

## A Matter of Perspective

By Bill Upton

If you ever feel a little overdressed when you pull up to a launch site looking like a NASA astronaut while other kayakers are blissfully heading out wearing a t-shirt and their PFD stuck under a bungee, just read *Sea Kayaker – Deep Trouble* (available at <http://www.paddling.net/store/showProduct.html?product=167>). It's a collection of stories of kayaking mistakes, their consequences and lessons learned that will put you in the "be over-prepared" camp of sea kayaking.

A couple stories chronicle kayakers who get into trouble after launching into seemingly calm seas and paddle into conditions beyond their means. In almost every case they didn't check the wind forecast and couldn't see the rough conditions when they decided to launch, either because the wind was blowing offshore or the area was sheltered by a point.

There was a good example of deceptive offshore winds on the Bay this past New Year's weekend. The Thomas Point light data showed steady winds from the Northwest in the upper twenties and gusts in the thirties. My neighborhood in Southern Maryland goes from Bay beachfront up a fairly high hill. From up high, you could see nasty-looking whitecaps all the way to the Eastern shore. But from kayak level on the beach, the Bay looked flat calm (see photos).



Northwest Winds about 30 Kts with gusts above 35 from up on the hill photo by Bill Upton

In *Deep Trouble*, Chris Cunningham, editor of *Sea Kayaker*, warns that when winds are coming off the shore, it can be deceptively calm (p. 151). "From the shore, you may see only the smooth, dark backs of the waves. Because you can't see the white, breaking faces of the waves, the water may appear much less rough than it really is." Many times, we can get away with paddling in the lee, but if you venture farther out or hit an area not as protected by the shore, "the wind can hit hard and fast, even though you may be on fairly



Looking same direction from beach level standing photo by Bill Upton

smooth water. By the time you feel the wind's full force, you may find it difficult to get the kayak turned back toward land." He advises, "before paddling away from shore, across the mouth of a bay, or beyond a point of land, stop and make a thorough assessment of the conditions."

Besides having the right gear, the most important key to safety is developing *good judgment*. And for we paddlers who have a lot to learn, being around expert CPA paddlers who are always willing to share their knowledge is a big benefit – even if it means looking a little odd at the boat launch.

See all photos from that day at <http://picasaweb.google.com/beach.shack2802/2010NewYearSGale#>

## A Furnace in Winter

By Michael Free



Michael Free photo by Bob Shakeshaft

Bob Shakeshaft and I hit the water at Furnace Bay on February 20, launching from Perryville Park, at the extreme north end of the Bay. Air temperature was about 44° F and water in the 30's. We saw two mature Bald Eagles, an immature Bald Eagle, Blue Heron, hundreds of Tundra Swans, Deer, Penguins (ok they weren't *penguins* but they looked like little *penguins* [Ed. Note: they were male Common Merganser in breeding plumage]), different types of ducks, etc.



Bob Shakeshaft photo by Michael Free

More photos at

[http://picasaweb.google.com/ckayaq/20100221FurnaceBayWinterPaddle?authkey=Gv1sRqCJj-weydyP\\_TQQ&feat=directlink](http://picasaweb.google.com/ckayaq/20100221FurnaceBayWinterPaddle?authkey=Gv1sRqCJj-weydyP_TQQ&feat=directlink)