

Paddler Profile: Lois Wyatt

Interview by Bob Browning

Name: Lois Wyatt

Lives in : Burke, VA

Real job Retired now, but long-time instructor of English as a Second Language, Fairfax County Adult Education and Northern Virginia Community College

Do you regularly attend a Piracy? Most often I attend Arundell Piracy because I enjoy the larger group of paddlers and the variety of put-in locations

Number of years paddling: Now my 12th year with a sea kayak. Paddled a rec boat for 7 years prior.

How did you get involved in sea kayaking? Had a canoe in the back yard but couldn't persuade anyone in my family to go out with me. Biked often along the C&O tow-path and realized that kayaks were one-person boats. After years solo in the rec boat, I wanted more adventurous paddling and realized that it was wiser in a sea kayak on the open water to be part of a group. Caroline Labbe told me about CPA.

What boats do you paddle? I have a Current Designs Squamish, 15'8" yellow on white with skeg. My "guest" boat, which I use occasionally, is an Elie Strait, 14' also yellow on white with rudder.

Type paddle used: I love my Werner small bent shaft.

Do you do any other type of paddling besides sea kayaking? Not since I got my kayak.

Do you regularly do any other outdoor activities? Swimming, biking, and hiking

How often on average do you paddle between May and October? Once or twice a week.

Do any winter paddling? No, as enticing as some friends make it sound, I remain unpersuaded that the enjoyment would outweigh the challenges and pain.

Favorite local paddling location : Don't really have one favorite. I like variety and exploring unfamiliar waters.

Favorite CPA trip you've ever been on and why? I love getting out on Chesapeake Bay, wherever the put-in.



Photo/Ralph Heimlich

Coolest paddling trip you've ever been on anywhere and why? So hard to choose. Paddling past the Newport mansions parallel to the Cliff Walk, or slipping out Hull Gut to paddle around several Boston Harbor islands, or paddling through the gates of the hurricane barrier into downtown Providence. (My southern New England roots are showing.) Or my urban paddle around Seattle's Lake Union into the ship channel and past the many floating homes the day my first grandchild was born. Took the phone call announcing his birth on the water!

Scariest/most dangerous trip/experience and why? Two paddles with the same issues, both solo, one-way trips in my sea kayak with following seas. One was on the Virginia side of the Potomac when I launched from Curioman Bay and took out at Stevens Rd. A northwest tail wind was strong that day, making the waves too high for

comfort as I passed Ragged Point and Coles Point. The other was near the mouth of Narragansett Bay, RI when I rounded the rocky south end of Jamestown at Beavertail State Park. Promised myself I would turn back the moment I did not feel comfortable. I felt fine right up to the moment I did not, but then I concluded turning around would be even more risky, so I stayed the course. That rocky shoreline looked scary!

Bucket list trip(s): Maine, Baja, San Juans and other islands near British Columbia. Actually, almost any place I've never been, except polar bear country. Ruled out Baffin Island, beautiful as it is, after hearing about Marshall Woodruff and Dave Isbell's trip.

Three things you like most about paddling and CPA? Outdoor exercise with beautiful scenery and friends to share it. Adventures close to home and new perspectives on familiar territory. Adventures in distant and beautiful places.

One unusual, non-paddling thing other people find interesting about you:

I love white water rafting (on a guided trip). I've tried a number of rivers in this area and in my travels, as far away as Turkey and Australia, but it's hard to beat the Youghiogheny. Anyone up for the Lower or Upper Yough?

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