

# Chesapeake Paddler



Publication of the Chesapeake Paddlers Association, Inc. Volume 21, Issue 3

May 2011

## A Janes Island Gathering

By Jay Gitomer



**Silly Rabbit—Crisfield is for Crabs!** photo by Dana Rutherford

Laura Ventura and I put together a trip to Janes Island for a big group of friends. We did Kiptopeke last year, with a focus on rough water, and this year we decided to do something different. We chose Janes because the area is beautiful and we thought it would be a bit more accessible for our friends from the north. Janes Island is a state park near Crisfield, MD. The actual island is mostly marshland, but most of it is edged in sweeping white beaches. Bird and marine life is profuse.

We invited a lot of people we know from the Greenland paddling community and a few members of our local paddling crowd. We were fourteen people total, including people from New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Maryland. Most of us paddle mainly Greenland style and are interested in rolling skills. We liked the idea of having some clean flat water for rolling practice, and we also hoped to find some variety on the outside of the island for those who wanted something rougher.

We rented the Daugherty Creek Conference Center in the park. It sleeps 16 people in 4 rooms, each containing 2 bunk beds. The house was large and comfortable. Upstairs, there was a wide-open area that was set up for presentations (more on that later). It had a screened porch out back that contained picnic tables, as well as a large grill and a fire ring. The kitchen was spacious and contained a commercial refrigerator, a commercial freezer, and a sink big enough to wash a large dog or a mid-sized child. But enough about the accommodations.

We began to arrive on Thursday afternoon. Check-in wasn't till 5 pm, so a few of us launched and poked around the marshes, practicing navigation. That was fairly hopeless because the channel had markers that weren't on the chart. We had to use visuals of the tanks and buildings in the far distance to estimate our location.

Janes Island has a kayak dock and a boat launch. The launch is normally reserved for powerboats, but because we had such a large crowd coming, the park rangers told us we could use it. That was helpful when the rest of the paddlers arrived; launching fourteen boats would take a long time using a single kayak dock (although the kayak dock is really convenient and easy to use). There is also a rack for guests' boats, so we didn't have to load and unload every day – very convenient. We said we didn't have locks for the boats and a park employee said, "Don't worry about it. People around here are too lazy to steal." Throughout our stay, the park personnel went out of their way to make our stay enjoyable, and they achieved their goal. We felt welcome.



**Janes Island from the State Park area** photo by Dana Rutherford

On Friday, we launched around 10:30 and headed out to circumnavigate Janes Island. We took advantage of the tides and traveled clockwise. The weather was perfect, but we didn't see many powerboats. We passed Crisfield and tightened up our group before we

*(Continued on page 4)*

*Janes Island (Continued from page 1)*

headed on the outside of the island. Because we had a large group with a wide range of paddling speeds, we did a radio check and put a point paddler in place. We paddled about halfway up the island and stopped for lunch on one of the sweeping white beaches. It's always a surprise at Janes to climb a dune, look over the grass, and see a landscape that stretches for miles. The marshes were brilliant with golds, reds, blues, and purples. Continuing on, we rounded the top of the island and paddled to the top of Daugherty Creek, which runs between the mainland section of the park and Janes Island itself. The current in the creek at that time was fairly strong and we flew back to the launch.

Once there, some of us landed and some stayed in the water to play around with rolls and rescues. The sun had been obscured by clouds right about the time we stopped, and the water temperature was too cold without the sun to warm us. We rolled a little, shivered a little (despite our layers and dry gear), and then we did some rescues... not all on purpose. That's the breaks when trying new rolls.... Sometimes things don't go too elegantly.

That night, we went to dinner in Crisfield at a restaurant called The Cove. Remember that name and don't go there. Back at the lodge, we sat around the fire for a few hours, talked about paddling and everything paddling-related, and planned the next day. It was such a pleasure to be with so many dedicated paddlers; throughout the lodge and its yard were small knots of people engaged in lively discussions about things that only paddlers care about.

On Saturday, we broke into two groups. One group went for a day-long paddle to the Big Annemessex River (north of Janes Island), practicing navigation and handling beam seas on the way. The rest of us took a relaxed paddle through the marshes along the Red Trail and stopped for a play session at a sandy white point that we'd scoped out on the chart and reconned the previous day. It was perfect; the beach was gradual, the seas were calm, and the only other people around were a couple and a dog who'd come on their boat, which was anchored a few yards offshore. The water temps were pretty warm, about 70F, and the air temps were about 74F. We laid out a bunch of mats we'd brought, had lunch, and relaxed in the sun before getting back into the water.



**Rocking and Rolling at Janes Island** photo by Kerry Kirk Pflug

We spent a few hours trading kayaks, sharing skills, and enjoying the scenery. Kerry had brought a Tahe Marine that everyone was eager to try. I had my Tiderace Xcite-S, which I insisted that everyone try, and I think we were all too afraid to borrow Dana Rutherford's gorgeous handmade wooden boat. Romany's were well-represented, and there was even an Anas Acuta (not mine). We had a various collection of skills within the group, so most of us got some help with something we were working on and also helped teach someone else one of our own skills. Jan Sheehan was our most willing victim; Laura Ventura taught her to balance brace and Rich Hagerty helped her tweak her Euro sweep roll.

After the session, some of us went back around the outside of Janes Island, while others of us went more directly back through the creek. The outside crowd had fun with rough beam seas and navigation. The inside crowd was thinking about crabs and we made excellent time reaching the take-out.

That night, we went to Luston's on Rt 413 just west of Plantation Road and picked up steamed crabs, along with some paper and mallets. Back home, we dumped out the crabs and put some non-seafood on the grill and shared dinner. We had some people who didn't know how to pick crabs, but they learned quickly and no crabs were wasted – all we threw away were shells.

Afterward, we gathered on the second floor of the lodge, which is a wide-open space that has a screen hanging from the ceiling. Kerry Kirk Pflug gave a presentation on the coastal navigation of New Jersey that she's been doing with Chris Raab. It was fascinating. She didn't just talk about conditions or distance traveled, she talked about the commitment the trip required, the bond between herself and her paddling partner, and the concerns and triumphs that arose from the decision and execution of the ambitious paddle. It was the best paddling presentation I've seen – really impressive. After Kerry was finished, we put on the videos we'd taken of Jan learning to balance brace and we all put in our two cents.

We spent the rest of the evening around the fire outside again. I stayed up way too late, not wanting the weekend to end. More...

*(Continued on page 5)*

Janes Island (Continued from page 4)

### If You Go

Janes Island is a state park that includes over 2,900 acres of salt marsh, over 30 miles of water trails, and miles of isolated pristine beaches. It is located a few miles east of Crisfield, MD. The park has tent sites, camping cabins, full-service cabins, and the lodge. There also three back-country campsites out on the island. Regardless of where you stay, bring bug spray.

There is a Food Lion grocery at the easternmost intersection of Plantation Road and Rt 413. There are several restaurants in Crisfield and there is Luston's Crab House on Rt 413. There is a drive-through package store on Rt 413 slightly west of Plantation Road.

The park includes over 30 miles of marked trails through the marshes. Waterproof maps of the trails are available for \$3 at the camp store. The west side of the island is open to the Bay, and sometimes conditions can be experienced there. It is also an easy paddle right into Crisfield, if one feels the need for some city life. The website (link below) has a link to order maps in advance, and also provides GPS waypoints.

Janes Island State Park

<http://www.dnr.state.md.us/publiclands/eastern/janesisland.asp>

### A Few Photos

<https://picasaweb.google.com/jaygitomer/Janes2011Images?authkey=Gv1sRgCKba-qPu-NKZLg#>

And more from a 2009 Trip

[https://picasaweb.google.com/109360710761903997324/20090725MDJanesIsl?authkey=Gv1sRgCK\\_TuoCqsqK-hwE&feat=email#](https://picasaweb.google.com/109360710761903997324/20090725MDJanesIsl?authkey=Gv1sRgCK_TuoCqsqK-hwE&feat=email#)

<http://picasaweb.google.com/CommodoreRich/JanesIsland709#>

<https://picasaweb.google.com/ralph.heimlich/JanesIslandCarCamperJuly2009#>



## CPA 2011 Virtual Photo Calendar Available

The 2011 CPA Virtual Calendar has been IMPROVED—Now all the dates on the CPA online calendar ARE IN IT Get the updated version at

[http://www.cpakayaker.com/uploads/online\\_newsletters/CPA2011/CPA%20Virtual%20Calendar%202011.pdf](http://www.cpakayaker.com/uploads/online_newsletters/CPA2011/CPA%20Virtual%20Calendar%202011.pdf)

You can download the .pdf file and print it yourself, or take the file on a thumb drive to Staples, Kinkos, etc. and have them print and bind a nice one on good stock. The file is laid out to print back to back (i.e., the photo for month x is on the back of the page for month x-1).