

Car Camping at Cape Henlopen and Paddling the Broadkill and Prime Hook

By Saki Sakakihara

I've had many good years participating in various Chesapeake Paddlers Association (CPA) events, but what I like even more than the trips are the people I've met. I can honestly say that most of my friends are kayakers, and most of those were met through the CPA. Hence, it was time for me to give back to the club.

In 2009, Suzanne expressed interest in organizing an overnight kayak trip. We decided to team together, combine our strengths, and put together a spectacular weekend event. We did a scouting trip on May 15-16, 2010, scoping out the campground, exploring the rivers, and checking out the nearest town. We also mapped out the kayaking and driving routes, studied the tide tables, planned the car shuttle, and organized participants to reserve campsites. We spent a good amount of time and effort ensuring this trip would be fabulous.

Our destination and base camp was Cape Henlopen State Park. The place is scenic, strategically located, and rich in history. In 1631, the Dutch made the first settlement. In 1682, William Penn declared that Cape Henlopen would be for "the usage of the citizens of Lewes and Sussex County," making it one of the first public lands established in the United States. A WWII military base resulted in bunkers and gun emplacements and concrete observation towers were built along the coast to spot enemy ships. Today the park has 3,709 acres on the Delaware coast, 4 miles of beach, and vast expanses of sand dunes, some rising almost 100 feet high.



The Heimlich Maneuver photo by Saki

That night, we did what I call a Heimlich Maneuver potluck, with what folks contribute based on the first letter of their last name. We had a big variety of dishes including spring rolls, berry cobbler, shrimp, lobster pasta, chip/dip, cheese, and zucchini bread. Nobody left the dinner table hungry that night. After an evening walk, I split firewood into kindling then got a roaring fire going. We all sat around the fire, drank, and chatted. Suzanne and I asked that folks be ready to go by 0800, so bedtime came early. One thing I love about the CPA is how prompt people are. It makes it soooooo much easier to plan an event when people are like this.

Broadkill River I led the kayak convoy to the Chandler Street boat ramp in Milton. We were now at 100 (paddler count of 18 and boat count of 17). We unloaded our boats and gear. The passengers stayed at the boat launch while the drivers drove to Oyster Rocks, our takeout. Then we all piled into two large vehicles and drove back to the launch, leaving the other cars at the takeout. By 1000, we were on the water. Our group was now ready for a journey down the Broadkill River.

We paddled downstream, along tree-lined shores, heading east towards the Delaware Bay. After about 1.5 miles, we passed the Edward H. McCabe Preserve on our right. This is a Nature Conservancy area that has a very small pier and some shaded trails. For anyone returning in a small group (4 or less), it is worth a visit. Despite the numerous trees, there was little shade since the sun was mostly overhead. We did manage to find a little bit near Smith Landing at mile 3.4. Here we took a short hydration break. There was little wind and a 91 degree high temperature so making time to cool off was important. Jennifer used this time to work on her rolling skills.

At mile 4.5, we turned south on Beaverdam Creek. Here we paddled upstream for 1.1 miles to Brickyard Road (road 257) before kayaking back downstream.

We continued downstream on the Broadkill passing under Coastal Highway (Route 1). The vegetation started to change from what might be found in freshwater woodlands to reeds and grasses more typical of a salt marsh.

Near mile 7.9, we pulled the boats out at Steamboat Landing R2 Park and Marina. Between their two boat ramps, the marina has a small store where they sell cold drinks and snacks. Up to now, we were pretty much the only people on the water but this would all change as we saw numerous jet skis also make use of the marina.

After a good rest, our adventure continued as we paddled the last few miles trying to stay clear of lots of power boat traffic. Hundreds of fiddler crabs were seen on the muddy shores. Despite their giant claw, they are harmless. This stands in contrast to the numerous greenhead flies which bite, attack, fly away, then do it all again after calling some friends.

By about 1440, we were done, having paddled 12.5 miles. Talbot (Aht's husband) was there at the takeout waiting patiently for Aht. I led most of the group back to the campsite while Suzanne made sure the folks with their vehicles at the launch site were able to



Linda W. Aht V. Nora C. Lisa F. Maryrose W. Marilyn F. Steven J. Amy F. Jill D. Brent "Bear" C. Dave G. Mike C. Geoff U. Suzanne F. Jennifer B. Lisa A. In the back in the yellow boat is Norma photo by Saki

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August

Aug 7	KIPP-5 Number 5	This is the fifth year for the KIP (Kent Island Paddle) event and I think it has been very successful in accelerating our learning curve in paddling.	Advanced Beginner	Marshall Wodruff
Aug 8	PurpleSwim Baltimore (a.k.a. Bud Beatty Memorial Swim)	Please volunteer for kayak support for this open water swim. Web Site: http://www.purpleswimbaltimore.org	Intermediate	Tim Beatty
Aug 10	Skills Training Series @ PoB - 3 of 3	The third of a series of skills training clinics run by Rick Weibush	Beginner	Ray Gitomer 443-449-5119
Aug 22	Iron Girl Columbia Triathlon	Please volunteer to help with the kayak support for the swim portion of the triathlon.	Advanced Beginner	Volunteer Event Coordinator Needed
Aug 22	Tuckahoe Creek Day Trip	Paddle Tuckahoe Creek and the Choptank River.	Beginner	Ralph Heimlich

Check the CPA Calendar at <http://www.cpakayaker.com/index.php?page=calendar>

For latest developments and full details.

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retrieve them. Unfortunately, that meant waiting in a shadeless hot place.

About half the group stayed at the campground while the rest of us ventured into historic Lewes for some fun on the town. This walkable historic town with waterfront views was settled by the Dutch way back in 1631!

Bill, Nora, Geoff, Norma, Jennifer, Aht, Talbot, Mike, Linda, Brent and I parked then took a leisure stroll through town on Second Street. We ate at Striper Bites, 107 Savannah Road, phone: 302-454-457. They managed to seat our large group in less than 10 minutes. In my opinion, dinner was good and so was the service.

We walked back for a short distance on Front Street along the water. Then we stopped in at King's Home-made Ice Cream for dessert.

Before heading back, we checked out Saint Peter's Episcopal Church. Actually, we just checked out the graveyard. This church has been in existence since 1680!

[Editor: Due to space limitations, you'll have to read the rest of Saki's report, and check out all the pics, at http://saki.iwarp.com/100_25-27/delaware.html]

It was a great weekend. It would have been nicer had it been 10 degrees cooler but still it was great. I would like to lead/co-lead CPA trips in the future. Maybe one per year. People seem to enjoy it and I like the people who participate. I was told afterwards that things appeared to have run very smoothly...even seamlessly. As with any big coordinated event, this is the result of planning and preparation. Suzanne and I kept each other on the ball, each making suggestions and questioning the other if we felt something could be done a better way. I think we make a good team.



Shady paddling on Prime Hook Creek photo by Saki