

A Paddle on the Patuxent and Jug Bay

By Paul Fofonoff

On Sunday, August 28, I went for a paddle on the Patuxent River, starting at the Patuxent Wetlands Park at Waysons Corner, at the Rt 4 bridge about 15 miles from my house. The temperature was in the 90s, so as soon as I got in the boat, I dipped my hat in the water. The tide was low when I launched, and rising, but the current was weak. The marsh was a yellow-green band, due to the flowering of wild rice (*Zizania aquatica*).

I was surprised to see stalks of Wild Rice with bags attached. At first I thought these were some kind of flower. Then I remembered that lots of people are trying to restore Wild Rice in the Chesapeake. The stands in Jug Bay were once threatened by nonmigratory Canada Geese. Fencing (Geese can't fly in the breeding season) and some controlled



Woods and Wild Rice all photos by Paul Fofonoff

hunting enabled the rice to recover. Greg Kearns, Jug Bay Park Naturalist, is responsible for much of this work. Wild rice is an important food to many marsh birds and animals, including the [Sora Rail](#) (*Porzana carolina*), which I have not yet seen. Now people are trying to restore rice in other places, including the polluted [Anacostia River](#).

I stopped for a rest at Mount Calvert, a historic colonial plantation house. After that, the channel narrowed at the site of a former RR bridge—there are two ancient pilings at the crossing. The historic alignment of the [Chesapeake Beach Railroad](#) went all the way from DC to North Beach on the Bay. As I paddled, the river opened up to Jug Bay, a large freshwater tidal lake.



Narrows above Jug Bay

I paddled to a spot called Pindell Point. About 3 years ago, looking for shelter from a thunderstorm, I landed here and followed the trail up the steep wooded bluff to good views of Jug Bay and an active [archaeological dig](#) (off limits to the public!). As I was about to launch from Pindell Point, a Jug Bay caretaker came by on an evening walk. He had a story about the archaeological site. The volunteers and students were finding artifacts from stone-tool-making. The rocks and flints must have come from the Piedmont or Mountain regions. They were finding stone flakes, from tool-making. Then a student called out, "Here's a big flake!!!" It was a nearly-intact 13,000 year-old Clovis Point, one of the prized objects of American archaeology—normally only found out West in the Texas-New Mexico-Colorado region. . She got the nickname 'Big Flake' for the rest of the project.

This time, trying to land with kayak's bow on land, and the midsection in water more than knee-deep, I capsized. In 90 F weather, that was refreshing. Near Pindell Point, there was a white waterfall of invasive Asian Clematis (*Clematis orientalis*) cascading down a tree. I made it back to my car round dusk. I'd only paddled 6 or 7 miles, but was too tired to sleep well. I guess I'm not 25 anymore, but this was a great trip.



Jug Bay from Pindell Point



Mount Calvert



Cloud reflection