdoor expeditions worldwide better than ever."

We were sent two models, the Aukanek ("Designed to deliver optimal power in rough conditions, the Aukanek paddle provides adventurous paddlers greater control for kayak surfing and rock gardening.") and the Akiak ("The world's most popular Greenland-style carbon fiber paddle"). Both retail for \$348 USD and have several of Gearlab's innovative features, including the replaceable ProTek tip made from a durable polyamide material.



Those of us who have had excellent wooden paddles slowly eaten away at the tips by contact with sand, rough rocks, and barnacles will appreciate this feature. Also appreciated was the rock-solid joint on these breakdown paddles, providing a firm attachment with no discernible, irritating wiggle. The joint was relatively easy to separate with my usual pre-use treatment of silicon spray.

The paddles are offered with several options, including length, and blade and tip colors. Extra tips are available on the website. We found the prices to be similar to other carbon fiber breakdown paddles, although shipping from Taiwan is a considerable cost issue.

As an aside, we have found that any paddle joint, no matter how cleverly designed, does need careful rinsing and regular lubrication to avoid grit or salt buildup.

On the water, the paddles performed beautifully. Tammy was especially taken with the way the buoyant blades "popped up," when taking them out of the water, adding a little jump and lift to her stroke.

While not as weightless as Tammy's super-light Werner, it was still much lighter than our wooden Greenlanders, and far stronger than the Werner, which included the warning not to put any excess pressure on it when exiting the boat, for instance. The Gearlab paddles felt sturdy enough to beat off a ravaging polar bear, if necessary.

I mostly used the Aukanek, as I thought I would like the wider blade. I did, but should have ordered the 220 model, as it was a little short to use comfortably in my Hornbeck canoe. I found myself borrowing the longer Akiak from Tammy for a change.

The only problem with the paddles was one I have with all non-wood paddles. A wooden paddle just feels more alive and springy to me. However, the extra strength and the replaceable tip of the Gearlabs far outweighs this, and these would be the Greenland-style paddles I would choose for an expedition.

Gearlab offers a number of other items, including dry bags, deck bags, paddle bags, and the like. They offer their joint ferrule so you can turn your wooden Greenland in to a break apart, and even have a carbon fiber norsaq!



*L: Paddling with the Aukanek off Cape Ann, Mass. R: With the Akiak on Eagle Lake, N.Y.*