

Chesapeake Paddler



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New Point Comfort Car Camper IV

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CPA members and trip organizers Bill Dodge and Mark Taylor have now led the 4th kayak car camping expedition to New Point Comfort in Mathews County, Virginia, which took place on July 8-10, 2005. This year marked a record 18 participants and was blessed with unusually good weather, despite a soggy kiss from Hurricane Cindy on Thursday night. Ron Barnett and Mark Taylor paddled Friday up on the Piankatank River, and Bill, Bill and Meg Scofield, Bob Brannon and I launched from the beach and explored Horn Harbor.



Bill Scofield with Atlantic Bottlenose Dolphins

Attending were Bill Dodge, Mark Taylor, Greg and Jenny Welker, Bill and Meg Scofield, Mary and Vitus Eidukevicius, Sally Baker, Bob Brannon, Ron Barnett, "Woody" Woodward, Marshall Woodruff, Joan Spinner, Yvonne Thayer, Dick Rock, Ellen Stefaniak and I. With so large a crowd, Saturday we split into two paddling groups to launch in the direction of the "old" New Point Comfort Lighthouse, with the "earlys" leaving a bit sooner. The "lates" were rewarded for their sloth by paddling with a pod of 20-30 Atlantic bottlenose dolphins as we approached the breaking water near the lighthouse.

Both groups rendezvoused at the sand spit north of the lighthouse for lunch, a little surfboating (the highlight of Bill's trip), and some first aid for jellyfish sting when Bill Scofield capsized and recovered both himself and a Medusa into his cockpit. When I heard that the first aid for stings is Adolph's Meat Tenderizer and vinegar, I wasn't sure if we were going to treat him, or eat him.

Sunday we paddled as a group (after some defections) from the beach up to Winter Harbor and out through the cut in the north embayment. With Greg and Jenny playing Humphrey Bogart

and Katherine Hepburn a la African Queen in getting us through the narrow, sinuous channel from south harbor to north harbor, we eventually came out to a lunch spot overlooking the Bay and Wolf Trap Light. Again, we glimpsed a few dolphins having lunch on their way north. We got back to camp about 3:30, hit the showers, and hit the road. Another perfect Mathews County paddle.

Once-sleepy Mathews County, bordered nearly all around by the Piankatank River, Chesapeake Bay, Mobjack Bay, and the East

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River (Charts 13 and 14, ADC Chesapeake Bay Chartbook, 5th edition), is fast becoming a weekend getaway destination for folks from Norfolk to Washington, many of them paddlers. Mark Taylor is credited with the brainstorm of CPA camping trips to the location when he was bicycling the many rural roads in the county, but Bill Dodge has been the trip organizer and leader of all four expeditions.

Dodge's first CPA Mathews County trip was hardly auspicious. We (Bill, Mark, Dick Rock and I) rendezvoused at the Gwynn Island Camp Ground in a relentless pouring rain, set up tents, and did what any good adult campers do—piled in the car and headed for bright lights and cold beer! We discovered the Southwind Café in the heart of Mathews (the biggest conurbation around) and had a delightful dinner and libations in light, dry, bug-free bliss. The Southwind is still one of the premier restaurants in the New Point Comfort area. That first trip we visited the very interesting (and dry) Gwynn Island Museum, circumnavigated Gwynn Island (along with Greg and Jenny Welker, who arrived next day), and visited a local outfitter (Queens Creek Outfitter) who told us about the Mathews County Blue Way water trail.

After spending a rather soggy couple of nights on Gwynn Island, Mark and Bill did some scouting and located our current venue, the New Point

Comfort Campground, run by the Webster family. The Websters were a tad leery of Bill's first approach, wondering if their quiet campground would be overrun by the aquatic version of Hell's Angels, but with an average age approaching 50, and CPA's habitual leave-no-trace ethic, they were won over. For the last three years, this has been CPA's home-away-from-home in Mathews County, and our beachfront sites (off in the corner, so the rest of RVs don't get infected with muscle-power madness) have been the site of a gypsy encampment of long-boaters.

Some links for trip planning:

Welcome to Mathews County
<http://www.visitmathews.com/>

Mathews County Blue Way
<http://www.visitmathews.com/MAPS/BLUEWAYS/blueways.htm>
And <http://www.blueways.org/>

Queens Creek Outfitter
<http://queenscreek.com/>

New Point Comfort
Campground <http://www.visitmathews.com/LODGING/NPCAMPGROUND/npcampground.htm>



Bill, Marshall, Ron, Woody, Joan, Bob, Mark, and Yvonne in Camp