

Chesapeake Paddler



Publication of the Chesapeake Paddlers Association, Inc. Volume 20, Issue 2

March 2010

In Case You Thought We Stop For Snow



Bob Pullman and Robert Golden preparing to paddle at Eastern Neck (that ain't sand back there) photo by Ralph Heimlich

This edition of The Chesapeake Paddler is devoted to all those many paddler who don't quit because of a little snow and ice. Highlighted here are a brace of local winter paddles, a longer-distance trip, and some evidence that folks are out on the water all winter. If you are interested in extending your paddling season into the frosty months, there are some important considerations for cold water paddling. You can learn about them at the CPA website in the brochure we put together a few years ago (see <http://www.cpakayaker.com/downloads/events/flyers/Safety3fold.pdf>) and on the ACA website at <http://www.americancanoe.org/atf/cf/%7B74254DC2-74B4-446F-92BE-547992272AB7%7D/ColdWaterSurvival.pdf>

Trip Report: New Year's in the Outer Banks

by Jay Gitomer with help from Rick Wiebush

A few of us went down to Swansboro, NC, to see in the New Year by paddling in the frequently rough waters of Bogue and Beaufort Inlets. We wanted to get away from the snow and freezing temperatures and also to continue the New-Year's-in-the-Outer-Banks tradition started last year by Matt Bowler, Kevin Black and Rick Wiebush. The paddlers included those three plus Kim Neutzling, Jay Gitomer and James Kesterston (from North Carolina). We had the good luck to catch up with Lamar Hudgens on the last day—on dry land, sadly—but Lamar on dry land is better than no Lamar at all.

Most of us stayed at the Waterway Inn, which is on the same property as Lamar's Barrier Islands Kayak shop. The water is right there. It's a paddler-friendly place, with a nice verandah for hanging wet gear. Matt camped at Croatan Park, which is about five minutes away. More on that later.

We put in the first day right off the bulkhead on the property into the White Oak River and were soon paddling among a bunch of little islets. They were covered in bright green marsh grasses, wind-carved white sand hills, and strange gray trees that looked like fingers. We paddled through them, having to portage over some shallows a couple of times, and then



North Carolina New Year's Paddlers

(Continued on page 9)

North Carolina Winter Paddle (Continued from page 1)

landed on the back side of Bear Island. We carried the boats across the narrow island to the ocean. Bear Island is one of the North Carolina barrier islands that divide the sounds from the Atlantic Ocean.

The air temps that day were about 55° F and the water was about 50° F. There was small surf where we put in on Bear, and larger surf across Bogue inlet off Emerald Isle. Most of us played around in the smaller stuff and then in the confluence where the inlet meets the ocean over a shoal off the NW tip of Bear Island. Matt, of course, made a beeline for the biggest, nastiest waves in sight. After several good hours of surfing and playing around, we headed back through the inlet since the current was now in our favor.



The next day, with air and water temps about the same, we drove about 30 minutes north to Beaufort and put in at Radio Island. It was a short paddle out through Beaufort Inlet to play off Bogue Banks, where the water was pretty busy. The swells were about 4', fast, and lumpy. There was a stone jetty protruding from the beach on Goat Island; to its east, there was fun surf, and to its west was hairy, disorganized and dumping surf. In the inlet proper, on Willis Lump, there were huge, confused waves and a massive zipper. Kevin disappeared along with Matt into the worst/best of it—the big waves. How big is big, you ask? They looked to be about 8', with clapotis shooting twice that high into the air. Matt and Kevin both confirmed that it was some of the roughest water they had ever paddled.

Most of us stayed where it was smaller – 3-4' spilling waves and really good for our purposes. We surfed and played around in the transitional areas. I had a lot of firsts, which thrilled me. At one point, I was smiling so hard my face hurt. Rick asked why I looked like an insane person (not in so many words, but I knew), and I said, "What a great way to end a great year." There is no place I would have rather been or any other bunch of people I would rather have been with on 12/31/09.



That night was New Year's Eve. After dinner, we gathered outside the motel and stood on the waterside looking up through palm trees at the blue moon. Yes, there was wine. And some scotch. And Kahlua. And beer. Somehow, Kevin and Rick brought up the old (late 1950's) Andy Devine show which featured an 18 inch tall rubber talking frog by the name of Froggy the Gremlin. Apparently, Froggy would appear on the set only after being entreated by Andy to "plunk your magic twanger, Froggy". I am not making this up. For those in the group who had never heard of this particular cultural phenomenon, there was intense interest in determining: 1) what exactly a "magic twanger" was; and 2) what precisely was involved in "plunking" it. I'm not sure whether and to what extent these questions were ever answered in a satisfactory manner. However, as you might guess, the subsequent alcohol-fueled discussion spiraled out of control and took a decidedly salacious turn, doubling everyone up in laughter as midnight approached. And that is when Kevin told me that the next day, he and I would be practicing rescues in the ocean.

It's not the ocean I objected to; I've been rescued in the ocean before. It was the temperature. It had plummeted into the mid-40s, and gotten raw and windy. Plus, my gear was all damp. I was dreading it, actually. The next day, everyone returned to real life except Kevin and me. I tried to avoid him all morning, but he knew where my room was and I couldn't pretend to be out—there was no place to go. Plus, my car was there. There was no hiding.

Fortunately, it turned out that Kevin had changed his mind about attempting to drown me. Instead, we put in at the boat launch at Croatan Park and went into protected water and just had a flat paddle up the river. It was really windy, though, so it wasn't that flat, which made it more interesting. We paddled into it for four long miles and then paddled back for four short miles. I was glad to be on the water for the first day of the year; the old saying is to spend New Year's Day doing as you intend to continue. And we did.

Before we left the next day, we had a chance to catch up with Lamar. Lamar is doing something really interesting with the Wounded Warrior Project, which helps servicemen and women who have returned with traumatic mental and physical injuries (<http://www.woundedwarriorproject.org/>). What a great way to turn the enjoyment of paddling into meaningful work. He had plenty to say about it, and it was all interesting.