

ATLANTIC COASTAL KAYAKER

November 2019 Volume 28, Number 8



Les Outlets on the west coast of Sark, Channel Islands. A series of interesting stacks, which earlier in the year host a variety of breeding seabirds. Photo by Kevin Mansell.

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News & Notes



2020 Hurricane Island programs, Ocean Wood Campground rebirth, Arctic Cowboys NWP Expedition, more.

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Features

A Channel Islands Tour

By Kevin Mansell



Mention the Channel Islands to most North American kayakers and their thoughts probably turn to an archipelago off the Californian coast, but what about the original Channel Islands? Located off the coast of northern France, they sit between the arms of Normandy and Brittany, a unique mixture of English and French culture.

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Skills, Endurance, and Majesty

A Paddling Expedition in Cape Breton

By Kerry Kirk Pflugh

The driving rain and low atmosphere created a fog-like effect as I looked at the distant shoreline. The waves crashed around me and the sudden force-6 winds were carrying me farther from my companions, who were in their own struggle with the wind and waves. I was losing sight of White Rock, our destination on the opposite shore of the Bay of St. Lawrence, as the wind and waves swept me out into the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

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Breaking The Mold: Trampling The Trope On Older Women

By Tamsin Venn. Photos by Olive Sauder.

These photos of Publisher Tamsin Venn were taken as part of a project scheduled to go on display in Ipswich, Mass., during International Women's Month, beginning March 8, 2020. The project was conceived by local RN and accomplished mountain biker Jan Lindsay. The display will celebrate the life-style choices and accomplishments of eight older local women.

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Remote Cat Point Creek Paddle Through Past Landscapes

By Leslie Middleton. Photos by Dave Harp

Early morning light beckoned me upstream into the green, marshy world of Cat Point Creek, a tributary of Virginia's Rappahannock River. I paddled the creek's narrow path through pastures of arrow arum, past tight fists of yellow pond lilies that had begun their spring unfurling. Blue flag irises were emerging from ferns that had found a toehold in boggy soil amongst the roots of a small, red maple.



This article first appeared in Bay Journal Travel Section, September, 2019.

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The Gear Bag



What We Took To Maine

Reviews of our gear, old and new, with some recommendations for holiday gifts.

by David Eden

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Safety



The Kayaker's Bug-Out Bag Emergency Items You Should Always Have

by David Eden

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Creatures of the Ocean



Antarctic_Leopard_Seal_(js)_33 by Jerzy Strzelecki. Licensed under the Creative Commons [Attribution 3.0 Unported](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/) license. Image cropped

The leopard seal (*Hydrurga leptonyx*), also referred to as the sea leopard, is the second largest species of seal in the Antarctic (after the southern elephant seal). Its only natural predator is the killer whale. It feeds on a wide range of prey including cephalopods, other pinnipeds, krill, birds and fish. It is the only species in the genus *Hydrurga*. Its closest relatives are the Ross seal, the crabeater seal, and the Weddell seal, which together are known as the tribe of Lobodontini seals. The name *hydrurga* means "water worker" and *leptonyx* is the Greek for "small clawed."

The leopard seal has a distinctively long and muscular body shape, when compared to other seals. This species of seal is known for its massive reptilian-like head and jaws that allow it to be one of the top predators in its environment. A notable key feature of leopard seals is its counter-shaded coat. A counter-shaded coat is when the dorsal side of the coat is darker than ventral side. Leopard seals have a silver to dark gray blended coat that makes up its distinctive "leopard" coloration with a spotted pattern, whereas the ventral side of the coat is paler in color—ranging from white to light gray. Females are slightly larger than the males. The overall length of this seal is 2.4—3.5 m (7.9—11.5 ft) and weight is from 200 to 600 kilograms (440 to 1,320 lb). They are about the same length as the northern walrus, but usually less than half the weight.

Another notable characteristic of leopard seals are their short clear whiskers that are used to sense their environment. Leopard seals have an enormous mouth relative to their body size. The front teeth are sharp like those of other carnivores, but their molars lock together in a way that allows them to sieve krill from the water, in the manner of the crabeater seal. Since leopard seals are "true" seals, they do not have external pinnae, or ears, but they do have an internal ear canal that leads to an external opening. Their hearing in air is similar to that of a human, but scientists have noted that leopard seals use their ears in conjunction with their whiskers to track prey under water.

Leopard seals are pagophilic, "ice-loving" seals, which primarily inhabit the Antarctic pack ice between 50 and 80 degrees S. Sightings of vagrant leopard seals have also been recorded on the coasts of Australia, New Zealand, South America, and South Africa. In August 2018 an individual was sighted in Geraldton on the west coast of Australia. Higher densities of leopard seals are seen in the Western Antarctic than in other regions. Most leopard seals remain within the pack ice throughout the year and remain solitary during most of their lives with the exception of a mother and her newborn pup. These matrilineal groups can move further north in the austral winter to sub-antarctic islands and the coastlines of the southern continents to provide care for their pups. While solitary animals may appear in areas of lower latitudes, females rarely breed there. Some researchers believe this is due to safety concerns for the pups. Lone male leopard seals hunt other marine mammals and penguins in the packed ice of antarctic waters. The estimated population of this species ranges from 220,000 to 440,000 individuals, which puts leopard seals at "least concern." Although with an abundance of leopard seals in the antarctic, they are difficult to survey by traditional visual techniques because they spend long periods of time vocalizing under the water during the austral spring and summer when visual surveys are carried out. This trait of vocalizing underwater for long periods has made them available to acoustic surveys, allowing researchers to gather most of what is known about them.

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News & Notes



2020 Course Signup Opens

[Hurricane Island Center for Science and Leadership](#) has begun accepting registrations for its summer programs. While the main focus of the Center is middle- and high school-age students and teacher programs, it does offer several adult programs, as well

The island itself serves as a spectacular classroom for the programs, being centered in the scenic center of Maine's Penobscot Bay, along with the rest of the Fox Islands. The Center provides a unique alternative to the standard summer camp.

Middle and High School

07/05 - 07/11: High School Marine Biology
07/12 - 07/18: High School Island Ecology
07/19 - 08/01: High School Advanced Marine Biology
07/19 - 07/25: Middle School Island Ecology
07/26 - 08/01: Middle School Marine Biology 1
08/02 - 08/08: Middle School Marine Biology 2
08/02 - 08/08: High School Sustainability Leadership
08/09 - 08/15: Middle School Climbing Course

Adult Programs

Women of Water: 07/05 - 07/18

Lithic Ecologies (Archaeology:) TBD - In this four day course, students will become familiar with the archaeological history of granite production and Wabanaki presence at Hurricane Island as well as the wider coastal environment.

Wilderness Medical Associates Certification Courses: Become certified as a Wilderness First Responder (WFR), or extend your EMS training. Wilderness Medical Associates (WMA) runs courses for getting certified as a Wilderness First Responder (WFR) and in Wilderness ALS (WALS). Check out its website for more information. Information for [April WFR here](#), [August WFR here](#), and [August WALS here](#). You can register for those courses in [our system here](#).

Teacher/Educator Day: TBD - A free trip to explore and learn more about the programs offered through the Hurricane Island Center for Science and Leadership. If you are a teacher or administrator who would like to learn more about the Center's professional development programs, school programs, and summer programs, come visit for the day.

Farm-to-Table Dinners: TBD - Experience an exquisite farm-to-table dinner on Hurricane Island. The Center will be celebrating with the bounty of its beautiful gardens, the skill and artistry of scratch cooking, and the incredible scenery of Hurricane Island. The dinner is prepared and presented by Hurricane Island's culinary team and features locally sourced ingredients.

Bird Banding: TBD - [The Institute for Bird Populations \(IBP\)](#) runs bird banding courses on Hurricane.

Volunteer Days: TBD - Interested in donning work gloves and spending the day on Hurricane Island? The Center looking for hearty volunteers interested in gardening, trail maintenance, shingling, painting, cabin

improvement, and other projects around the island. In return for a little sweat equity, the Center will provide you with free lunch and time to hike and explore the island at the end of the day.



Ocean Wood Campground Reborn

It's good news for Ocean Wood Campground in Birch Harbor, Maine. In 2016 Burt's Bees founder Roxanne Quimby bought the 113-acre campground on Schoodic Peninsula right before it went to auction. The goal was to save the prime ocean frontage from development.

The campground had 3,200 feet of jumbled orange granite front along with about 70 campsites, a gem for anyone kayaking the bold waters of Down East Maine.

The campground had closed in 2010 and the campsites and roads became overgrown, running water unavailable. Loyal campers came to help clear the underbrush in exchange for free camping in very rustic conditions.

The conservationist's plans for the property have been on hold, as Quimby figured out the best use for the property. Recently her vision gelled, according to a recent article in *The Working Waterfront*. She lives in nearby Gouldsboro and is very familiar with the property.

The plan is to create a tier of three camping offerings with many fewer sites: One is a limited number of wilderness sites, some on the ocean, accessed by foot. Two is glamping sites, with a furnished tent or yurt. Three is sites for small, well-spaced pop-up campers (vs. large RVs, which are accommodated elsewhere on the Schoodic Peninsula).

For the glamping sites, Quimby has brought in architect Todd Saunders, who is best known for the unique 29-room Fog Island Inn he designed on Fogo Island, Newfoundland. Saunders will design and help build about six of these basic sites. He may also include small buildings for a library, co-working space, and children's play space.

Quimby will also renovate a large barn on the property to be used for group gatherings. In summary, the idea is to honor the campground's long history of public use but also conserve this special piece of land.



Trash, Trash, Trash: MITA Celebrates 2019 Season

The Maine Island Trail Assn. (www.mita.org) had a good stewardship season, with much to celebrate. It added a new stewardship associate position and caretakers on the popular Jewell and Little Chebeague islands off Portland Harbor. It organized more than two dozen group service days, the most ever. Hundreds of volunteers aided in keeping the trail pristine and accessible for visitors. Check out this video for a few highlights from the season. <https://vimeo.com/368310757>

Join MITA's Holiday Party and Open House, Friday, Dec. 13, 5-8 p.m. for a community holiday party at the office 100 Kensington St., Portland, Maine. Call (207) 761-8225 to RSVP.



Paddle the Charles River Whenever You Want

Season passes are now on sale at a reduced rate at Charles River Canoe and Kayak, Boston. Prices range from \$114-\$179 according to age and returning pass holder status. Family passes are also available. Passes are valid at all seven rental locations on the Charles and Mystic Rivers, lot of choice for a noon-time workout out of Kendall Square, Cambridge, or do a ten-mile stretch with shuttle service (our favorite). Rent a double kayak and bring a friend for free. Upgrade your pass to include 15 days of offsite rentals - take a paddleboard or kayak on your summer vacation! Offsite rentals include everything you need to put a boat or board on your car. For more information, <https://paddleboston.com/>



Wekiva/St. Johns River Ramble in Good Company

Join Paddle Florida December 5 - 8, 2019, 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 participants camp in rustic cabins for the first two nights and at Wilson's Landing on the way to the finish at Blue Springs State Park in Volusia County. At a total of 30 miles, this trip is perfect for beginners to try out paddle camping. On Saturday evening, paddlers will enjoy the musical stylings of Bing Futch! During this trip, you will make memories grounded in nature with an authentic eco-friendly Old Florida charm in an area of Florida that is vastly undisturbed.

Paddle Florida is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to supporting canoeing and kayaking in Florida. Supported, multi-day trips in each of Florida's five water management districts highlight the state's beauty and cultural heritage while promoting conservation. **The registration deadline for the St. Johns River trip is November 21.** [Register here.](#)



Inset T: West Hansen paddling the Amazon River. Credit Erich Schlegel. Inset B: The Arctic Cowboys. West Hansen's planned route through the Northwest Passage.

The 2020 Arctic Cowboys Northwest Passage Expedition

From the website westhansen.com The plans for this expedition were originally reported in ACK May, 2019, News & Notes. Originally planned for 2019, the 2020 expedition includes three solo sea kayakers from Texas: Jimmy Harvey, Jeff Wueste, and West Hansen. They will kayak the entire 1900 miles of the infamous Northwest Passage, located in the Canadian Arctic Archipelago, from the town of Tuktoyaktuk, NWT, Canada to Baffin Bay, near the town of Pond Inlet, Nunavut, Canada. International maritime laws and Roald Amundsen define the Passage as running from one end of the Canadian Arctic Archipelago to the other. These huge islands contain waterways that held the mystical route sought by explorers for centuries, to link Europe to Asia.

Prior to the digging of the Panama Canal, the only ocean route between Europe and Asia was around the treacherous Cape Horn, then through the Drake Passage - some of the most dangerous seas on the planet.

Until Roald Amundsen made the first successful sea crossing of the Northwest Passage (1903 - 06), this labyrinth of ice took hundreds of lives as explorers attempted to break through the icy barriers, hull crushing rocks and violent arctic storms to make the journey across the top of the world.

Since then, many sailboats and ships have successfully plied the Passage, though modern sailors still fall prey to the desolate elements. A handful of kayakers have attempted the journey and completed parts of the route in multi-year attempts, going over land and over ice, but no kayaker has made the journey in one single season and without portaging over land.

This is the goal for the Arctic Cowboys: 1900 miles in 60 days, across the top of the world.



Scenes from TRAQS 2018. Photos by David Eden.

Traditional Qajaqers of the South (TRAQS) 2020 Event Registration Open

TRAQS 2020 will take place March 26-29 at the Lake Placid Camp and Conference Center in Lake Placid, Florida, with its beautiful waterfront and fantastic orange-scented breezes.

Helen Wilson, the Internationally famous mentor and new President of Qajaq USA, will be there for TRAQS 2020. Alison Sigethy and Greg Stamer will return as a guest mentors. Ben Fontenot will also return to lead the paddle-making class.

TRAQS is planning new fun group activities including a moonlight paddle and a harpoon throwing contest as well as the always popular bonfire. This is in addition to the array of on-water activities and morning Yoga. It is once again offering an "extended" TRAQS experience. This includes Thursday night, March 26, lodging, three additional meals, and personalized mentoring Friday morning.

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Adventure Paddling

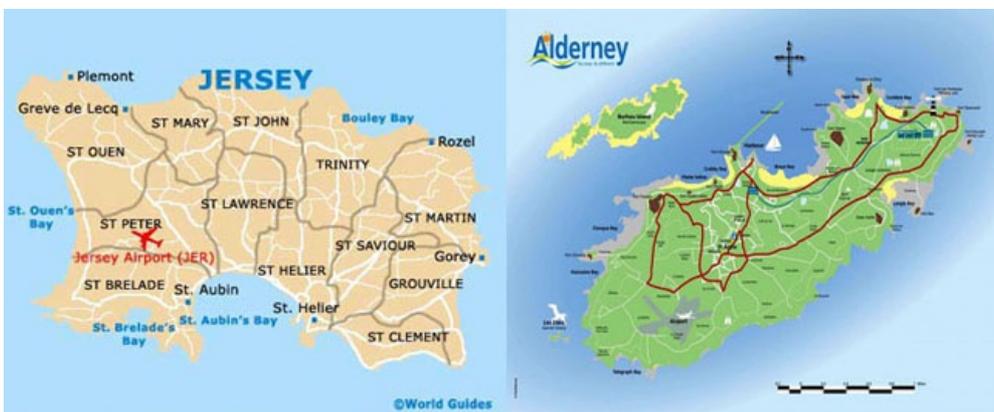


Paddling along the east coast of Sark. Superb cliffs punctuated by numerous caves.

A Channel Islands Tour

By Kevin Mansell. Photos by Kevin Mansell.

Mention the [Channel Islands](#) to most North American kayakers and their thoughts probably turn to an archipelago off the Californian coast, but what about the original Channel Islands? Located off the coast of northern France, they sit between the arms of Normandy and Brittany, a unique mixture of English and French culture. (Considered the remnants of the [Duchy of Normandy](#), they consist of two Crown dependencies: the Bailiwick of Jersey; and the Bailiwick of Guernsey, consisting of Guernsey, Alderney, Sark, and some smaller islands. - Ed)



Jersey, the largest, is my island home. Large is a relative term, as it is only nine miles long and five miles wide.

Within this compact 45 square miles, there is some dramatic coastal scenery set against a rich historical background, which stretches back approximately 240,000 years. The kayaking is made all the more interesting by the twice daily rise and fall of the tide, with a tidal range which reaches 12 meters (39 feet) on the larger spring tides.

My paddling organization, the [Jersey Canoe Club](#), was formed in 1974. Back then, "canoe" was a generic term for anything that was paddled; today we paddle almost exclusively sea kayaks. Members of the Club developed their skills and gained experience in local waters before moving further afield in search of paddling challenges. One area which the members visit regularly is the west coast of Greenland, so regularly in fact that the Club has eight sea kayaks based in [Ilulissat](#), on [Disko Bay](#).

This summer, though, some of us from the Club looked for paddling adventures in our own backyard. No loading kit into North Face holdalls and struggling through international airports. It was a simple matter of driving four miles from home, unloading the kayak and heading out for eight days. A pretty minimal environmental carbon impact.



L: The view from the inside of one of the larger caves on Sark. R: Pausing for a swim at Eperquerie, one of the earliest landing places on the island. A cannon in the foreground is used as mooring post for small boats.



Fog rolling in along the west coast of Sark. A warning of what was to come a couple of days later.

Our first destination was [Sark](#), just over 12 nautical miles to the north. Our departure was timed to coincide with the start of the northerly tidal streams. In the Channel Islands, it's a matter of working with the tides, otherwise failure and epic paddles are the potential outcomes. A quick radio call to the [Jersey Coastguard](#) and soon we were heading north at five knots. We have a good working relationship with the local coastguard, always radioing a passage plan when we are heading offshore. It is reassuring to hear a friendly voice on Channel 82.

The crossing, to Sark took two hours and 50 minutes in almost perfect conditions, and before lunch we were lifting the kayaks up the beach before heading to the campsite. Sark is a unique island, retaining many attributes of a feudal society. No cars are allowed on Sark. The island was settled from Jersey in 1565. Elizabeth I gave permission for 40 families to settle there, in an attempt to discourage French pirates. Each house had to be able to supply a man with a musket for the island's defence.

We walked up the hill to the campsite before setting off in search of a place to swim and a restaurant. The pattern for the week was paddle a few hours, put up a tent, and eat out. Its surprising how much room there is in a sea kayak when you don't have to carry a weeks worth of food.

Sark was to be our home for two nights, as we planned to paddle around the Island, the following day. Even exploring the bays, the total distance of a circumnavigation is only eight nautical miles, but it took us seven hours to complete. There is just so much to see, endless caves, stacks, and arches, including one long tunnel which has currents pouring through reaching speeds of five knots.

Creux Harbour, on the east coast, was the original sheltered landing, built in the 1860's. We stopped off there for coffee and cake while waiting to meet Jim, who was paddling up from Jersey. The weather was unseasonably hot , so we needed to refresh ourselves on a regular basis by swimming in the crystal-clear waters. After leaving Creux Harbour, we stopped at L'Eperquerie landing on the island's northeast, one of the earliest anchorages on the island, where the small boat mooring bollards are re-cycled upside-down cannons, salvaged from the shipwreck of the East Indiaman ship, *Valentine*.

The west coast of Sark provided plenty of amusement and some challenges as thick fog obscured part of the route. The tidal streams were heading south with us as we threaded our way through the offshore reefs, great entertainment, and seven hours after we left Dixcart Bay, we were lifting the kayaks back up the beach.



L: La Coupee, the narrow neck of land which joins Little Sark to the larger section of Sark. R: Looking west from Pilcher Monument. The large island in the distance is Guernsey. The white sands of Shell Beach on Herm can just be made out. That would be our lunch spot the following day.

The following day we headed to [Herm](#), a particularly small Channel Island, with a resident population of 60, swelled during the summer months by seasonal workers for the tourist industry. Only just over three nautical miles from Sark, timing was of the essence, as we had cross tides running up to four knots at time. With correct planning the crossing was really easy and before long we were sitting on Shell Beach, on the northeast coast of Herm, a beach reminiscent of the Caribbean as opposed to northwest Europe. A celebratory swim was in order as the particularly warm weather continued.



Nicky paddling past Brecqhou, a private island with no landing allowed. The tide is running north and some movement can be seen, but we were on neaps so it was manageable.



L: Approaching Shell Beach on Herm. It's hard to believe that we are in the British Isles. R: Perfect conditions approaching Herm.

Herm has a [fascinating history](#) and is lovingly cared for by the people who live and work on the island. The campsite is close to the highest point on the island, offering superb views of not only where we had paddled from but our proposed route for the following morning. Our destination was Alderney, the most northerly and isolated of the Channel Islands. We were looking at a 22 nautical mile day, 17 of which were going to be an open crossing.

Those days spent working out vectors on a British Canoeing "Open Water Navigation and Tidal Planning Courses" were going to pay off. If conditions deteriorated on the crossing, we could miss Alderney; among other factors, we had to plan for tides reaching five knots in strength, and these were only neap tides! It's one thing to be able to plan the navigation in a classroom with time and resources on your side. It's a different situation when you are sitting in a field, with limited resources and a restaurant booking fast approaching.

Fortunately, Janet was pretty quick with the calculations and soon we were heading down the path towards the restaurant. One of the pleasures about kayaking in the Channel Islands is the possibility of eating out in a variety of quality restaurants. This is not a wilderness area, but a populated archipelago, but with some really high-quality kayaking, which requires careful tidal planning.

The following morning, I radioed into [Guernsey Coastguard](#), informing them that eight sea kayakers were leaving Herm for Alderney, with an estimated time on the water of just over five hours. The forecast was perfect, apart from the hint of some mist patches. As we headed north through the reef to the start of the crossing the hint of mist turned into the reality of thick fog. Visibility was well below 200 meters.



L: An interesting navigational mark. A six-knot speed limit to avoid disturbing the puffins. R: Leaving Herm early in the morning. I had just radioed the Guernsey Coast Guard and was pleased with the weather conditions.

As we sat contemplating our next move the coastguard called for our position and our intentions. It should only be a mist patch, so we decided to press on in the hope that the forecast was correct. The Coastguard seemed surprised by our decision and insisted that we radio in every 30 minutes with our location, the visibility, and most strangely the welfare of the group, a request that I had never had before.

As we headed into the fog we quickly settled into a rhythm, senses tuned into any unusual noises and aware of a building two-meter swell. I radioed in after 30 minutes and again after an hour. I missed off the welfare report on the second radio call and the Coastguard was immediately back on the radio requesting information on the condition of the group. It would have been so easy to have been flippant and answer that one person had a sore shoulder, another person was feeling slightly menopausal, etc., but I resisted the temptation. What was an issue though, was that out of 60 minutes potential kayaking time, 15 minutes had been spent on the radio.

The forecast mist patch evolved into an 18-mile-wide, dense fog bank, so we were within a few hundred meters of Alderney before we eventually saw the vague shape of its cliffs looming out of the fog. It was a pretty good test of the accuracy of our navigation, without doubt satisfying to those who had drawn the vectors the night before.



30 minutes later the fog had surrounded us and it stayed that way for nearly five hours. A good test of navigational planning.



Alderney appearing from the fog. Seeing the cliffs bought a sense of relief.

[Alderney](#) is the closest of the Channel Islands to both France and England, with a turbulent past. This is reflected in the numerous fortifications dotted around the coast. Possibly the darkest period in the history of the island was during the Second World War, when the island was evacuated prior to being occupied by the forces of Nazi Germany. The fortifications and anti-tank walls can be seen all around the island plus the memorials to the foreign slave workers who died as a result of the appalling treatment they received.

Thankfully, today Alderney is a much happier place and we enjoyed a couple of peaceful days exploring the northern isle. It was also with some relief that we watched the fog disperse prior to our paddle south back to Sark and eventually Jersey. It was a late afternoon departure from Alderney, we had a 22 nautical mile paddle, of which, 18 were an open crossing, but we had tide and visibility on our side. Five hours after leaving and just as the sun set on another superb day, we pulled ashore in Dixcart Bay, Sark, 60 hours after we had left on our crossing to Herm.



Kate passing Fort Houmet Herbe, completed in 1854 it is one of numerous military fortifications around the coastline of Alderney.



L: The daily ritual of eating in a restaurant. A very civilised way of undertaking an eight-day sea kayaking trip. R: Alderney Lighthouse on Quenard Point. It was built in 1912 to warn ships of the treacherous waters around the island. In March, 2011, the powerful light was replaced by much weaker lights. Previously it could be seen from 23 nautical miles away but the powerful beam was replaced by a couple of LED lights which can only be seen from 12 miles away.



Angus leaving the southern tip of Alderney, its about 17 nautical miles to our next landing. Conditions were ideal.



Arriving in Sark. We took a day to explore the island on foot before heading back to Jersey on our final 12 mile crossing.

One thing many of us are guilty of is the desire to travel the world in search of paddling adventures. We graze on a diet of Instagram feeds, magazine articles, etc., drawn to ever more remote and exotic locations, while we neglect those areas close to home. We should be thinking about exploring in detail our local environment, gaining an intimate knowledge of the history, geography, and wildlife of our home area.

We are fortunate living in Jersey, in that distances are small. We only drove ten miles in total, to enable this paddle to take place: Eight days of superb kayaking and, for most people on the trip, new places to visit, especially Alderney, which isn't paddled to that often.

[Alastair Humphreys](#)* has developed the concept of microadventures, they should be short, simple local, and cheap, opening up the world of adventure to people who otherwise might not have access to challenges in the outdoors. Our trip at the end of July certainly met most of the criteria of a microadventure, although we could

perhaps have eaten in cheaper restaurants at times.

To Get To Jersey

Ferries

From G.B., about a ten-hour trip without much savings in price.

[Manche Iles Express](#)

[Condor Ferries](#)

Airlines

British Airways from London's Gatwick is probably the easiest. [Flybe Air](#)

easyJet: www.easyjet.com Clubs and Outfitters [The Jersey Canoe Club](#) welcomes visiting kayakers. They have kayaks for use and members who are eager to share the local waters with visiting kayakers.

[Gorey Watersports](#)

[Absolute Adventures](#)

[Kayak Adventures](#)

[Jersey Adventures](#)



Kevin Mansell: Although born in England, Kevin grew up on Jersey, an island he has called home since the mid 1960s. Kevin spent his working life as a school teacher. Kayaking has been an integral part of his life since he was given his first kayak in 1969. He has earned his A BC Level 5 Coach and has spent years exploring remote areas of the world, with his favorite areas being the west coast of Greenland and Baja. Retirement in 2016 has allowed him to spend even more time on the water. You can read about his kayaking journeys at www.seapaddler.co.uk.

**Alastair Humphreys does have a website, alastairhumphreys.com, but I received an error message from Firefox when I tried to access it, including the following warning:*

"It's likely the website's certificate is expired, which prevents Firefox from connecting securely. If you visit this site, attackers could try to steal information like your passwords, emails, or credit card details."

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Adventure Paddling



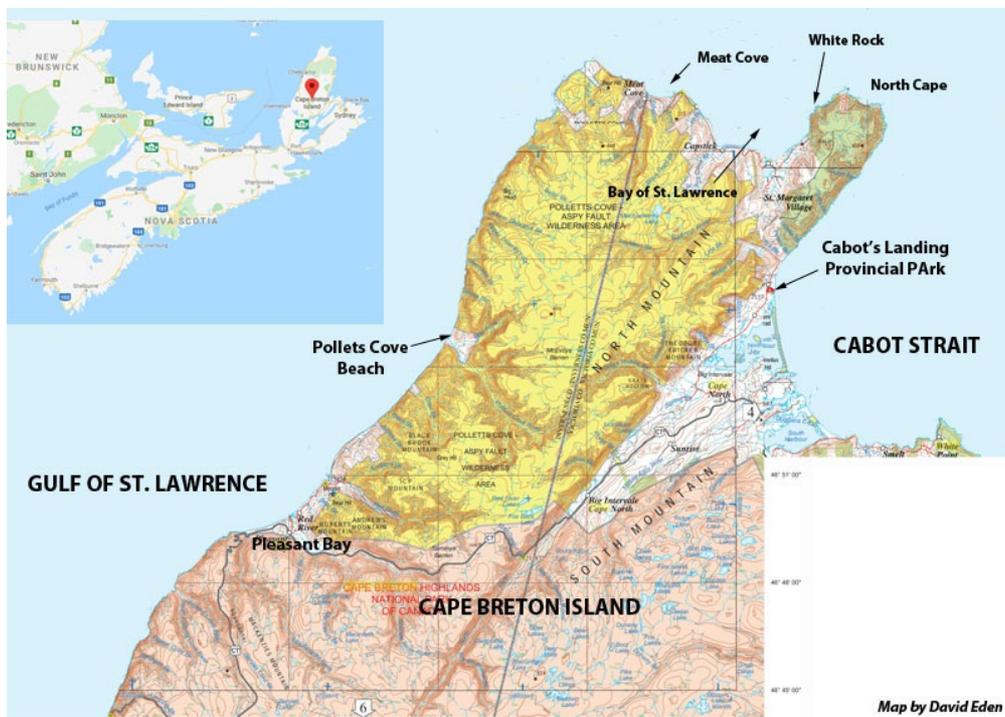
Kerry in a rare mix of still water and sunshine.

Skills, Endurance, and Majesty:

A Paddling Expedition in Cape Breton

By Kerry Kirk Pflugh. Photos by Troy Siegel and Kerry Kirk Pflugh.

The driving rain and low atmosphere created a fog-like effect as I looked at the distant shoreline. The waves crashed around me and the sudden force 6 winds were carrying me further from my companions, who were in their own struggle with the wind and waves. I was losing sight of White Rock, our destination on the opposite shore of the Bay of St. Lawrence, as the wind and waves swept me out into the Gulf of St. Lawrence. It was then I remembered my skeg was partially down. I lifted it and instantly, I was able to bring my bow around into the wind and get a ferry angle. With all my strength, I battled the squall and made my way back into the harbor and to the White Rock where my companions were anxiously waiting for me.



Like every trip I have ever embarked on, the trip to Cape Breton had been planned and discussed for more than a year. Debbie, Troy, and I decided that Cape Breton would be our destination for our next adventure even before we had completed our Maine trip. With its famous remote mountain range, the historic Cabot Trail, and a promise to paddle with whales, this seemed like the perfect blend of great paddling, history, and a wild and rugged coastline.

The plan was to launch from Pleasant Bay and paddle over the next four days to Cabot's Landing. We built in extra time in the event that foul weather grounded us. Research told us that this stretch of water had the potential of being very rough and unpredictable, depending on the weather. We spoke to experts and local guides including Scott Cunningham, who wrote the book on paddling in Nova Scotia. We learned the prevailing winds, looked at weather history for the area, and studied maps and navigation charts. We even took some rough water training to brush up on skills, just in case.

All of this was useful and valuable, but in the end it's good judgment, accurate risk assessment, and dealing with the conditions you find yourself in that makes or breaks a trip. Even with all the planning and preparation, conditions happen and you must deal with them. And so it would be for this trip.

We arrived in Pleasant Bay, a small, humble coastal town on the Cabot Trail, after a two day drive from the New York/New Jersey area. The coastline is rocky and rugged, but the mountains reaching up to the sky are green and pastoral. Horses range freely and, we would learn, make themselves quite at home in your campsites.



L: Pleasant Bay. R: Loading for departure.

It was late when we arrived and getting dark. It had been raining most of the day and we decided that instead of doing the necessary shuttle in the dark, we would arise early the next morning to drop a car at Cabot's Landing, our pullout on the other side of the mountains.

The drive over the mountains the next day was nothing short of magnificent and terrifying. The narrow winding roads reached up to the sky as we wove our way around and up, and then down the other side of the mountain range to Cabot's Landing. The mountains were thick with stately spruce trees. Streams seemed to flow from their depths, traversing down mountainsides, through valleys, and emptying into the sea. In the valleys, the landscape was pastoral, dotted with small farms and hamlets. We passed numerous hikers and bikers looking for that special trail or road challenge on the Cabot Trail.

Cabot's Landing is a lovely, well-kept Provincial Park with an expansive sandy beach. Standing on the shore, looking out on the vastness of the North Atlantic, gave me pause. A paddler would be completely vulnerable to the elements should a storm or squall come through. I hoped that conditions on our journey would be kind to us, but I had every expectation that we were about to embark on an adventure of endurance and a test of our skills.

Pleasant Bay was a-bustle upon our return. Tourists gathered to board several whale watching boats that moor there. Other visitors walked along the pier in hopes of spotting whales swimming by. It took about an hour to load our gear and make sure we had what we needed for the return shuttle. We left a float plan with one of the whale watching companies and exchanged contact information. The owner, advised that we stay off the water the next day because winds were predicted to be about 40 miles an hour. We had already decided that Tuesday would be our off water day, but we were grateful for the advice and asked about future forecasts. "Too early to tell," was the answer we received from everyone we asked.

We launched at around 11 a.m. The paddle to Pollett's Cove was about nine miles. Conditions were perfect - light wind, sea state textured but gentle, sunny, and warm.

I was conflicted about where I wanted to paddle. Hugging the shoreline, I would have the opportunity to see the beautiful rock formations or maybe a sea cave, but off shore I might see whales. For the first half of the trip I stayed near shore. I was not disappointed by this decision. The surrounding green mountains eroded to a sandstone rock face that dropped into the sea. The coast was littered with cobble stones guaranteeing a bumpy landing should one need to pull off the water.

Just as we neared Pollett's Cove, Troy and I got hailed by Debbie and the whale watching captains. They advised we paddle about a mile off shore where we would run into a pod of whales. Without hesitation, we paddled into the Gulf and right into a pod of whales.

On the drive up the mountains from Cheticamp to Pleasant Bay, Debbie and I had seen two whales swimming up the coast. Even from our distant vantage, we could see they were enormous. We speculated whether they were or minke or fin whales. Remembering their size, I was a little nervous about what whales we might see. As it turned out, they were pilot whales (genus *Globicephala*). Pilot whales are similar in features to Belugas, except in color. They are about 19 feet long and grey or black in color. I immediately relaxed and enjoyed watching them dive and swim under our kayaks and all around us.

There must have been plenty of prey like squid or fish around, because there were pod upon pod of whales swimming and diving in the area. As one group pulled away, we caught up with another. At one point a cow and her calf swam in amongst our three kayaks. The calf broke the surface and literally looked around at each of us before diving. It was awesome!



Pilot whales.



Pilot whales with Kerry.



A young whale tries to get "up close and personal."

We played with the whales for about an hour, then, little by little, the pods pulled away and soon the water was quiet again. We waved goodbye to the whale watching boats and paddled to Pollett's Cove. It was long past lunch and we decided to take a break. Once on shore, we talked about paddling on, but in the end decided to stay at Pollett's Cove for the next two nights and hike the next day, while we waited for the predicted storm and wind to pass.

Pollett's Cove was every bit as beautiful as was described by numerous writers and paddlers. However, despite its limited accessibility - either by foot or boat, it was quite busy. More than half a dozen campers had hiked in for an overnight. We chatted with several folk, about where they were from and where they were headed. Most had heard of Pollett's Cove's beauty and wanted to experience it firsthand. Even though the site was crowded with campers, we decided to stay and make camp.

A fresh water stream flowed from the mountains through the valley and out to the Gulf. Green pastures, and

rolling hillsides with free ranging horses abounded. Throughout the cove you could see makeshift fences and barricades, presumably to keep the curious horses away from tents and food.



Receding headlands between Pleasant Bay and Pollett's Cove.



Troy in front of a gulch and its stream that we passed.

Because of the approaching storm, we looked for a site that would be somewhat sheltered from the wind. We tucked in behind a hillside on the north side of the cove, away from the other campers, who were nestled against the hill across the stream. As we put up our tents and prepared our meal, the sun was sinking rapidly. We grabbed cameras and climbed to the top of the hill just in time to see it dip into the Gulf. It left a rose, orange, and purple sky in its wake and we watched until all color faded and gave way to deep purple, then blue, then black.



L: Evening sun at Pollett's Cove. R: Our tents tucked in behind a hillside.



L: Kerry, Troy, and Debbie. R: Sunset over the ocean.

Once in our tents, we settled in and hunkered down for the wind and rain. Somewhere in the middle of the night, it hit. Pouring rain pelted us, followed by intense wind. My tent bent flat, but never gave way. The rain lasted for just a short time, but by dawn the wind was still blowing, just not as intensely as it had overnight.

As we made breakfast, we watched the campers on the other side of the valley pack up and one by one head out. Soon we were alone with the horses. After breakfast, we made sure our tents and other belongings were secure and went for a hike. On top of the mountain ridge, you could see for miles. The Gulf was choppy and white caps dominated the gray and angry sea. I wondered if the sea would quiet down once the wind had stopped or if the waves and chop would persist.



We woke to a sunny day and the sound of horses chomping at the thin turf.

By the time we returned to our camp site, the wind had subsided a bit more. We began making plans and packing for the next day. It was decided we would leave early and paddle the 12 miles to Meat Cove, arriving before the predicted afternoon winds picked up.

Wednesday dawned bright and sunny, but a bit breezier than expected. Waves were crashing on the rocky beach as we launched into a choppy and confused sea. It became immediately evident that the wave height was bigger than we had realized and the waves were breaking near shore. To prevent a spill, we paddled about a mile off shore. For the next couple of hours, we paddled in three- to five-foot waves with a following sea. On occasion, a rogue breaker would sneak up on us, but we managed to avoid being rolled.

At one point, one of my companions felt queasy. We rafted up and shared some ginger and discussed the possibility of attempting a landing on one of the rocky little beaches we were passing. In the end, we decided that the wave height and intensity of the breakers would have made for a precarious landing and difficult relaunch. We pressed on until just before Meat Cove, when the seas quieted and we saw a chance to take a break safely. With a little rest and some food, we relaunched without incident and paddled the remaining two miles to our destination.

Meat Cove is a busy public beach and campsite. The cabins and tent sites were located on top of the hill far above the beach. We decided that we would ask permission to camp on the beach because the idea of hauling gear and kayaks to the top of the hill to the designated campsites was not at all appealing.



L: A heron stands silhouetted against the dusk in Meat Cove. R: Candle lantern and evening stillness on the beach at Meat Cove.

The cove was bustling with activity and the small restaurant on top of the hill was busy with tourists and campers. It was warm and the beach was filled with families and children playing and swimming. Dressed in our dry suits and paddling gear complete with radios, tow ropes, and helmets, we looked like we have returned from some grueling expedition - completely overdressed and out of place. People just stared as we landed.

With permission to camp on the beach granted, we took advantage of the restaurant and showers and then made camp for the night. Little by little families left the beach, until finally, it was just Debbie, Troy, and I. We prepared for dinner and built a small fire from the stray pieces of driftwood we found. About this time I realized I wasn't feeling well. I decided to skip dinner and went straight to bed, hoping that by morning whatever it was would pass. Unfortunately, that plan failed, and I was up all night with stomach ailments.

By day break, I was tired and weak and not at all hungry. We had a five mile open water paddle facing us and another two or three miles to our campsite. A rain storm was predicted for the late morning with the following day predicted to be another high wind day. Given the circumstances, I felt I needed to push myself to make the passage and get settled ahead of the storm.



Leaving Meat Cove with the five-mile open water crossing ahead.



White Rock, a massive quartz intrusion and our goal across the Bay of St. Lawrence.

We launched as the day dawned grey and deeply overcast. Debbie and Troy wolfed down power bars and we packed at record speed. The cove was glass-like, not a ripple broke the surface. As I paddled, the fresh air seemed to pick me up a bit and I felt I would be okay. However, as we made our way into the Bay of St. Lawrence, the wind picked up and the sea state built, becoming textured and confused. About half way to White Rock, an unexpected squall hit. The three of us were blown in different directions and I found myself alone, battling to remain in the Bay. The driving rain was coming down so hard, it felt like hail and the wind was unrelenting.

As I was being carried out of the Bay into the Gulf, I remembered my skeg was partially down. I lifted it and was able to maneuver my bow into the wind and get a ferry angle that carried me back into the Bay and across to where my companions were waiting for me. At this point, I was exhausted, but also pleased that I had managed

the squall and was safely reunited with my companions. The pouring rain had not let up, so I pulled my cagoule out of the day hatch for additional protection.

We discussed our options - going back, paddling into the harbor, or continuing. Realizing we were just two miles away from our pull out, we decided to continue. As we paddled past sea caves and unique rock formations and spires, we were joined by a pod of seals. At times they were skittish and at other times, brave enough to be within two feet of our kayaks. They were completely unaffected by the wind, waves, and rain.

We rounded Cape North and passed the lighthouse at Money Point, the feature that indicated our campsite was near. By this point, we had endured at least two more squalls and whatever strength I had left had vanished. I called to my companions for help. We rafted up and they insisted, despite my stomach upset, that I eat and drink something. I did so with great trepidation. Knowing that I was completely out of juice, I asked to be towed. About five minutes into the tow, I started to revive and reached for another power bar that I had placed in my pocket. After another ten minutes, I was paddling while in tow. The food and water had revived me enough so I could continue.



A sea arch looms ahead as we paddle towards Cape North.

We looked for the description of our pull out, but after paddling four miles, we knew we had missed it. The weather was continuing to be unfavorable, although the intensity of the wind had died down. However, the sea state was still choppy and we were all tired and anxious to take a break. We consulted our maps and GPS and Troy indicated we were less than a mile to the Gulch, the location of a beautiful waterfall and possible pullout. We paddled until we reached the falls. The rain had by now subsided significantly and the winds remained tolerable, but the sea state seemed to be building. Troy inspected the possibility of using the Gulch as a campsite, but after landing and walking around, he decided that it was very wet and with waves from the North Atlantic crashing into the small cove, we figured it would be best to find something else. By this point, we were running out of options. The next safe pull out was Cabot's Landing, which was scheduled to be our final stop the next day. Apparently, in our pursuit of a landing, we had paddled well beyond our planned pull out.

Troy estimated that we were only four miles away. We decided to go for it. In the distance, I could see the beach. Waves were crashing against the rock wall of North Mountain and the sea state continued to be big and confused. Fortunately, the wind and rain had stopped and with our destination in site, the only thing I could think about was how to safely land in the crashing surf.

About a mile from the beach we paused to put on our helmets. We discussed the best approach for a landing in big breaking waves and then made our way to shore. As we got closer, the crashing waves seemed to subside. Perhaps it was the contour of the land, or the slightly sheltered configuration of the cove, but the landing was anti-climactic in comparison to the day on the water.



On the beach at Cabot's Landing. Note the nearly non-existent surf.



The beach and adjoining park were not in great demand this rather dreary day.

All three of us rejoiced by kissing the sand and laying there for several minutes calming our nerves and getting our land legs. It felt like we had been on the water for days. In fact, it was only early afternoon. Considering the squalls, wind, and waves, we had made excellent time covering the 15 miles from Meat Cove to Cabot's Landing.

It was a paddle trip for the record books - a test of endurance, strength, skills, fear, anxiety, and team work. Conditions ranging from benign to challenging with five foot waves, following seas, breakers, squalls with driving rain making visibility nearly zero; and winds gusting to 30 knots with no place to land.

There continues to be much to process about our decisions. The trip, however, definitely solidified my confidence in and knowledge of my skills; the importance of eating and drinking even when not hungry; the value of good research, planning, and preparation, and the absolute gravity of choosing good and skilled paddling pals that you can depend upon to join you on eventful expeditions.



Kerry Kirk Pflugh: Kerry is Director of the Office of Local Government Assistance at the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, the direct line between the DEP and all municipal, county, and local governments. She is an enthusiastic sea kayaker, expediting from Newfoundland to the Adirondacks to Alaska. Kayaking has taken Kerry to places she never dreamed she'd see. She has met extraordinary people and enjoyed sharing her adventures with friends. She also enjoys writing about her travels in the hopes of inspiring others to wander the waters of the world..



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KAYAKING PEOPLE



Publisher Tamsin Venn nears the Essex side of the Fox Creek or Hay Canal, the "oldest man-made tidewater canal in the United States, dug in 1820." HistoricIpswich.org.

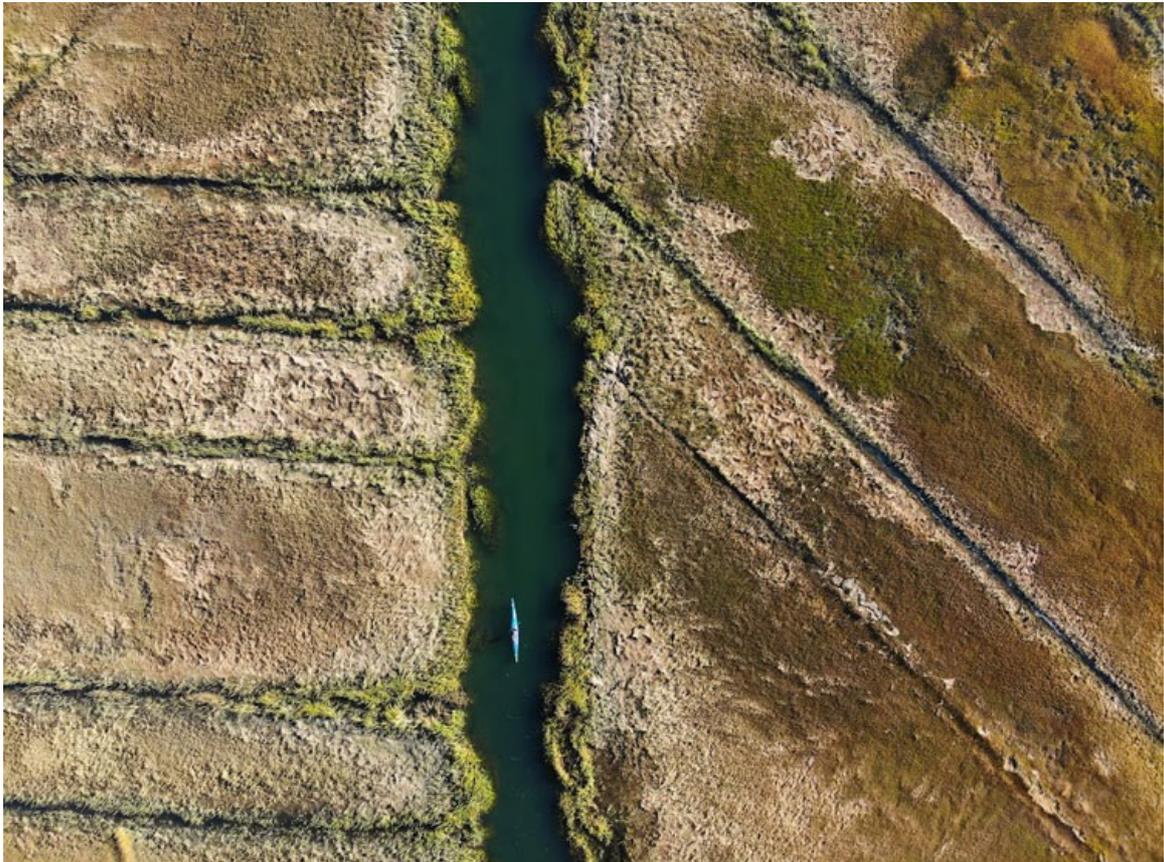
Breaking The Mold: Trampling The Trope On Older Women

By Tamsin Venn. Photos by Olive Sauder.

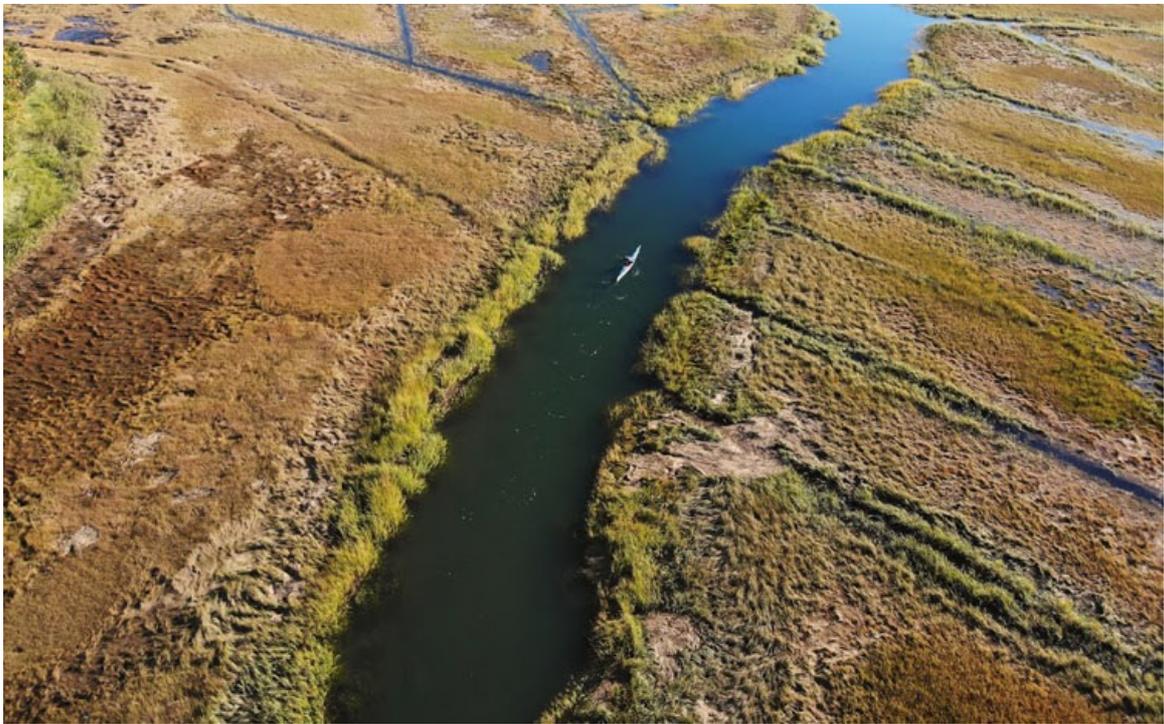
International Women's Week, the first week in March, is a week of celebration, education, and awareness surrounding women's and gender issues. The United Nations marks the week with annual conferences on equality. To raise awareness locally in Ipswich, Mass., Jan Lindsay and photographer Coco McCabe will put on an installation that focuses on older women who have chosen unexpected and physical ways to express their zest for living, who've honed their craft over decades.



"We thought it'd fit well during International Women's Month," says Lindsay, who is an accomplished mountain biker and registered nurse. "The idea behind the project grew from a growing sense that, as a sixty-something-year-old woman, I was becoming invisible. And surveying older women friends, I discovered that it resonated."



"We could feel our youth-idolizing culture throwing older people, particularly older women, into the shadows. My hope is to throw that trope into a different light."



The exhibit at Zumi's Coffee Shop in Ipswich, Mass., in March, will include photos of eight local women in action, paired with their story.



The exhibit at Zumi's Coffee Shop in Ipswich, Mass., in March, will include photos of eight local women in action, paired with their story.



These photos taken of publisher Tamsin Venn kayaking through the Ipswich marshes, home base for Atlantic Coastal Kayaker, will be part of the exhibit.



The Fox Creek Canal provided the final link in the chain of navigable water from Merrimac River to the Essex River. This allowed passage of primarily lumber from New Hampshire to the shipyards in Essex without risking passage on the open ocean. It was also used for the local transport of farm and other goods, especially salt marsh hay, hence its other name. Today, the canal is not maintained, is entirely tidal, and is used recreationally,



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Places



From a launch site onto Menokin Bay in Virginia, paddlers can explore Cat Point Creek's protected upstream reaches or head downstream toward the Rappahannock River.

Paddle Through Past Landscapes Along Remote Cat Point Creek

By Leslie Middleton. Photos by Dave Harp.

Early morning light beckoned me upstream into the green, marshy world of Cat Point Creek, a tributary of Virginia's Rappahannock River.

I paddled the creek's narrow path through pastures of arrow arum, past tight fists of yellow pond lilies that had begun their spring unfurling. Blue flag irises were emerging from ferns that had found a toehold in boggy soil amongst the roots of a small, red maple.

The rhythmic swirl of water eddied off the paddles, occasionally interrupted by sounds from the marsh: The slap of a beaver marking its territory before sliding, unseen, beneath the flatwater to the tangled woodwork of its den. The cry of a pileated woodpecker on its trajectory through the creek's forested valley.

Cat Point Creek offered such a complete feeling of remoteness that I felt I must be close to experiencing the land - and waterway - much as it had been before English settlers came to the area.

I'd set off that morning from a launch downstream at the historic site of Menokin, the 1769 home of Francis Lightfoot Lee, who signed the Declaration of Independence. The grounds include a recently improved launch site for canoes and kayaks. My paddling companion was Alice French, the Menokin Foundation's educator, whose job includes taking visitors onto Cat Point Creek from spring to fall.



A kayaker enjoys a serene paddle on Cat Point Creek in Virginia through the early morning mist.

Menokin offers the only public boat launch on Cat Point Creek, so paddlers are often found heading down the hill behind the remains of the Lee family's house, now undergoing restoration to showcase Colonial building methods. The road descends through towering tulip trees that date to the early 1800s.

The launch site itself was once the plantation's bustling wharf at the end of a "rolling road," where large casks of tobacco were rolled downhill to waiting ships. The road is still evident as a deep depression alongside the path to the launch site.

Cat Point Creek stretches 19 sinuous miles, roughly north to south, across almost the entire width of Virginia's Northern Neck. And although the creek is a Rappahannock tributary, its headwaters are just a half-mile shy of the Potomac River.

A satellite image of this portion of "the Neck" shows the dendritic tendrils of Cat Point and other creeks that empty into the Rappahannock. They cut into sediment laid down eons ago, giving way to modest escarpments above which Native Americans and then colonists established settlements. Now covered in forest, they flank either side of Cat Point Creek at the far edges of the wide, watery valley.

As we paddled upstream from Menokin Bay, the creek was narrow and boggy. Here and there, a thin white PVC pipe marked possible channels, but at times the waterway got so narrow we were forced to back out and try another route.

I'd been told that during the high tide - *and* after a lot of rain - we might be able to paddle another five miles upstream if we were willing to navigate downed trees and an uncertain pathway through dense wetlands. That kind of adventure would have to wait for another day.

After a slow mile upstream, stopping to admire the blooms of Virginia sweetspire and the delicate evening primrose, we headed back to Menokin Bay. It was only on the return trip that I saw a single house in the distance.



The freshwater marshes of Cat Point Creek, a tributary of the Rappahannock River in Virginia, offer perfect habitat for largemouth bass, crappie, rockfish and catfish..

I wanted to see the downstream stretch of the creek, too, as it winds its way to the Rappahannock. On a different day, after setting up a return shuttle, I launched from Menokin during a slight drizzle.

The creek's serpentine curves became more obvious as I paddled. Each was bounded by solid, tree-covered banks pockmarked by dark holes where kingfishers and other animals burrowed.

Scraggy roots of mountain azalea clung to the bare soil of these north-facing cliffs, refuge pockets for plants more commonly found in Virginia's higher elevations. Every so often, a large splash roiled the water nearby, possibly a blue catfish or gar. An immature bald eagle followed us downriver, stopping on tree snags along the way.

Long before Cat Point Creek became one of several designated "water trails" on Virginia's Northern Neck, it was for eons one of many watery pathways integral to the lives of the local indigenous peoples. In 1608, Capt. John Smith recorded 14 Rappahannock Indian settlements on the north side of the river and its tributaries. The lands surrounding Cat Point Creek offered superior soils for small-scale agriculture and pottery making.

These same rich soils and elevated plateaus were attractive to English settlers, too. By the late 1600s, the Rappahannock had been mostly displaced from their homeland.

The Menokin plantation was not the only large farm along Cat Point Creek during the colonial era. Just downstream from Menokin is Mt. Airy, owned by the Tayloe family for more than 250 years. Tenth generation Tayloe Emery lives there today with his wife and two children, who are growing up, like their forebears, with a close relationship to the creek.

"We have some old letters between John Tayloe and George Washington, talking about duck hunting," Emery told me. "I like to think of the creek as where George Washington used to shoot his dinner."

Emery has a conservation easement on much of his property, ensuring protection into perpetuity.

In all, more than 10% of the 48,000 acres of the creek's watershed is protected by easements. The Tayloe Tract, close to the mouth of the creek, was the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's first acquisition of the Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge.

Today, the agency manages several parcels along the creek set aside for wetlands, water quality, wildlife and especially waterfowl. Headed down the creek toward the river, we passed multiple duck blinds perched on the edge of the creek.



A delicate web weaves through bare branches along the shore of Cat Point Creek in Virginia.

After several days of rain, the creek's downstream flow matched the tidal current headed upstream, and the wind was thankfully behind us. There was no one else on the water - not unusual, according to those who frequent the creek. But we continued to be followed by a mature bald eagle, which was joined from time to time by an immature eagle.

Bill Portlock, senior educator for the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, has paddled here in every season for many years, often as part of the annual winter bald eagle survey conducted by the College of William and Mary. It's not uncommon, he said, to find eagles there in large numbers.

"There are eagles perched on the edges of the marsh everywhere - so many that we often have to stop the boat to make an accurate count," he said.

Portlock attributes this to the wide variety of life found in the creek's ecosystem and said the diversity is driven in part by its location.

"Cat Point Creek is located right at the cusp where the salt wedge coming up the Rappahannock from the Chesapeake Bay runs under the fresh water coming downstream," he explained. The upwelling is the source of biological productivity in the river and the creek.

Richard Moncure, tidal river steward for Friends of the Rappahannock, has spent much of his life on the Rappahannock and often leads educational trips on Cat Point Creek.

"The creek is like a microcosm of the entire Rappahannock River: brackish at its mouth, becoming fresher the farther upstream you go. It's a great place for teaching about watersheds, and it's still relatively pristine," he said.

And, according to Moncure, it is "perfectly underutilized."

The stretch of the creek from Menokin Bay south to the Rappahannock River is crossed by two low bridges, limiting power boat traffic to those well-timed to the tides. "It's ideal for kayaks and other small watercraft," he said.

The wind picked up as we paddled under Newland Road, the second of these bridges, right as Cat Point Creek widens onto the river. It took some work to paddle upriver to our take-out at Naylor's Beach Campground. The Rappahannock is a couple of miles wide here, and I missed the intimacy of the creek's marshy, serpentine channel.

Another day - another season - I'll return. Maybe in the late summer, when the arrow arum's dark sticky seeds are forming the winter food for ducks, or in the fall, when the wild rice lets loose on the water. Maybe next spring, as the green of the freshwater marsh is just emerging.

No matter when, I'm reasonably confident this unique and highly protected landscape will have changed little.

Bill Crouch, assistant manager for the Rappahannock River Valley refuge, puts it this way: "Cat Point Creek comes very close to the character of wilderness that so many of us seek... untrammelled, and mostly unaltered by man."

Resources

The paddle launch and kayak rentals are available at Menokin during daylight hours. Visit menokin.org or call 804-333-1776.

For a digital map of the water trails on the Northern Neck of Virginia, including Cat Point Creek, visit virginiawatertrails.org.



Click image for PDF describing the water trail.



Leslie Middleton writes about water quality, public access, and the special places of the Chesapeake Bay region from her home in Charlottesville, Virginia. Click image for more articles by Leslie.



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The Gear Bag



Millie watches us load the canoes.

What We Took To Maine

By David Eden

In the first years of our marriage, when Lilly was small and before Anton came along, we would pack up our big Necky Nootka, stick Lilly in the middle hatch and my son, Chris, in the bow and head out with Tammy riding shotgun in her Arluk 1.8 on multi-day trips. As the kids grew older, our usual kayak exploration mode was to drive to and camp at a central location and explore the paddling opportunities in the area. Now that we are empty-nesters, it has been hard to return to our previous style of two decades gone. For one thing, the camping accoutrements you can fit into a car make for much more comfortable camping: large tent, big inflatable mattress, real pillows, an oversized cooler, martini glasses.

But we missed the romance of those past trips, with the ability to go much farther than a simple day trip. So this year, we had an opportunity to go on a multi-day trip to Maine and jumped at it. Along the way, we were able to field test some new gear, some bought and some borrowed, some old and some very new, under what were some reasonably difficult conditions: high winds, rain and sleet, and freezing temperatures. A list of our larger bits and bobs of gear and how they worked follows.



Left to Right:
 Snow Lion Limited Edition Expedition Regular
 Sea to Summit Sea To Summit Comfort Plus SI Sleeping Pad
 Therm-a-Rest Therm-a-Rest NeoAir® XTherm™ Pad
 REI Trailbreak Foam Pillow

Sleeping Bags

Snow Lion Limited Edition Expedition Regular - Priceless: Literally priceless, because, unfortunately, you can't get these anymore, Snow Lion being long gone. These were the best-designed bags available when I bought them in 1976. List price was \$166.00. or perhaps \$749.07 in 2019 dollars. Over the past 43 years, the down in them has settled, turning what was once a bag that was almost too hot at temps above 10° into a three-season bag. Still, these had several advantages, critically the ability to zip together. This meant we could shove Millie the dog down inside as a hot water bottle for extra warmth. Visit the [1976 catalogue PDF](#) to see what the outdoor enthusiast has lost.

Sleeping Pads

David: Sea To Summit Comfort Plus SI Sleeping Pad - \$139.95: This is a lightweight sleeping pad for camping and backpacking. I found it very comfortable to sleep on. Its three-inch foam thickness offers plenty of plushness for lying on the hard ground. The foam is much larger packed than our old 3/4-inch Therm-a-Rests (also 43 years old and somewhat flattened). It has a self-inflating, adjustable fill valve (SI stands for "self-inflating") which does work to some extent, but I found that I had to blow it firm, as with any of this sort of pad. The valve design is not great for getting your mouth around. The Delta Core interior design helps to reduce the pad's weight by removing some of the foam without losing support. R-value of 4.1 kept me quite warm during our recent trip to Maine, when the temps dropped below 30° F on at least one night. I got mine at [REI](#).

Tammy: Therm-a-Rest NeoAir® Xtherm™ Sleeping Pad - \$214.95 - \$254.95: Tammy thought that this pad was "wicked comfortable." Since this is essentially an air mattress, one would expect it to be cold, but Therm-a-Rest has solved this through a combination of construction and materials. To quote the Therm-a-Rest website:

When your backcountry pursuits demand extreme insulation and an ultralight packed size, alpinists and mountaineers turn to the NeoAir XTherm. The unrivaled Triangular Core Matrix offers the best warmth-to-weight ratio of any air sleeping pad construction. The construction gives the 219½" (6.4 cm) thick pad superior stability, boasting the most inches of weld for maximum camp comfort. The packable pad boasts a 6.9 R-value, allowing users to take it into the most extreme conditions.

Other features the website mentions are: Ripstop nylon resists punctures; ThermaCapture layers trap air and reflect heat; and the mummy shape shaves ounces off. The pad is quite narrow, and Tammy did have some trouble staying on top. A workable solution for us: We placed our old Therm-a-Rest pads as a base in case we slipped off the pads, then used the other pads directly under us. We were sent a slightly older version to test (Therm-a-Rest has updated some aspect of the pad, including a new valve design to replace the very reliable one they have used for at least 40 years.) You can get the version we had, at deep discount [here](#).

Pillows

When we car camp, we pack a couple of standard pillows each. Too bulky for this trip, so we bought a couple of the [REI Co-op Trailbreak Foam Pillow](#). These come in two sizes, Regular and Large and cost \$19.95 and \$24.95. The pillows have a smooth side and a plush side, and each has a sewn-on pocket that the pillow can be rolled into. They are stuffed with chopped foam, which makes them easier to roll than a solid pillow. We found them perfectly comfortable and a nice change from our previous solution of rolling up a bundle of clothes.



L to R: Jack Rabbit tent with Mountain Shade Tarp over it. Jack Rabbit without fly. Old Eureka tarp pole design. New Eureka pole.

Tent and Tarp

Big Agnes Jack Rabbit SL3 Tent - Not Available: Big Agnes no longer makes this tent, which is a pity, because we have found it a nearly perfect three-season super light model. Rated for three sleepers, it would be a very tight fit if anyone else tried to crawl in with us. Still, this is one incredibly light tent with reasonable room for two adults and a small dog. And it rolls into a small package.

The tent has a number of features usually associated with much heavier tents, such as two doors, two vestibules, free standing, pre-cut guylines, color-coded webbing, buckles, and storage pockets. It is extremely easy to set up by yourself, even in the dark (although a headlamp would help to find the color-coded webbing on the fly). The main support and ridge pole segments are all connected; only the cross-ridge pole is separate, making basic setup rapid.

Although the Jack Rabbit is no longer available, Big Agnes does produce the very similar [Tiger Wall 3 Platinum](#), which retails for \$599.95. (Why can't they just charge \$600 and be done with it?!) The difference that springs to the eye when checking this out is the price. Five years ago, our Jack Rabbit retailed for a mere \$369.95. However, Big Agnes' use of quality materials and great design, as well as the incredible lack of weight of its super-light tents could make the price less painful.

Mountainsmith Mountain Shade Tarp - \$59.95: We carried several extra tarps with us to cover eating and kitchen areas. We had an eight by ten polyethylene tarp from [Aubuchon Hardware](#) (\$8.99) that went *inside* the tent and served as a ground cloth, and the 12- X 12-foot [Mountain Shade](#) went over everything.

The tarp gave extra coverage from the elements, which were not favorable on more than one night. It kept the rain drip line even farther from the tent than the fly alone, and on the very cold nights collected the breath frost that otherwise would have gathered inside the tarp and rained down through the netting roof onto us.

We attached ten-foot parachute chord guy lines to each tie-point. With the chords, the tarp weighs about 2.25 pounds, so the weight of the tarp and tent together was just over five lbs.

Tarp Poles: We carried four adjustable tarp poles By Eureka. I have used these for years, after making do with kayak paddles to form a peak in my tarps. This design is no longer available, as Eureka has [vastly improved the design](#), making a lighter (18 oz. vs 2319½ oz.) pole with a more compact adjustment mechanism. The pole now has a pair of twist locks similar to those used on adjustable mountaineering ski poles. Price is about the same - \$35 more or less.



L : Outdoor Research Upsurge Paddle Gloves. R: Werner carbon-fiber, bent-shaft Corryvreckan Paddle.

Paddling Gear

Outdoor Research Upsurge Paddle Gloves - \$39.00: We were sent a nice new pair of these [paddle gloves](#) to test. I found them very comfortable to wear and fairly warm. I do suffer from very cold hands and did find that using my lined pogies was necessary under the coldest and wettest conditions. The gloves worked very well at protecting against that sore spot at the base of the thumb. They were also great for improving my grip on my wet paddle shaft. The gloves are designed with "barely-there foam support, and dexterity that doesn't interfere with your natural grip on [a paddle]. Breathable Airprene is mapped only where your hands lose the most heat, and also allow for maximum stretch and dexterity. A synthetic suede palm, poly-spandex stretch back of hand fabric, all-over UPF 50+ sun protection, and strategically placed drain holes for a cold water escape route," according to

the website.

One feature that we did not, alas, get to test was the gloves' UPF rating, as the sun was never strong enough in this northern late season paddle to be much of a concern. Overall, an A-rating for this nicely-designed glove.

Corryvreckan Carbon Bent-shaft Paddle - \$440.00: This might have been a good time to more extensively field test the GearLab Greenland-style paddles I reviewed last September, but unfortunately we had to send them back. We used our Werner break-down carbon fiber models, mine the bent-shaft, two-piece [Corryvreckan](#). The large blade and bent shaft of my paddle were a big help shoving my heavily-laden canoe along. That big blade is also a comfort for bracing in rough conditions, and the bent shaft works ergonomically to increase the power of my stroke. According to the Werner website, the Corryvreckan is its "largest premium High Angle blade, designed for those who want powerful strokes in all directions. The perfect paddle for the coastal play environment, or for those strong enough to move lots of water and cover the miles fast." I love this paddle and highly recommend it.



L to R: Skylake Pack. Discovery View Dry Bag. Counter Assault Bear Keg. BearVault BV500 Food Container. Yeti Roadie 20 Cooler.

Dry Bags

Skylake™ Dry Daypack - \$99.95: We were sent several dry bags from SealLine to test out, and [this beauty](#), with its 18-liter capacity and beautiful "Heather Blue" color quickly became my fave bag of the trip. This is what I kept all those daily items and extras that needed to stay dry and was the first item out of the boat at every stop and the last one in as we took off. An A++ pack.

Some of the features mentioned on the SealLine site include:

- Waterproof: Constructed with 100% waterproof materials & welded seams.
- Confident closure: DrySeal™ roll-top closure offers intuitive sealing and amplifies waterproof protection.
- Easy access: Front stretch mesh pocket offers quick and easy stowing and retrieval on pack exterior.
- Stowable: Convenient roll & stow design is secured by front pocket strap for compact storage.
- Comfortable: Lightly padded shoulder straps provide comfort when carrying.
- Versatile: Straps are removable for travel and dry bag use.
- Attachment point: Allows for clip-on of a bike light.

Another thing I really like about this pack is that it doesn't stay in storage when I'm not paddling. I had to do a long bike ride carrying papers and a borrowed book in the rain and the Skylake replaced my usual [Patagonia Chacabuco](#) daypack that day.

SealLine Discovery View Dry Bag, 20 Liters - \$39.95: We had a couple of older REI see-through 30-liter dry bags. These were very stiff and hard to roll at the best of times, but became almost iron-hard as the temperature dropped. I switched them out for [these really nice bags](#) after struggling with the others for a day. The material stayed flexible in the cold, and even though the sides were translucent, rather than crystal-clear like the REI bags, I was still able to see enough to be able to tell what was inside.

We have received a couple of bags from Cascade Designs (parent company of the SeaLine products). The bags have the PurgeAir bleed valve: "Our unique and waterproof PurgeAir™ valve vents trapped air, helping the dry bag compress further after being sealed, and is both more durable and more reliably waterproof than waterproof/breathable fabric membranes." I have always been somewhat suspicious of the valve, but must admit that the bags' contents stayed perfectly dry through splashing, rain, and even a couple of dunking on our trip. Definitely A+ gear.

Food Storage

Counter Assault Bear Keg™ - \$79.95:

BearVault BV 500 - \$79.95:

Yeti Roadie 20 Cooler - \$199.99: We were heading into bear country and needed to take food containers that would keep our food safe, according to trip leader Chuck Horbert. This led to some rapid research and some agonized decision making. Here is what we came up with:

There is no really ideal solution. None of the safes is really 100% bear-proof. In fact, the [BearVault](#) products are

banned in at least one major park, the Adirondacks. Backpackers going into the High Peaks region have to carry an approved food safe, or rent one, and the BearVaults are banned, because the bears in the area have learned to break that design open. The [Bear Keg](#) is an approved design and should fit well into a backpack. On the other hand, it is fairly small and you can't see through it. Neither is waterproof, Both are frankly a pain to open and close. We got one of each to see how they would work. We definitely needed something to discourage the other critters who skulk around campers, waiting to raid their food, and we could just hope that Maine bears were not as mechanically inclined as those of the Adirondacks.

We were luckier with the cooler, as we had been sent it to review several years ago (*ACK The Gear Bag*, June, 2014 - Vol. 23, No. 4). The cooler has extremely thick (2½") walls. There are holes in the corners of the lid to add padlocks, necessary to make the cooler truly bear-proof. We did this, and I wore the keys around my neck. Its 19½" width just fits crossways into my [Hornbeck pack canoe](#), right behind the seat, so, although it's pretty heavy (15 lbs. empty), it sits low and does not affect the trim of the boat.

As it turned out, we were not bothered by bears at all, and, although I can't say if the smaller panhandlers of the forest came around after dark, we had no trouble with spoiled or nibbled comestibles in Maine!

ATLANTIC COASTAL KAYAKER

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Safety



The Anti-Hypothermia Kit, from center top: A: Kindling (Fatwood). B: Hurricane Matches. C: Candle Lantern. D: Heavy Duty Space Blanket (note grommets corners). E: Fire Lighters F: Waterproof Matches. G: Bic Lighter and Home-made Sparker. H: Magnesium Block with Spark Bar. I: Chemical Hand and Body Warmers. The items are all lying on a SOL reflective bivvy sack (J).

The Kayaker's Bug-Out Bag The Emergency Items That Should Always Be With You

By David Eden

This article first appeared in ACK May, 2015 - Vol 24 No. 3.

Creek Stewart, survival expert and author, defines "bugging out" as the "decision to abandon your home due to an unexpected emergency situation." Paddlers should never abandon their craft purposefully, but could conceivably become separated and have to go it for some time without a boat or SUP. In these instances, having an emergency kit that would stave off exposure and starvation, and expedite rescue could be a life saver. So I will be describing a two-tiered system, with items that should be attached to you in some fashion, as well as items that can be stashed on deck for instant retrieval, if necessary. But first, some basics.

The first concern of any paddler should be self-rescue, if for some reason you come out of and lose your boat, you want to be dressed for the water temperature, not the air. This can be unpleasant if you are, say paddling in Maine in July, as the air can be quite hot, but the water dangerously cold. I recall an incident with my son, then 12, off Peaks Island in August. He was in a dry suit, with light polypro long underwear and complaining about the heat. He managed to flip in a protected cove on Cushing Island. We were only 25 yards off the beach, so I towed him in. He was shivering by the time we got there, after only five minutes in the water. A quick rub down and a candy bar soon had him right. So if there had been other endangering circumstances, I would have needed to get him warmed up and kept him that way until help could arrive. This leads us to our first bug-out component:

Anti-Hypothermia Kit

This kit should contain all the materials necessary for an emergency landing, and should be attached to your PFD, so that it never leaves you, along with other necessary items, like your marine radio, cell phone, signal whistle and mirror, signal flasher, flare gun, and munchies. (I must admit that my PFD looks rather like a colorful tactical vest, as if I were storming New Orleans during Mardi Gras, but I am prepared!) If you are out camping, this kit is in addition to any fire-making items you have packed away. Here is what I carry in mine:

A. Emergency energy food

The key to staying warm is to keep the home fires burning, namely, your internal combustion. Some sort of high-energy, low bulk food should be included. I like Kendal Mint Cakes, which are basically glucose and peppermint flavor. The mint cakes have long been a staple on British expeditions, and travelled to the top of Mt. Everest with Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay. Lots of easily digestible calories. (Kendal is not a brand name. It is the town where the mint cakes are made by three companies: Romney's, Quiggin's, and Wilson's. I am only familiar with the last. I don't have a bar in the kit shown - I ate it!)

B. Fire Sparkers/Flame Source

There is a bewildering range of choice in how you can produce a flame. These range from simple matches, through the old-fashioned flint and steel, to the modern versions of the latter, I carry four. The first are hurricane matches (B), which are both wind- and waterproof. I have never used these, as I have never been out in such extreme conditions. They will continue to burn until used up. Regular waterproof matches (F), a Bic or similar disposable lighter, and a home-made sparker (G) complete the starters. Matches need no explanation, but my choice of sparkers might. Although I have a traditional flint and steel kit, and have tried modern versions such as (H) the ones in which you scrape magnesium dust into a little pile and then strike sparks with a special rod and steel, I have never been able to reliably start a fire this way without a fair amount of cussing. It takes a lot of practice to get the sparks to ignite the magnesium, and you have to worry about the dust blowing away or getting wet. Still, the magnesium bar with its integrated sparking edge is light and compact, so it goes into the kit. The home-made spark producer I created from a used BIC lighter (item "G" in the first photo, directions available on youtube.com) is more reliable for producing sparks. Although a little fiddly to make, it releases a shower of sparks onto my fire starters every time I spin the wheel.



L to R: Using fatwood as a torch around 1555. Kit items double-bagged in zipper-locked freezer bags. The waterproof pack. I include a ten-foot hank of parachute cord in the zippered pocket. The pack is eight by nine by 3½ inches and weighs about two pounds.

C. Kindling and Fire Starters

I have been using fatwood (A) as kindling for years. Fatwood is "derived from the heartwood of pine trees. This resin-impregnated heartwood becomes hard and rot-resistant." (wikipedia.org/wiki/Fatwood). It has been used as a fire lighter and even for torches for hundreds of years. It burns even when wet. I buy a 40-pound box every couple of years, so I always have some fresh to use as kindling, both in my Anti-hypothermia Kit and in my regular fire kit. I usually split a single stick to make a tipi as a basis for any fire, then add whatever kindling is available, shaved down to dry wood if necessary with my handy, attached the PFD survival knife. The fire starters in the medicine bottle (E) are commercial, but making your own is very easy. The idea is to mix a fibrous material with a flammable agent. Cotton balls or pads, or even dryer lint are good choices for the fiber, and you can use either petroleum jelly, shortening, or even lard as the agent (although the last two might go rancid). I tested all three, and found that I could start a burn with my sparker on each. Really goop up a wad of fiber with the agent, roll into a tight ball, and stick into your storage container. I carry ten or 12 balls. When you are ready to use the starter, just spread some of the fibers out, then add sparks or a flame. It will burn fairly quickly, but it will definitely get your fatwood blazing.

D. Emergency Heat Source

Even before you get your fire started, you might need to act to get your outer body warming up. The candle lantern (C), which can act as light if you are stranded overnight, can actually help you warm up. The idea is to light the candle lantern, then squat or sit with it under the space blanket. If you are under the blanket, you won't lose heat from your head and you can keep an eye on the candle lantern so you don't knock it over and set yourself on fire. You can also alter your space blanket to use as a poncho, so you can walk around in it. There are excellent directions how to do this at: watertribe.com/Magazine/Y2002/M12/SteveIsaacModifySpaceBlanket.aspx Another item it might be a good idea to include in your kit is a chemical heat pack (I). There are two main types, the reusable and the disposable. The former heats very quickly but doesn't last all that long, while the latter, which requires exposure to air, heats more slowly but can last for hours. I have two handwarmers and a body warmer in my kit. I have used the former many times in the winter, and they put out a fair amount of heat.

C. Space Blanket

I carry two types of space blanket in my kit. Space blankets are basically vaporized aluminum deposited on a film to create a reflective and flexible material. They work by redirecting the infrared energy which a living body is always giving off back. (This can make the body less visible to infrared detectors. The Taliban has known this and been using it for years.) The blankets are especially effective if you are damp or wet in chilly conditions. However, they do not vent, so eventually the cooling effect of condensation could be a problem. My first type (D) is a heavy-duty version with grommets, reinforced corners. This works well as a space blanket, but can also be tied or staked down in a number of ways as a small tent or a reflector for a fire: You set up the blanket as a lean-to, then sit between it and the fire to keep your back warm, as well. The second type (J) is the background of the photo. It is a bivvy sack that you crawl into like a sleeping bag for all-around warmth. Remember the caveat about condensation, however. Its orange color makes it visible to potential rescuers. A useful addition to the Anti-hypothermia Kit would be some sort of super-compressed, super-absorbent towelling. You could get as dry as possible using this, after you have created a heat source and gotten out of immediate danger. The kit travels on my foredeck, velcroed lightly and under the bungees. If I were out in anything serious enough to make me worried about possibly separating from my boat, I can strap it to the back of my PFD.

2. The Rest of the Bug-out Bag

If you are already on a camping trip, you should have most of the items necessary for survival under unforeseen circumstances for at least 72 hours. You should be able to survive without food and with a minimum of gear for that long if you are dry and warm and will remain so (no rain or snow on the way), but carrying the bug-out bag or extra supplies will make the waiting time much more comfortable. So consider the necessities and the extras when you plan your own supply list. A classic survivalists bug-out bag should contain pretty much everything you need to survive in relative comfort and safety for up to three days, including weapons. I do not carry one, although the late Robb White, author of *How To Build A Tin Canoe* (haven't read it? Shame on you!) had a rusty old pistol in with his fishing gear which he used to bring down a huge cobio he had on the end of a four-pound test fishing line, so it might be an idea. I pack my full bug-out bag if I anticipate the possibility of being stranded on a relatively out-of-the-way shoreline for at least overnight, due to weather or injuries. The requirements for survival include warmth/dryness, first aid, shelter, hydration, and food. Extras would include tools, lighting, hygiene, and communications.

A. Warmth/Dryness

Your anti-hypothermia kit will have the materials you need to create a fire, but there are some more items that you should be carrying along. I carry a dry bag with two sets of long underwear (wool and mixed man-made), two pairs of wool socks, wool gloves a wool hat, and a light-weight poncho. This may sound like overkill, but even in the summer temperatures can go low enough to be dangerous. The poncho, besides its obvious role as rain gear, can also make a reasonable shelter, help collect rain water, and even act as an emergency sail. The underwear can be mixed and matched depending on level of discomfort. I also have a lightweight summer sleeping bag and 3/4 pad for added comfort.



Top L to R: Ponchos as emergency shelter. Two ponchos make a sail for a raft of six boats. It took us 40 miles down the Hudson River. MIL-C-5040 Type III 550 Paracord. Bottom L: Minimal hygiene supplies for three days. Clockwise from top: Toilet paper, sanitizing wipes, toothpicks, hand sanitizer, Dr. Bronner's Peppermint Soap, cut-down toothbrush, hiker's towel. The peppermint soap doubles as toothpaste. Middle top to bottom: Diver's Knife, Survival Knife, Leatherman. R top to bottom: Headlamp, Photon light, Mini Mag Light.

B. Tools

Although tools are technically an extra, there is one that I carry all the time, strapped to my PFD: a good knife. For years I carried a small diver's knife, a habit I picked up on whitewater. Canoeists often have straps around their knees, and, if they wrap around a rock, they can become entangled in the straps. The knife could turn a potential drowning into a rescue. For emergencies (and camping), I have replaced the diver's knife with a larger and beefier survival knife. There are a couple of reasons for this. First, I have found that the blades on the smaller diver's knives I have used sometimes snapped when being handled roughly (The one shown is my third.)

For camping, and proactively for emergency bugging-out, I prefer a knife to be much more rugged. The knife shown is one of the Ultimate Survival line by Gerber, retailing at about \$60. I wanted a knife that was beefy enough to be able to split kindling by batoning, or striking the back of the blade with a stick to drive it through the wood. The sheath includes a magnesium sparker and an integrated coarse sharpening strip.

The only other tool I carry, which is actually many tools in one, is a Leatherman, sort of a Swiss Army knife with needlenose pliers. These come in all sorts of sizes, the one shown, a gift, is a little larger than I would have chosen for myself, but will handle all those repair tasks one is apt to run into from time to time. Although technically not tools, I also carry several hanks of 550 parachute cord (one 50-foot, three ten-foot, and four five-foot). Parachute cord is even more useful than it would seem at first, as you can break it down into its components. 550 cord is made up of several strands, which can be unravelled to make many more feet of strong cord of various sizes. See a [terrific article here](#) about parachute cord.

Finally, I include a small sewing kit with some hefty needles and strong thread, and 15-30 feet of duct tape. Some transport suggestions: If you keep your sewing kit in an old prescription bottle, you can carefully wrap the duct tape around the bottle, which makes a more secure container than the easily breakable plastic boxes small sewing kits usually come in. You can also then include some material patches with the kit. Wrapping spare duct tape around other items in your kits is always a good idea.



First Aid: A: Container. B: Bandage roll. C: Ibuprofen and three days of prescription meds. D: Selection of band-aids and bandage pads. E: Ace bandage. F: Safety pins and tweezers. G: Triple antibiotic creme. H: Tape. I: Alcohol wipes. J: Triangular bandage. K: Finger splint. L: Moleskin and scissors. M: Lighter with duct tape wrapping. N: Bug-bite stick.

B. First Aid

The makeup of your First Aid kit (of course, you already carry one with you every time you paddle!) depends on three factors: the area you are paddling in, the time you expect to be out, and your degree of paranoia. For many years, while paddling many miles in a day with my young children (you never know when you might have to perform an appendectomy on an off-shore island), I carried a fairly complete one the length and width of a standard laptop. Now I have cut way back on my "always" kit.

C. Shelter

For basic shelter, you should be able to cobble together some form of crawl-under shelter out of the anti-hypothermia kit. You can see the picture on the previous page of me on the shores of the Hudson River with my poncho shelter. Very effective if it had rained (it didn't), but no good for bugs. I was completely covered and rather hot overnight, except for my right wrist, which ended up with at least 32 mosquito bites and as big around as a medium sub. If you are stranded, you will probably want something a bit more protective, especially if you are in an area as infested as I was with biting insects. I have a super-light, three-person tent, the Big Agnes Jack Rabbit SL3, which has taken pride of place in my emergency gear bag. (See my review in ACK)

July/August 2014, Vol. 23, No. 5.) Tight but doable in an emergency for three (warm and very snuggly-buggy), good for two, luxurious for one, and only five pounds packed. To make it even lighter, I can omit the fly and rig one for rain protection using my poncho or space blanket and parachute cord. The tent provides protection from the buggies that infest the areas I tend to paddle in the summer, and the full Monty makes a snug haven for two in an emergency.

D. Hydration

Every paddler with a lick of sense will carry sufficient liquids for the duration of their paddle, so the prepared paddler will carry sufficient for the three-day emergency stay. Camelbak.com has a nice [hydration calculator](#) to help you decide how much liquid to carry. The problem arises when you are stuck for longer than you anticipated. This is when you must be prepared to use water sources that may be less palatable than you are used to.

Water is so important to your survival that you may need to increment your supply beyond the carrying capacity of your water bottles. You may need to get water from iffy sources, such as rain pockets in shoreline rocks. If you are lucky and it rains, you can always funnel water using a space blanket, but to use less fresh sources will mean you need to carry some sort of purifying agent. Boiling water is the easiest method, but does require a significant expenditure of time and fuel. There are a number of filtering methods available from straws to full-fledged filtering systems for the packer. Your choice should at least guarantee to block the most insidious pathogenic pollutants. There is a difference between filtering and purifying, your kit should be prepared to do both to some degree.

Chemical purifiers like iodine or chlorine are fairly effective in removing pathogens. If you carry tincture of iodine in your first aid kit, you can always use this to purify your water, five to ten drops per 32 fluid ounces (about one liter) of water. Make sure to splash some around the mouth of your bottle. Then wait for at least 30 minutes before drinking. You could also carry a bottle of purifying tablets, which are light and require less worry about titration. [Potable Aqua](#) is a way of putting iodine (tetraglycine hydroperiodide) into the water in pill form. This is not entirely effective in removing dangerous microbes from your water.

A combination of filtration and chemical treatment is recommended to be entirely safe. I haven't had a chance to use my packable filtering system yet, so can't comment on what might be the best to use. We welcome any reader with experience to write up this subject. Pump filters such as the [Katadyn Hiker Pro](#) (\$80-\$85) will clean about a liter per minute. Lifestraw ([buylifestraw.com](#)) makes several products for the individual, including filtering water bottles and straws. For more information on purifying water in the field, see the very interesting article at [wikipedia.org](#).

E. Food and Food Preparation

Since we are talking about emergency rations here, you should be mainly concerned about the maximum amount of calories. For pure sugar energy and flavor, it's hard to beat the classic [Kendal Mint Cake](#), long a favorite of British mountaineers and explorers. Basically pure glucose with peppermint flavor. Freeze dried meals are great, but do make deep inroads into your water supply. They also require that you carry some sort of stove and pot, utensils, and the other accoutrements of the portable kitchen. You may want to be able to boil water for some reason, so some sort of pot is not a bad idea.

Since we are talking about an emergency stay, I prefer home-made high calorie food bars. I like pemmican and "solo bars," made in advance and stored in the freezer. There are recipes for both pemmican and solo bars at the end of this article. These bars seem to keep in the freezer almost indefinitely, and can be refrozen without affecting their taste. The solo bars pictured on page 30 were made two years ago and are still yummy. I am eating a small piece even as I write!

F. Lighting

It is no fun being caught in the wilds without a light. While I have always encouraged my kids to move without light as much as possible, as using a flashlight will limit your visual awareness at night to the small circle of the flash, a flashlight is useful around camp and for signalling. My top choice, bar none, for a primary light source is an LED head lamp with an elastic strap. (All your electric light sources should be LED. The bulbs last virtually forever and use much less battery power than incandescent bulbs.) These can range in price from under \$10 to nearly \$200. I use mine all the time at home, and buy cheap ones at the local drug store. I've never noticed any difference in performance. The elastic strap is what gives out on these, and the more expensive ones don't last any longer. As back up I carry a few little Photon -style keychain lights clipped in various places and a Mini Maglite. Even the former, light and inexpensive with their single LED bulb, are visible at up to a mile and can be used for night-time signalling.

G. Hygiene

One thing you definitely do not want to neglect when stranded is personal hygiene. At the very least, you should carry toilet paper and hand sanitizer wipes well-protected in zipper-locked bags. I also carry a toothbrush and picks, small bottles of Dr. Bronner's Peppermint Soap and alcohol/aloe hand sanitizer, and a section of very highly absorbent backpacker's towelling. I took a large one and cut it into quarters. The smaller size is adequate if you squeeze the towel out several times, like a chamois for a car.

H. Communication

"The ideal tool for on-water communications is the VHF Marine Radio, since the Coast Guard is on call 24/7 and can triangulate your signal." ("Small Craft Communication," Gordon and Elizabeth Dayton, *ACK* September,

2013, Vol. 21, No. 5). That about says it all. You can carry a number of signalling devices, but your primary should be the radio. These are much more affordable than in the past and can be carried attached to your PFD. My setup is very similar, but I also carry my cell phone in a waterproof pouch, as well as a flare pistol and a brass horn. The horn takes a lot of breath and is not very audible over distances, but I've had it a long time and it's an old friend that has traveled many miles with me. Your communication devices are not technically part of your bug-out bag, as you should have them with you at all times on the water. The sound signal and night navigation light, at least, are both required by Coast Guard rules. It should be needless to say that you should be well-versed in the use and capabilities of any communications devices you carry. For a great article about those whistles we all seem to carry, see Wayne Horodowich's "The Whistle in Kayaking" in *ACK* - April 2015, Vol 24, No. 2.

I. Packing it all up

Now that you have brought all your gear together, you want to put it all into some kind of container and to have it easily accessible if you have to abandon your boat. You don't want to be yanking at a stuck dry bag or struggling with a jammed-down hatch cover. The storage bag obviously has to be waterproof and floatable. The size of your bag and how it is secured in or on your boat depends on how much you have decided to carry along. If you decide to carry your case on deck, before you set out be sure that you can perform any rolls or rescue techniques you will be relying on for safe paddling. Once you have done that, you can head out on your trips well satisfied that you are now prepared for survival.

Recipes



Pemmican Bars

This recipe came from thepaleomom.com. She uses beef heart instead of flank steak. That I leave to you. It does require a food dehydrator. I keep my food bars frozen and add a few to my supplies when I go out. They seem to last forever in the freezer.

Ingredients

- 1 lb flank steak or ground meat or fish
- (4 cups chopped frozen spinach)
- (2 cups chopped kale packed)
- 2 cups fresh or frozen wild blueberries, or ½ cup Dried Wild Blueberries
- ½ cup Dried Apricots or about 15 fresh apricots, dehydrated until still soft)
- ¼ cup coconut oil (substitute tallow for better portability)
- ½ cup tallow

1. Slice meat into ¼-inch-thick slices and lay on trays in your food dehydrator. It is easier to slice if the meat is partially frozen. Alternatively, you can form ¼-inch-thick patties of ground meat.
2. Dehydrate meat for 5-6 hours, until quite firm and most of the moisture is gone.
3. Place chopped spinach and kale onto a fruit roll sheet on a tray in your food dehydrator. Place blueberries on a separate sheet and tray. Add trays to the dehydrator.
4. Continue to dehydrate for another 3-4 hours, until the greens are completely crisp and the blueberries are quite small, wrinkled and chewy. At this point the meat should be completely crisp as well.



Hurricane Island Solo Bars

HIOBS Solo Bars I got this recipe from *Hurricane Kitchen* by Rick Perry, food service director for many years at the Hurricane Island Outward Bound School in Maine. The cook book has all sorts of recipes for tasty, organic meals for large groups of people. We use this all the time for granola, solo bars, and other recipes. I got my copy when I was instructing on the Island in the 1980s, but it is still available on Amazon.com. The solo bars were the only food provided to students on their two- to three-day solo experiences.

Ingredients

Yield: 60 Two-ounce Bars

- 2 pounds pitted dates
- 2 pounds figs (stems removed)
- 2 pounds raisins
- 2 cups cashew pieces
- 1 cup sesame seeds
- 2 cups peanut butter
- (I use chunky peanut butter, lightly toast the sesame seeds, and add 1 cup of chopped unsweetened coconut flakes.)

1. Mix all ingredients except peanut butter and run through a meat grinder.
2. Add peanut butter and knead in a mixer with a dough hook. (You can do this by hand, but it is extremely messy.)
3. Roll out into half-inch thick sheets and cut into two-ounce bars, about one inch by 2½ inches.
4. Wrapped in plastic wrap and aluminum foil, these will keep indefinitely in the freezer.

5. Grind meat and greens in a food processor or blender as finely as possible.
6. Finely chop apricots or process in your food processor.
7. Melt coconut oil and tallow. Mix blueberries, apricot, greens and meat together in a bowl. Add melted coconut oil and tallow, stirring until completely incorporated (if it isn't holding together for you, add more tallow and/or coconut oil one tablespoon at a time until you have a fairly moist sticky dough).
8. Press into a 9x9 inch pan. Chill until firm and cut into squares or bars.

