

Thanks for Coming to Gear Day!

A big thanks to all who participated in Gear Day and Fall-Out-of-Your-Boat Day at Truxton Park on Sunday, June 26. 60 to 70 people attended on what was an absolutely beautiful weather day. Everywhere you looked there were boats (including three skin on frames, a hand-made wood strip boat, an assortment of other kayaks including Epic surfskis, canoes and a stand-up paddle board) and mounds of gear. Jennifer Bine put on an impressive display of the myriad items of gear one might have for kayaking (including contributions of special items from several other people), Bela Mariassy talked about how to read marine charts and navigation, Tom Heneghan had a display on first aid, Ralph Heimlich brought his tree-friendly hammock and demonstrated some knot tying, Rich Stevens (with help of course from Sue) and Jim Zawlocki put on a kayak camping display, Steven Jahncke showed people how a skin-on-frame boat is made, Kara Brown and Ralph Heimlich put skid plates on their matching canoes, and Kathy Haduch showed how to properly fit a PFD and gave a demonstration on stand up paddling.

Brian Blankinship and Kristina McCoy and their cadre of very capable assistants (Rob Bowen, Tom Heneghan, Bela Mariassy, Jennifer Bine, Mihail Popov, Jim Allen, Paul Casto, and Chuck Haberlein) helped people with wet exits and rescues on the water. As usual for a CPA event, the potluck lunch was wonderful. Even Dave Isbell, who had to work that day, was moved to paddle over on his lunch hour and join us for a bit. Lots of people lent a hand and participated in a number of different ways at the event and a great time was had by all.

Thank you all very much!

Suzanne Farace

See <https://picasaweb.google.com/ImmunoGirl/CPAGearDayTruxtonPark2011> and

https://picasaweb.google.com/ImmunoGirl/2011_06_26GearDayAtTruxtonParkCPA?authkey=Gv1sRgCNmZpZ3I39TgYw#

for Catriona Miller's pics and

<http://outdoors.webshots.com/slideshow/580398065JSYrUJ> for Photo Yakker's pics [what is his name?]



Gear Day participants on Ego Alley photo by PhotoYakker[who is this?]



Rich loading at Queen Anne photo by Ralph Heimlich

Queen Anne to Solomons Island on the Patuxent

By Ralph Heimlich

I arrived at the Queen Anne Canoe launch about a half hour after dawn on a cool Friday morning. The mist rose off the river and wild turkeys gobbled from the woods across the river. I unloaded my boat and gear and packed the kayak. The CD Caribou is a cargo hauler, and this was only a long weekend, but I was taking lots of stuff for the group (big tarp, cook gear, watermelon!?! and lots of water). Bob Pullman drove up a few minutes after I got loaded and I helped him unload, then we drove out for the shuttle run down to Solomons Island.

Early Friday morning on Route 4 down the spine of Calvert County is busy with traffic, mostly headed off the peninsula to Washington, Baltimore and Northern Virginia. It wasn't always like this. In the 17th century, the Patuxent was the busy thoroughfare, and there were few roads through the thick virgin forests. Hard to believe that the narrow, muddy riverbank we'd just left had been the head of navigation on the river, reachable by ocean-going brigs and ships. As the forests were cut and the fields cultivated, sediment choked the river and the "official" port of entry moved further and

further downstream. Today, we battled traffic to place my truck in the parking lot along the beach in front of the Star of the Sea Church, so we'd be able to get home after the paddle, but we'd find peace on the river.

When Bob and I returned to Queen Anne, the other paddlers were there and loading their boats: Sue Stevens was helping Rich, Suzanne Farace and Mike MacWilliams were getting loaded, and Al Larsen and Tom Heneghan were getting their boats off the cars. Jennifer Bine and Jesse Aronson had called from the Beltway and were stuck in traffic, having left just that little bit too late to beat the

(Continued on page 7)

Queen Anne to Solomons (Continued from page 5)

traffic. I called and redirected them to Selbys Landing, below Jug Bay, so we could get underway without delay.

After Sue took a group picture from the dock, we pushed off in the downstream current through a deep green tunnel of lush vegetation on the narrow river. Bright yellow Prothonotary Warblers flitted across the river in the early morning shadow and woodpeckers drummed in the deep woods bordering the river. Reaching the confluence of the Western Branch at about 10:30 AM, we put in at Mount Calvert for an early lunch and sat at the landing under the venerable mansion. We called Jennifer and Jesse, who had arrived at Selbys Landing, and asked them to paddle up and meet us. A half hour later, they passed the concrete caisson that was the pivot of a swing bridge for the Chesapeake Beach Railway and landed at Mount Calvert to join us.

After lunch, we launched and paddled down past Jug Bay and Jacksons Landing on the last of the ebbing tide, and past Selbys Landing as a squad of young canoeists paddled up river, with one containing 3 boisterous boys capsizing intentionally just to get in the river. We offered them encouragement, and turned right into Mattaponi Creek, reaching the paddle-in campsite at White Oak Landing at about 1:30 after an 11.5 mile paddle down from Queen Anne. White Oak has a football-field sized grassy area for camping, a picnic table, fire ring and porta-potty, and is up on a bluff overlooking Mattaponi Creek. Located on the site of the Native American village John Smith recorded as *Mattapament*, there is as little development in site as when Smith's shallop rowed up.

We'd agreed to an early start to make the most of the ebbing tide, so 5:30 saw us eating a hurried breakfast, breaking camp and packing everything (less the watermelon) back in the boats. By 7 we were on the water, paddling down the creek in swirls of mist rising from the still-warm water. It felt good to be on the water as the rest of the world slept. We took the better part of an hour to traverse the arc of river we'd seen in a glance from the tower the previous night, then paddled down past the remnants of Nottingham, once the official customs port and head of steamboat navigation on the Patuxent. This stretch of the Patuxent is almost completely devoid of development, with a high bluff of resistant rock on the east shore, and Spice Creek leading off the river to the west, and Hall Creek meandering off to the east. We paddled into Swanson Creek and searched the south shore for the Maxwell Hall paddle-in campsite. At about 2 PM, we finally found what we took for the site about halfway down the creek, just opposite the humming power plant. We'd paddled 17 miles, and our average speed over the trip was just under 4 miles an hour, getting a kick of about 1 MPH from the current and tide.

Next morning, we repeated our early departure and were once again on the water by 7 AM. This morning was overcast and spitting just a tad bit of rain, but we packed up nearly dry and loaded the boats in the restricted landing, rounding Teague Point and heading under the Rt. 231 bridge by Benedict. The wind was out of the southeast, and the fetch across the broad Patuxent here, a true estuary, was in our face, so we crossed to the Calvert County shore at Sheridan Point to get as much lee as possible. We squeaked through a narrow cut at Jack Bay Marsh, at the mouth of Battle Creek, and coasted down the shore to weather the western end of Broomes Island. Broomes is the site of former waterman and Maryland delegate Bernie Fowler's annual wade-in, where uses his white tennis shoes to measure the Patuxent's clarity (see http://www.chesapeakebay.net/news_bernies2008.aspx?menuitem=28417). We took a short break before paddling the last stretch to Jefferson Patterson Park for lunch.

We paddled down the center of the broad river, with power boats traveling the channels on either side of us as we approached the long, narrow finger of Point Patience beckoning like Ahab as the river narrowed and deepened. The water off Point Patience is charted as deep as 122 feet, and the point is such an acute angle that you can have one end of your paddle in the sand and the other only feet from massive cabin cruisers as your paddle around it. Finally, we coasted up to the white sandy beach and landed in the gentle surf. Laurie Steele and Mike's brother arrived, and with the three vehicles, we shuttled all the boats, gear and bodies back to their respective launches, using the busy paved highways, and turning our backs reluctantly on the quiet, peaceful liquid highway we had traveled nearly 55 miles on over the last three days.



The Pax: A true estuary photo by Greg Welker

Pictures of the trip are online at:

<https://picasaweb.google.com/lh/sredir?uname=aronsonj&target=ALBUM&id=5615302747636814753&authkey=Gv1sRgCLbGiInW7JyBTA&feat=email>

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/gdwelker/sets/72157626903314702/>

<https://picasaweb.google.com/lh/sredir?uname=MichaelMacWilliams&target=ALBUM&id=5615091842203909121&authkey=Gv1sRgCPn7IPv5oYzodA&feat=email>

<https://picasaweb.google.com/ralph.heimlich/PaxRiverKamper2011#>

If you want to do some paddle-in camping on the Pax, I suggest you see my article on the Patuxent Water Trail in the May 2011 issue of Atlantic Coastal Kayaker at <http://www.atlanticcoastalkayaker.com/issues/issues.htm> and get a copy of the wonderful map created by CPA member Dave Linthicum (<http://shopdnr.com/patuxentriverwatertrailguide.aspx>)

You can reserve any of the campsites in Prince George's County (Queen Anne Canoe Launch, Iron Pot, Selbys Landing, White Oak Landing, Spice Creek, Milltown Landing) from the Jug Bay office at http://www.pgparcs.com/Things_To_Do/Nature/Patuxent_River_Park.htm, the Maxwell Hall campsite from Charles County at 301-932-3470, Indian Creek from MD DNR at 301-743-5161, and Greenwell State Park at 301-872-5688.