

# The Chesapeake Paddler



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It's at Ralph's House.  
What is the Holiday Party?  
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## Happy Birthday KIPP!

By May Win Liu

2015 marked the tenth anniversary for a different type of paddle, the Kent Island Practice Paddles, aka KIPP. KIPP started in 2006 when Marshall Woodruff proposed circumnavigating Kent Island as a series of paddles to a small group of friends with the eventual goal of paddling the entire 34 miles.

The first year did not have much of a plan. It was all new and all were learning how to execute a long distance paddle. Each paddle was a learning experience, with events reviewed and lessons learned and subsequently applied. Each year's experiences became the platform and blueprint for the subsequent year's activities. The Chesapeake Bay was the training ground and her many faces were seen: snow, icy water with warm air temperatures, dead calm on hot humid days, 25+ mph winds with 2-3+ foot waves,

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Waiting to start the paddle to Love Point

by May Win Liu

## CPA Members Help Win National Award from the American Canoe Association (ACA)

By Rick Wiebush

In the summer of 2015, several CPA members participated in an experimental skills development program that recently received a national award from the American Canoe Association. The ACA's "Stroke of Achievement Award" is presented each year to an ACA member organization for superior performance and achievement in program development. Largely due to the hard work and dedication of the participants (and the coaching staff), the award was presented this year to Cross Currents Sea Kayaking at the ACA's annual meeting on October 24 in Charleston, South Carolina.

Participants in Cross Currents' "Unconscious Competence" series (referred to as "UnCon") included CPA members Denise Parisi, Shelly Wiechelt, Liz Marancik, Jaclin Gilbert, Luci Hollingsworth, Susan Green, Rebecca Fitzsimons, Ed Cogswell, John O'Hara and Paul Plowright. Congratulations to everyone!

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## One More Paddle

By Greg Welker

Dave and I decided to get one more paddling camping trip in this fall. I somehow managed to get a permit for three nights in the Okefenokee Swamp National Wildlife Refuge (Georgia) with only a week's notice (permits are "reservable" up to two months before a trip date, and I have heard tales of people putting the permit phone number on speed dial to get through to the refuge office). Camping was on platforms over water/land/swamp, so we took Dave's solo canoe and my Kruger Seawind for ease of loading and unloading.

The eleven hour drive down I-95 was uneventful and it was a short drive from there to our campground for the night before the trip. We stayed at Traders Hill Campground. \$10/tent per night. Nice laid back campground, clean restroom and shower (yes, just one).

The next morning, Sunday, we drove about five miles to the Okefenokee Swamp Recreation Area visitor center and checked in with our permit. The center is nicely maintained, has a nice beach to launch from, and seems pretty secure for multi day parking. Gator number one was waiting for us just off the beach.

We launched and paddled west out through the main cross swamp canal. We passed two groups of people coming in from weekend trips. Our first camping platform was about a ten mile paddle. Each platform is elevated about 2 feet above the water and is about twenty

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*Usually when I watch people do this the kayak still has forward and backwards movement. It seemed like your body helped finish the turns, involving your whole body in controlling the kayak. (I'm envious, this is what I want to be doing)*

*Low braces: you get the whole head, hip snap thing.*

*Bottom line: You seemed to have great presence of mind even when being videoed. I couldn't even remember which side to edge on! And best of all, no matter what I commented above, you seem to have excellent boat control.*

The final assessment component consisted of a formal assessment (for most of the students) either using the ACA L3 personal skills assessment criteria or the BCU 3\* skills assessment criteria. The formal ACA assessment was conducted by Rick Wiebush (with input from the coaches). The formal BCU 3\* assessment was conducted by Jen Kleck of Aqua Adventures (San Diego) during the Kiptopeke Symposium.

Outcomes

In terms of intermediate outcomes, both the coaches and the students believe that everyone made incredible progress in a relatively short amount of time. At the end of the program it was clear that people's enthusiasm and confidence was sky-high. Here are two examples of that:

*I have been paddling for several years, but this course has transformed my paddling capabilities, and my perspectives about paddling. It has resulted in expanding the number of competent, enthusiastic, engaged, and active paddlers in the mid-Atlantic kayak community.*

*We were well-prepared prior to paddling in challenging conditions. When briefly exposed to L4 conditions, we were able to confidently handle our boats due to the skills developed in this course. Most of us were unconsciously using skills that we have been practicing for weeks. Students successfully used the correct stroke or brace at the right time without thinking.*

One of the outcomes that wasn't really anticipated was the incredibly strong bonds that developed among the group members. The tight group cohesion created a supportive learning environment that allowed people to try things that they might not otherwise do; allowed them to sometimes fail but get right back up and dust themselves off; and gave them tremendous satisfaction when they accomplished something that was met with whoops and cheers from everyone else.

The goal of Unconscious Competence was to move people toward mastery of the intermediate skills that are reflected in the ACA L3 and the BCU 3\* criteria. Judging by the number of people who passed one or the other formal assessments, that goal was largely achieved. Three of the participants received the ACA L3 personal skills award, two others received the BCU 3\* award and one received both awards. Of the remaining students, two decided to forego the formal assessment, and two others still have a few skills to master to the point of unconscious competence. They will likely pass the assessment and get their awards in the spring of 2016.

The last outcome – and maybe the most important – was that throughout this whole three-month experience, we all – students and instructors alike – has an incredible amount of fun! ☺

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by forty feet, with half of the platform covered with a tin roof like a picnic pavilion. A small walkway leads to a port-a-pot with a pit toilet underneath. This site was partially on land, so we beached our boats to unload. There was a fire ring on the land. There are very few sites where fires are allowed. After setting up our tents and tying them down to posts and other appurtenances on the platform, we relaunched for some more paddling. While paddling in the main canal was an easy 3.5 mph pace, once we left the canal and got into some of the less traveled trails the lilies and other aquatic vegetation slowed our pace to less than three miles per hour. Plus, we were gawking at the scenery and birds, such as White Ibis and Wood Storks. We did about 16 miles that day. That night the low was between 50-60 degrees, and we had no mosquitoes. However, Fluffy, the resident alligator at the platform did show up begging for a handout. Poor Fluffy went hungry that night.



First Platform Camp

by Dave Isbell

Next morning we relaunched under the watchful eyes of Fluffy and headed back through the canal and then north into the trails to Cedar Hammock platform, about a 10 mile paddle. The location of this platform had puzzled us before the trip, and it did not show up on any maps. We found out at the visitor center that a fire about ten years ago had burned the platform and the surrounding area, and a day use platform had been repurposed at a new location on the trail but not renamed on the map. This platform, consisting of the plastic dock

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Okefenokee Swamp

by Greg Welker



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blocks we often see at marinas and kayak launches, was literally floating in an open area of the swamp's prairie. A 360 degree view of the swamp, and a nice sunset. Anchoring to the platform was a bit of a challenge, as we only had the pavilion posts to use, and the platform pieces tended to form an uneven sleeping surface. Both of us were glad we would not be experiencing a thunderstorm while camping on this site. While the swamp was surprisingly quiet during the day, at night the noises were constant. Alligators groaned and bellowed, owls hooted, frogs croaked, and lots of unknown things splashed. And there were the expected mosquitoes once the wind died down. The morning brought a wet fog and we were careful not to slip slide off the platform into the realm of the gators.



**Dave's tent anchored by food barrel and water bottles on platform**  
by Dave Isbell

Our third day of paddling took us south about 10 miles to Monkey Lake, where the platform was located in the center of a cedar hammock. The paddle took us across the widest section of prairies we had seen to date. Our largest alligators were seen along this route, with one in the 8-9 foot range (sorry, no desire struck us to get exact close up measurements). There were very few mosquitoes at this site which surprised us. That night we were closely serenaded by several Barred Owls, with at least one about ten feet from the tents.



**Flat Water**

by Dave Isbell

Our last day of paddling took us out seven miles to the north. We came across two Sandhill Cranes in the prairie. The binoculars revealed that these were wild birds, with no identification bands. Very nice to see. We just beat the rain back to the vehicle and managed to keep ahead of it for the drive back to Maryland.



**Hammock Camp**

by Dave Isbell

Overall, a very nice exploratory trip. It would be worthwhile to go back and do more camping and paddling in other parts of the swamp. Permits are \$15/person per night, and I am not sure of the maximum number of people allowed per site, but I wouldn't want to have more than four tents on a platform. It looked like the pavilions would support a hammock, but you would be in the way of cooking and using the platform in the rain. ☹️



By Greg Welker

**More photos of Greg and Dave's Trip:**

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/gdwelker/albums/72157661420754501>

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