

CPA Paddler Profile ~ Katie O'Meara

Interview by Rick Wiebush

Name: Katie O'Meara

Lives in: Baltimore City, Maryland

Real job: Faculty member at Maryland Institute College of Art

Member of a Piracy? No

Paddling Buddies: Kippers (Kent Island Practice Paddlers), Kippburz and Mary Lou from Canton Kayak Club (CKC) out of Island View Café in Essex, Maryland

Number years paddling: 2 years

How did you get involved in sea kayaking? I sea kayaked for the first time in August of 2010. I was vacationing in Maine and did a two or three hour paddle with an outfit on Mt. Desert Island. Once that baby surfed a bit I was hooked!

How did you learn to sea kayak? I wanted to learn more and set up a lesson with the Canton Kayak Club at Island View that October. Once I learned they had a dock out at Island View, I joined CKC, paddled out of there as often as I could, enjoyed it a lot, and made several paddling friends. Soon I became frustrated that I wasn't learning faster. I booked a few half-day lessons but I needed a more consistent environment to learn in, and knew that without a spray skirt or other essential gear I wouldn't be advancing. So I bought my own boat and started joining CPA paddles. My first was a Kippburz in January, 2011, and I have been paddling with the KIPP ever since. This year, after a full year with the KIPP group, I circumnavigated Kent Island (34 miles) with Paula Hubbard. In addition to these and other CPA camping paddles, last year I took a Cross Currents surf class, did a lot of pool sessions, and went to SK102 and the Delmarva weekend. I'm always looking for intensive learning opportunities. I hope to attend Kiptokee and other special events to continue to advance my paddling skills.

Boat usually paddled: P+H Scorpio LV, blue, 16'8"

Type paddle used: Aleut/Greenland

Do you do any other type of paddling besides sea kayaking? I don't really do any other paddle sports. I did a canoe weekend with Jay Gitomer on the Batso (New Jersey Pinelands) and would be interested to try it again, I'm still in the honeymoon phase with kayaking, however.

Do you regularly do any other outdoor activities? Summer: biking, hiking, travel. Hiking around archaeology sites measuring or drawing features, heading to Oman to measure towers that are 4500 years old!

How often do you paddle in summer? 2-4 times per week, longer paddles on the weekend

Do any winter paddling? YES! I joined the KIPPburz series in January last year. Winter paddling is great!

Go to pool sessions? I spent a number of Saturdays at University of Maryland last winter (2012), but now that I can paddle outdoors year-round and I'm less nervous about overturning on energetic water, I chose to spend my winter paddle days outside rather than poolside!

Favorite local paddling location: Kent Island area and Essex, Maryland so far, eager to explore Blackwater Wilderness Area and Jane's Island on the Eastern Shore.

Favorite non-local location: Still working on some travel paddling. So far, away from home, I've paddled just a bit in Maine—hope to expand this significantly in the next year or two!

Best paddling trip/experience ever and why? Maybe my longest... since I love to paddle, the best in this case is the longest. I did the KIPP circumnavigation last year and it was great— all 11 hours 17 minutes, 34 miles. The first leg into a headwind from Kent Narrows to Love Point, rounding the point with following seas to Kent Point, then about an hour of ultimate calm, then crazy winds again. Beautiful day for it, and excellent mentor, Paula Hubbard kept us on track to optimize currents for each leg of the journey.

Scariest/most dangerous trip/experience and why? Hmm. We see a lot of weather with the KIPP series. I guess for me the scariest, though, was my first. It was a peer paddle, my first paddle with my own kayak, and it was cold. As I've learned over the course of this year, I was with a lot of supportive, experienced paddlers who shepherd when needed! The surf session in Ocean City, New Jersey as a hurricane worked its way north was intense, but we were close to shore and had a lot of experienced paddlers nearby, so that was a somewhat controlled fright.

Bucket list trips: Arctic when I'm ready, San Juans, Alaska, South America....

Any formal training or ACA/BCU certifications: Workshops when I can, no certifications yet.

Three things you like most about paddling? Being so close to the water, and the sense of maneuverability you have in the kayak.



Katie O'Meara

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