

Paddler Profile: Michael Fernandez

by Bob Browning

Lives in: Swedesboro, NJ

Real job: Manager at a small regional wastewater treatment authority

Do you regularly attend a Piracy? Due to distance and work schedule, no. I have participated occasionally with PON.

Number of years paddling: I've lost count! My first kayak was a canvas & wood frame boat when I was around 12 year's old, paddling the Pine Barrens of New Jersey.

How did you get involved in sea kayaking? First ventured into the sea with my dad in an old whitewater boat in the early 1970's, paddling the surf off Ocean City, NJ. Many years later, living near Delaware Bay, it seemed logical to expand my paddling horizons. I picked up an early crossover kayak (WS Seacret) in the late 1990's and it took off from there. Eventually I worked for a few years guiding in the Philadelphia area and pursued ACA instructor's certification (now lapsed). But sea kayaking opened up an entire new realm of paddling possibilities, and re-invigorated my love of paddling.

What boats do you paddle? Canoes, kayaks, anything that floats! An NDK Romany is my go-to boat, but I also have an Explorer, Scirocco, couple of rec boats, and a canoe or two.

Rudder or skeg? Skeg!!!

Type paddle used: Comfortable with both, but partial to Greenland.

Do you do any other type of paddling besides sea kayaking? Used to do whitewater in canoe and kayak, and I am thinking of trying it again. Occasionally I puddle about in a canoe, and have an old canoe sail rig in need of repair.

Do you regularly do any other outdoor activities? These days it's mostly kayaking or skiing (cross country and downhill). Used to do a lot of caving and climbing until knee problems caught up with me.

How often on average do you paddle between May and October? I try to get out at least once a week, even if only for a short paddle.

Do any winter paddling? Not as frequently, but I still try to get out (skiing takes priority!)

Favorite local paddling location: Delaware Bay is my 'go-to' paddle destination under an hour, offering anything from committing open water crossings to endless meanderings through marshes. Getting up towards two hours I have been exploring the Eastern Shore, which is actually easier to get to and with less traffic (boat or car) than the Jersey shore.

Favorite CPA trip you've ever been on and why: I've enjoyed Dave Wilson's Chesapeake Voyage immensely; it opened my eyes to the endless paddling destinations there. I've found my first wild oyster, oyster middens, stunning sunsets, rampant rabbits (on Taylor Island), and some great paddling partners!

Coollest paddling trip

you've ever been on anywhere and why: So far it has to have been Georgian Bay. Although I love paddling coastal Maine, it's wonderful to be on a lake-full of water fit for drinking.

Scariest/most dangerous trip/experience and why: Worst

experience ever was in a canoe on the Lehigh River, I believe it was after Hurricane Agnes. Came too close to drowning (even with a PFD), and learned why you don't go on a river in flood!

Future bucket list trips: Pacific Northwest / British Columbia, Apostle Islands / Lake Superior. I'd like to paddle more in Florida as well. And Greenland is intriguing.

Three things you like most about paddling? I like to explore. Being the fastest or paddling the farthest is not a big motivation – I love a secluded marsh, finding new birds or flowers... and the spectacular sunrises. Of course, if I need to do some tricky navigation or negotiate a tide race in pursuing these it's a nice bonus!

What do you like about CPA? Emphasis on building skills and paddling competency. Plus some good folks to paddle with.

One unusual, non-paddling thing other people find interesting about you: Wouldn't say it's unusual, but I'm a die-hard bluegrass & old time music fan. 🎸



Michael & Battleship
Photo by Kerry Pflugh

We would like to know about you!

Contact Bob Browning if you are interested in a being featured in the Paddler Profile or if you know of someone else he can contact.

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