

# Chesapeake Paddler



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## WAKEing up on Kyoquot Sound By Chip Walsh



I traveled out West this summer to join the Whatcom Association of Kayak Enthusiasts (WAKE) members on an 8-day trip to Vancouver Island's Kyoquot Sound area in late July and early August. Dave Peebles was the trip leader, and five others participated.

**Getting To Kyoquot Sound** The group rendezvoused in the vehicle queue of the ferry terminal at Twassen, BC to catch the 7:45 a.m. ferry bound for Nanaimo. We drove to Campbell River, then on to Zeballos and Fair Harbour, our launch site (click map for hyperlink).

**Fair Harbor to Rugged Point** We launched about 9:30. There was a moderate headwind as we exited Fair Harbour and we hugged the Markale Peninsula and crossed Pinnacle Channel to take advantage of the lee of Hohoae Island for a mile or two. The paddling was different for me. The water was clear, cool (I think around 60° F) and from several hundred to a thousand feet

deep. The banks were lined with large rocks covered with aquatic plants, muscles, barnacles, and starfish. Above the banks, the rocks gave way to verdant evergreens lining the slopes that angled steeply up from the banks. The slopes ascended into a layer of clouds that seemed only a few hundred feet above the water.

Our gear-laden boats sliced through a foot of wind chop and we paddled toward and around Whiteley Island. Dave guided us to a little beach on the south side of Whiteley and we stopped there to stretch and eat lunch. We could see our destination, Rugged Point, from our lunch stop, perhaps 3 - 4 miles across Kyoquot Channel. After lunch, we all felt better that most of the paddling work of the day was done and we veered south to hug the southeast coast of Kyoquot Channel and enjoy the scenery. Conditions improved as we neared Rugged Point and landed on the sandy beach overlooking Kyoquot Channel.

Half our party disappeared into the forest at Rugged Point. They followed a path through the forest and crossed to the beach on the ocean side of Rugged Point and evaluated camping options—sound side or ocean side? Sound side was selected, and we proceeded to unpack boats and set up camp. There was a large collection of silver-weathered timbers at the storm surge line. Dawn, Dave, and Frank set their tents on bare spots amid the logs. Lori and Les found tent-size openings just on the edge of the woods. I set up on a tent platform cut into the woods a short distance away. There was another party camped just to our south—a family with kids age 8 and 3. They'd arrived via an outboard-powered inflatable. A second family socialized with them but retreated to a power boat anchored off the beach at nightfall.



Verdant evergreens above the banks photo by Chip Walsh

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*Kyoquot (Continued from page 1)*

An unexpected luxury at Rugged Point was a pavilion-covered table and steel bear-lockers. With the exception of Dave, our group was on individual kitchen and dining plans, with our own kitchen gear and individually cooked meals. Often we cooked at about the same time, so we were more or less eating together, but differently. Les and Lori seemed to favor the foil-packed camp meals. Frank Wilson used some canned goods. Dawn was forever consuming some kind of liquid that came in 8 oz boxes. Quite a bit of wine was packed along, I'm not sure by who. Dave was often cooking real food, and on two occasions cooked group meals. Frank cooked a pot of muffin mix each night, refining his cooking technique over the course of the trip. The group got to sample the muffins the next morning. I got to looking forward to the daily muffin!

**Day trip to Grassy Island** Grassy Island sits about a mile out in the Pacific, several miles southwest of Rugged Point. There is a reef-like series of rocks and islands along the coast there. The water between the island reef and "mainland" Vancouver Island is labeled in the chart as Clear Passage. We rounded Rugged Point and paddled southeast in Clear Passage against a 10-15 mph wind. The weather radio cited the sea swell as .75 meters, and there were wind waves on top of those of a foot or so. I was enchanted by the feel of the ocean swell and the site of my fellow paddlers gently rising and falling amid the swells. We passed a rocky feature the map labeled Nipple Rock. I took some pictures of the group passing Nipple Rock, more fascinated, I think, by the name than the rocks.



Camp on Rugged Point photo by Chip Walsh



Grassy Island photo by Chip Walsh

Grassy Island was a big enough rock outcropping to have trees and grasses sprouting up where soil had accumulated among the craggy rocks. A guide book stated that Grassy Island had never been glaciated, like elsewhere on Vancouver Island, and therefore had unique fauna. On first arrival, we all broke out lunches, sat on a log, and ate. Initially, I was not much impressed with Grassy Island, but after lunch, nature called and I wondered off to find a secluded niche in the rocks. I was amazed to find a number of leafy and flowery plants growing from obscure little cracks in the rocks. Additionally, the rocks themselves were metamorphic layers and, on close examination, I could see many fossils in the rock. Walking among the tidal pools, I saw anemone fastened to the rocks and shrimps darting about. Grassy Island had a raw, intoxicating beauty that took me by surprise as we lingered. Dave, meanwhile, had set up off shore to fish. We finally got worried we were going to be trapped by the receding tide and launched our boats. I puttered south a bit while waiting for others to launch and saw a sea lion colony on nearby rocks.

On the return trip from Grassy Island, I was looking forward to the trailing wind and swell we earlier had in our face. The wind and swell had grown a little, and Dawn didn't care for the way it shoved her kayak around, so we headed north and got to the land's edge of Clear Passage. Paddling by the shore was less exciting but more interesting, and we paddled through small gaps in the rock-strewn stretches along the coast. From a distance, it would look like a solid line of rock, but as we'd get close we would find gaps, and sometimes could paddle through. Dave dropped off as we rounded Rugged Point. He tied off to some kelp and proceeded to catch at least a half dozen fish: ling cod, black cod and rock cod. When he came back to camp he proceeded to fillet the fish in preparation for a fish

fry.

Lori, Les and Frank continued past our camp and went to find fresh water to replenish their water supply. As they were gathering water they encountered two bear cubs. Then they heard momma bear descending a nearby tree. They aborted water gathering and returned to their boats, thus ending the only bear encounter of our trip.

The day's weather had followed the pattern of our first day. It started off misty and overcast. In the afternoon the mist lifted and we even got a few rays of sun. By evening, we could see mountain tops. On this evening, a number of whales began to forage in the Sound in front of our beach. The Sound at this point is about 1.5 miles wide, and you can see for several miles in each direction. All evening long, we would see the tell-tale spouts of whales surfacing, followed by the black form of their backs along the surface. Spouts would sometimes appear almost at the same time and far enough from each other that we knew we were seeing some number of whales. But, they don't hold still for counting and it isn't possible to say how many were swimming in the Sound in front of us. I

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*Kyoquot (Continued from page 4)*

was enthralled by the knowledge these magnificent behemoths were sharing the same waters we were kayaking. **Rugged Point to Spring Island** It rained overnight and was only letting up about the time we were packing out of Rugged Point. Les and I carried our boats nearly down to the water and proceeded to pack. I was amazed how quickly the incoming tide overtook the spot where I was packing my boat. I had to drag it back at least five times, each time the boat a little heavier. On this trip, I thought I had packed a rather minimal amount, but I had a heck of a time getting everything into hatches. We launched about 9:30.

Today's route was due northwest. The winds were minimal. It was raining/misting intermittently, but we had good visibility and could see Thornton Island, a mid-point along the Spring Island vector. We paddled past the 30-foot rock cliffs of Union Island (that's a big honking island!) and into the Pacific. The roughly 4-mile, open-water crossing went smoothly and we soon were landing on Thornton. A previous camper spent considerable effort setting up a kitchen in a nook in the rocks. The "kitchen-window" was a touch that made me laugh. We ate lunch and listened to the weather radio. Since it sounded like the winds were going to behave, we decided to continue the open-water crossing. The sun came out and it turned into a stellar afternoon. The clouds even lifted off the mountains and we could see the snow-covered Coast Range mountains behind those on Vancouver Island. We made more sea otter and whale sightings on the crossing to Spring Island. The swells were a little larger than the day before, and there were almost no wind waves. Again, I was enchanted by paddling on the Pacific. I felt very lucky to be there.

At Spring Island we found a group of eighteen paddlers from Seattle camped on a tombolo (tidal depositional island) near the end of the island. To me, the tombolo looked like the largest and best place to pitch a camp, but Dave was pleased the other party had left a small, shell beach empty. That was the spot he liked to camp because it has superior wind protection, and that was where we set up camp. Several of us initiated small grading projects to smooth and flatten the broken-shell beach to make spaces for our tents. Frank's site even had a little retaining wall. I was concerned about putting my tent on the shell beach, because with the sharp broken shells, I figured it was going to be the end of the tent floor. Hopefully, the smoothing job limited the damage. That morning, we'd packed up a lot of stuff in the wet, and after unpacking, our site had that "yard-sale" look as everybody tried to dry out their gear in the afternoon sun.

There were fishermen among the Seattle group. Towards evening we saw them carrying a 30-pound fish back to their camp. They sent a several-pound slab of Halibut fillet over to our group. Les cooked it up and several of us had enhanced protein with our evening meal. Turns out, people in the NW think halibut is a real treat, so I wish I'd tasted some. I may never have another chance to taste it as fresh as it was at Spring Island.

**Spring Island to Kyoquot Village** (Walters Cove) We had fabulous weather in the morning, breaking the pattern of grey, misty mornings. The day's paddle was to the Native village of Kyoquot and it's cross-cove neighbor, Walters Cove. We headed around the ocean-side of the Island, paddling along the rocky, outer, ocean-facing coast. There was a light wind, but mostly we were just enjoying riding the sea swell and feeling the power of the surge along the rocks. We could see a whale spouting off Lookout Island to our north, and I wanted to just paddle for it. Paddling for whales is probably futile: By the time you could get to where the whale is, the whale is likely to be somewhere else. But this whale was headed in our direction and gave us a good show, including a frothy, head-up launching that seemed to last longer than possible because whales are big. The whale's direction of travel took it a few hundred yards ocean-side of our group, so that the whale's exhalations seemed quite loud.

We turned to the west and stopped on an island Dave wanted to check out for camping potential. We didn't stay long, and it was decided the island was campable. Back in the boats, we hugged the north side of Spring Island as we made for Kyoquot Village, weaving an intricate path through the rocks and channels along the island. This turned out to be some of the most fun paddling of the trip as we ducked in and out of the rocks on the surge of the swells, including paddling through a number of arches along the island. We also had fun dallying along a sea otter colony we passed. Dave was hilarious as he gave voice to the mother sea otters admonishing the young ones to avoid the kayakers, and the naughty teen-aged otters who ignored their elders and came over to check us out.

We arrived at Walters Cove at 12:30, beaching between some piers just by the store. The store opened at 1:00, so we ate lunch while waiting for the store to open. The store was opened by a cheerful woman and several bought ice cream and other goodies. Dawn and Dave bought cups (Dawn's was \$15 and she swears it was used). I wished I had brought money and thought to get and mail some post cards, because I saw the PO sign on the store—apparently it does double duty. Lori visited the Java Hut, 1 K away. Eventually,



Shell beach "yard sale" on Spring Island photo by Chip Walsh

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*Kyoquot (Continued from page 5)*

the store lady turned on the water for us, and we all filled water containers, which was the stated purpose of this trip. Kyoquot Village and Walters Cove have no access by road: The only way on is by boat or float plane. The native band that live in the Village number about 300, and unemployment is said to be 80%.

The wind had picked up and it had gotten cooler while we were lounging around the store. We exited Walters Cove on the more southerly channel (we'd come in on the north). We had a stiff head wind crossing back to the Mission Island group (Spring is one of the Mission Islands), but once among the islands it was easy to find lee and the wind chop was much reduced.

**Circumnavigating Spring Island** There was no set objective for the third paddling day on Spring Island. Dave went fishing and the remaining 5 of us slowly circumnavigated the island. The rock gardens were not as appealing because the tide was much lower. A kayaker from the West Coast Expeditions camp (a commercial outfitter maintains a camp on the west side of Spring Island) was circumnavigating. He passed us when we were about a quarter of the way around and we were moving so slowly we saw him finishing when we were about half way around. I seemed to spend a lot of time waiting, and my back was complaining—I was not comfortable *sitting* in the kayak. It began to rain when we where about half way around. Eventually, I told the group I was moving ahead. Surprisingly, Dawn came with me, and Lori later told us she did, too, but Dawn and I were unaware and didn't wait for her. Dawn and I paddled past camp and back out onto the ocean. We both wanted to feel the swell, and I was certainly hoping for another whale encounter. But it turned out to be the only day of the trip we did NOT see whales. Eventually, we all reunited at camp.



Kayaks beached on Spring Island photo by Chip Walsh

I'd spent a considerable amount of time prowling around on the exceptionally craggy rocks that extended in several directions from our camp. The rocks are so rough that my hiking boots seemed to stick to them even on very steep angles. Once the rain started, the rocks got slippery and treacherous. I wanted to go find a pole to use erecting my tarp, so that we'd have someplace to cook out of the rain. Incidentally, Les had his tarp set up off a huge root ball, but we'd collected firewood and piled it under his tarp, so when the rain actually came, there wasn't much room under the tarp. I stole a pole out of the firewood pile, sort of sinful, but it turns out we had more wood than we'd burn anyway. Frank helped me set up the tarp, and we set up an effective dry space under which we could all cook. Sheets of rain could be seen blowing by in front of us, and the Seattle paddler's camp was furiously flapping in the wind, demonstrating why Dave preferred the wind-protected site on which we camped.

Dave's fishing rod had broken. He set up a hand-line which proved effective since he caught another passel of fish.

Dave's packing skills amazed me. He produced a large stew pot, potatoes, carrots, onion and I don't know what else and proceeded to cook a fish stew that was not on my diet but tasted astonishingly good anyways! He also pulled out an endless supply of 1-litre wine boxes. I made drinks for Lori, Frank and myself. I called them Spring Isliettos. A squirt of lime juice, shot of cranberry juice, and a shot of rum. I enjoyed the heck out of those.

We made a fire in the rain/mist. Lori and Dawn had built a tiny fire the previous night, but this group was short on pyromaniacs. Most nights we didn't build a fire, and this night when we did, we kept the fire a reasonable size. We talked about the next day's paddle back to Fair Harbour. Winds were expected to rise in the afternoon, so we jointly decided on an 8 a.m. get away. Frank's rule of get-away time says it always takes 2 hours, which meant getting up at 6:00, so the fire was hardly used. Dave and I pushed around the coals after the others had retired, but we weren't going to put any more fuel on it, so we retired, too.

**Spring Island to Fair Harbour** The tide was way low and at ebb as we packed up. It was 8:30 by the time we were underway. The weather was great. The day was blue overhead with lots of misty fog at water level, and hanging over some of the hillsides. The sunrise was one where the bright sun looked like somebody was pointing a light through the haze, and some low clouds made a couple stripes of grey across the sun.

From Spring Island, we crossed a placid stretch of open water to enter Crowther Channel on the north side of Union Island. After paddling past Union Island, we entered Markale Passage, which splits Hohoae Island and Mocketas Island. We could see quite a few whales spouting between Union and Hohoae Islands. Once on Markale Passage, we had line of sight up Kyoquot Sound for many miles, and had to paddle many of those miles to get to the inlet that leads to Fair Harbour. Thankfully, Dave knew of a little beach where we could land for a break, on Hohoae Island. I was more than ready for the end of the trip by the time we passed the log dump at Fair Harbour.

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*Kyoquot (Continued from page 6)*

At Fair Harbour, we all worked together to get the boats unloaded, vehicles packed, and boats racked. We talked about trying to make the last ferry out of Nanaimo, but that seemed uncertain and would then deposit us in Twassen after midnight. So, instead, we drove out to Zebalos where we set up camp. We made our way to the Lodge Pole Inn in "downtown" Zebalos. The influx of the six of us swelled the crowd in the bar to about ten people and overwhelmed the bar tender, who had to call in reinforcement. Cold beers and hot food were ordered and consumed. Good, but understandably pricy given the distance from suppliers.

In the morning we made a smooth exodus from Vancouver Island. We got to Nanaimo about 11:00, and the 12:45 ferry was already 94% sold out, according to the electronic signs. So, we were all glad we had not stopped for breakfast along the way. As we waited, I watched a tug towing a huge log-boom raft into a mill in Nanaimo. The previous day at Fair Harbour, we watched logs being dumped into a boom, so it was interesting to see a log boom at it's terminus. The ferry sailed on time. We had great weather and spent part of the crossing on the open, top deck watching the rugged mountains of coastal BC pass to the east, while we drew closer to the huge snow cap of Mount Baker visible to the south. Frank pointed out the dramatic difference in color of the water as we crossed into the silt plume of the Fraser River, which drains a huge area of BC and enters the Sound through the city of Vancouver. I was a little sad when the Ferry operator called us to our vehicles, because it meant our group would be splitting and going back to the "real" world. I was sad to say goodbye to them, but happy to have paddled with them and thankful for a week's worth of stellar paddling and camping memories, WAKEing on Kyoquot Sound.

Read Chip's complete trip report at <http://chipwalsh.org/Kyoquot/WAKE-Trip-0712.html>

Frank Wilson's pictures are [HERE](#)

WAKE site at <http://www.wakekayak.org/>



Heading for Crowther Channel on return photo by Chip Walsh

## CPA Kayaker Paddles Snapper



Photo credit: Eastern Snapping Turtle courtesy of Linh Phu.

[http://www.dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife/Plants\\_Wildlife/herps/Testudines/EasternSnappingTurtle.asp](http://www.dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife/Plants_Wildlife/herps/Testudines/EasternSnappingTurtle.asp)

I was driving home in a downpour on Berryman's Lane in Reisterstown, Maryland in August when I spotted a huge snapping turtle on the right side of the road. I pulled into the Church of the Brethren parking lot, grabbed my umbrella and walked out into the road to drive the turtle back to the grass before he was flattened. I was wearing a dress and open toed shoes because I had just come back from church, and I was so excited that I thrust my furred umbrella at the snapper. He lunged and snapped at me. I needed a better tool. Then I remembered I had my Camano paddle in the trunk since I was supposed to kayak that morning. When I sloshed back to the car to pop the trunk I saw a little foreign car parked next to mine with a six year old child in the back seat and a male driver up front. I waved both sections of the paddles at him, and he got out of the car to help me. He gesticulated and spoke to me in what sounded like German about the snapper's big bite, but he was smiling a little. He was wearing a wool suit.

I handed him one half of the paddle, and I faced the snapper's head again with my half while the man in the suit approached the snapper from the side. Before I could blink, he had scooped up the snapper and flipped him onto the grass. The snapper landed on his back, and the man flipped him again to get him claws down, shell up. It was thrilling. He was about to leave when I asked him to flip the snapper one more time into a grassy depression so that he could not reach the road. He did, and we both drove off. I am happy to help a snapper any day and am glad I had such fabulous help. Who knew the Camano was such a perfect tool? Lightweight, durable, and smooth, easy snapper flipping action.

Rosemary Wallace



Chip Walsh on Kyoquot Sound *photo by Frank Wilson*

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### CPA Annual Meeting:

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- Nominations for CPA Officers Due
- CPA Calendar for September-December

### The Chesapeake Paddler

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