

Chesapeake Paddler



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Pocomoke/Nassawango Camping Trip For a More Perfect Union

By Ralph Heimlich

Well, we didn't have as much "fun" as the Patuxent Sojourners, and nobody died, but there was a proposal. They say you can see all of life pass by on a river, and I guess its true, but please hold the delivery of the baby—I'm too old for some things.

Thirteen paddling disciples assembled at Pocomoke River State Park's Milburn Landing on Friday afternoon and took a short paddle downriver. Dave Isbell and Jill Doroz, paddling with their Greenland sticks did a sales job on a couple of fishermen in rec boats. The one guy was so impressed that he wanted to get detailed specs. If you see a paunchy fisherman in a wide rec boat paddling Greenland style, blame Dave.



Cellar House Farm photo by Rich Stevens

We went down to Cellar House, the "oldest house on the Pocomoke", built in 1718 by a French smuggler who later murdered his mistress in the upstairs bedroom for cheating on him (she's still in residence, on dark and moonless nights, so they say). There's a Native American burial in the cellar, and the mouth of a tunnel reaches out to the river and was used by the Underground Railroad before the Civil War. The current owner, Jack Graham, collects sculpture, and the grounds look like a modern art museum. See <http://www.cellarhouse.com/>

We got back to find a note from the "Hammock Nazi" saying I couldn't abuse their trees (Note: Hennessy Hammocks use tree hugger straps, and don't hurt trees), so I had to pitch it as a tent (it makes a GOOD hammock). With the "no trash removal", "no liquor", and now "no hammocks" rules, I think MD DNR is heading for the "no park" park. My new goal in life is to commando camp every water-accessible MD State Park by hammock without getting caught. We'll see about this!!!

On Saturday, as we were loading up, sly Rich Stevens slipped a little "surprise" package into the seat of Sue Bauer's boat and then kept biting his tongue as Sue found more and more little things she had to do before she suited up. She finally started to get her gear on, and I (designated photo taker) didn't think she would see the "surprise" so I remarked to Rich "it's a good thing it ISN'T a snake" which increased her scrutiny and she finally found the little gift wrapped box with a ribbon on top. Inside was a frog—which is apparently some kind of totem with these two—with a 1 carat chunk of ice and a platinum setting. Rich bent his knee (I thought he tripped until I remembered how you're supposed to propose) and popped the question. I didn't really hear an answer, but pictures don't lie, do they?



A Decent Proposal photo by Ralph Heimlich



Landing at Red House Road photo by Rich Stevens

For the paddle, we were joined by Paul Ffonoff and Davidson Gillespie (from down Onancock, VA, way) and the 15 of us started off upriver. I tried several times to interest our newest paddlers (Ann Larsen, Kimberly Riggle and Geoff Ultsch) in a shorter one-way 9 mile trip with a shuttle, but they didn't bite. So we were going to do the full 18 in a day. At least the tides were cooperating, and it looked like the weather would, too.

Getting up to Red House Road proved to be pretty much of a breeze. Very light boat traffic and high overcast. Lots of snakes sunning after all the wet weather, including pairs on several logs. After a highly coordinated landing where we helped the rec boaters get ashore, too, we put in and headed back down river. About halfway down Nassawango, the skies opened up and the weather alerts went off like car alarms at a slim jim convention. Under the "Any old port in a storm" philosophy, we paddled in to one of the few cabins

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on the creek and asked permission to come ashore until the thunder stopped. Don't know what we'd have done if he'd said "NO", but they were very hospitable and invited us up on the porch. Pretty soon, his 5 year old son came out, then the 4 year old daughter (Heaven). Very nice! Next out were a tattooed tag team crew from the WWF. Good thing we weren't wearing our "Paddle Faster--I Hear Banjos" shirts!! I got nearly the entire life history of our host in the 20 minutes it took for the storm to pass and I think he maybe was wondering just who the hell we REALLY were. Suzanne bet there was some illicit chem lab in the basement. Ah well, country hospitality and don't ask too many questions.

Saki, Rich, Sue and Paul had been ahead of us and sheltered under the Nassawango Road bridge, so we joined up and finished the downriver run under alternating sunny skies and clouds, as the weather alerts kept sounding. We got back to a nearly submerged camp (it's in a swamp, after all) and my former campsite was christened "Lake Heimlich". Showers, munchies and well deserved libation set us up for the "Feast" which went down in true Pirate style, including 2 bottles of

The "Feast" at Milburn Landing photo by Rich Stevens

champagne toast for the betrothed (I'll drink to that!)

Sunday looked pretty good, so we broke camp (almost dry, except for a passing shower) and paddled down to Dividing Creek (thank you Gina), about 4 miles down from Milburn Landing. We went up the beautiful little creek, seeing birds, snakes, wildflowers, and thanks to Sue's sharp ears and eyes, a nice Barred Owl perched about 30 feet off the water. We made it up to the 364 bridge and decided we'd better reverse. The last 4 miles were a bit of a slog, but everyone did fine.

Congratulations to all paddler for completing an RU (Rich unit = 30 miles) even if it took the whole weekend.

Saki's pictures are online at http://www.kodakgallery.com/ShareLanding.action?c=19p5s29o.4fxrf86k&x=0&y=-1ceuag&localeid=en_US&cm_mmc=site_email--site_share--core--view_photos_button

Rich's are at <http://picasaweb.google.com/CommodoreRich/NassawangoCreek#>
and <http://picasaweb.google.com/CommodoreRich/MilburnLandingAndUpDividingCreekToRt358Bridge#>
and <http://picasaweb.google.com/CommodoreRich/PokomokeRiver#>

and mine are at <http://picasaweb.google.com/ralph.heimlich/NassawangoCreekCamper2009#>



Dave Isbell on Dividing Creek photo by Rich Stevens

Porpoise Seen on West River, Maryland

This item from Greg Welker: "Paddling on the West river I came across a pod of porpoise. First time I've ever seen them on the West."

Greg wasn't hallucinating (or Photo Shopping) based on this article <http://www.hometownannapolis.com/news/top/2009/06/24-22/Dolphins-spotted-in-West-River.html> in the local paper. You can see a better picture there, too (sorry Greg!).



On Porpoise photo by Greg Welker