

Coastbusters

The Cross Currents Newsletter for Mid-Atlantic Paddlers

January 2025

On Becoming a Sea Kayaker: Alice Down the Rabbit Hole

*Renee Alice Riley Adams
(RARA)*

Whoa! What is All This?

Laurie - whom I met on FB - invited me to my very first “pool session” in early 2024. I didn’t have the slightest idea what a pool session actually was but I was sure of one thing: after two years of paddling alone in my recreational kayak from the little put in at the end of my street I was ready to find other kindred spirits and discover the larger Chesapeake Bay.

At the pool, I found myself naturally drawn to the graceful swoopiness of the boats – so different from the snubby river kayaks I used to see while rafting the Rogue River in Oregon. I watched with fascination from the sidelines as people intentionally fell out of their brightly colored boats; rescued each other; climbed up into their kayaks cowboy style; and contorted their backs like circus performers, using big yellow pillows to stay afloat. I even saw one guy break his paddle (which looked more like a long, thin, stick; later I learned it’s called a Greenland paddle) while attempting to roll. I was worried as I saw him struggle though finally he righted himself and inhaled, a giant grin on his face. I didn’t know about skirts or wet exits at the

time, but I could sense that no one else seemed the least bit alarmed. (No wonder: It was rolling guru Mike Hamilton!).

I was inspired by the playfulness and fun I saw combined with such serious skill and, as Alice, the character in Alice in Wonderland, would say, from there things just got “*curiouser and curiouser.*”

I loved that most the people in the pool were around my age but still seemed flexible and strong. I wondered if this was a sport I could do into my 70s,



Grace and style in the pool. Photo: Laurie Collins

*I rode my motorcycle
10,000 miles across
Canada by myself*

or maybe even 80s. What excited me most though was the possibility of belonging: both to a community where people value being fit and in nature, and the idea of belonging to the Chesapeake Bay. Instead of connecting with the mountain ranges and high deserts of Oregon, I was ready to embrace the Bay whole-heartedly -- to be in the expansive beauty of it all. It may sound grandiose to say but kayaking for me is a sacred pursuit that feeds my soul.

New Challenges Needed

While I've never considered myself to be athletic, I was no stranger to being on the water or adventure. My Dad used to take me and my brothers sailing on the San Francisco Bay; I rode my motorcycle 10,000 miles across Canada by myself and in Europe in my mid-20s; I joined a rowing club in my 40s in Southern Oregon; and my little brother got me into stand-up paddle boarding. Though I never played sports in school and have not thought of myself as a flexible or particularly strong person, I just love being outdoors! With my life coaching practice winding down and many all-consuming house projects finishing up, I was looking for a new passion and challenge in which to invest my time and energy.

I quickly signed up for a bonanza of introductory courses: The Chesapeake Paddler's Association (CPA) "All Things Kayaking: SK101" in April; Cross Currents' day-long Intro to Kayaking in June; and a Women's Skills Weekend in July. I also joined the Canton Kayak Club so I could try out other boats, and investigated a Meet Up group called WatersEdge.

Buying the Right Boat

I'd seen sea kayaks on the tops of cars when we'd come from Oregon to buy our house in Annapolis but didn't know anyone who had one. For two years, my little orange Hurricane Prima 110 Sport (11.5 feet long, 29" wide, low slung lawn chair included) served me well though I knew I was ready for more. *"Alice asked the Cheshire Cat, who was sitting in a tree, 'What road do I take?'"*

In early March I drove north to Baltimore to meet some folks from the Canton Kayak Club to see if I could learn more about getting a sea kayak. I found my way to the Union Craft Brewery, the site of the CKC event. Most of the people I met used boats at the nine different free storage and launch sites set up by the Canton Club. But two people I talked to said they owned longer boats from a British company called P&H. The guy to see was a guy named Brad at Starrk Moon Kayaks in Delta, PA.

Simplified Guide to Buying a Kayak

I emailed Rick at Cross Currents to sign up for classes and to ask how to buy a kayak. We had a funny exchange.

Rick talked about the basic considerations: the importance of fit (*you don't want to be floating around in it (pardon the expression) and you don't want to be jammed into it either. It should be comfortably snug*); what I wanted to use it for (point to point vs. play); length and rocker; plastic vs. fiberglass; cost, etc. Then: *"Those are generalizations. There are about 5,000 different boat models. I'd encourage you to try as many boats as you can before buying, borrow, rent, etc*

Me: *Thanks for the info about boat buying. Only 5,000 different models, eh? Easy-peasy . . . hahahahah.*

I know the Daves down at Annapolis Canoe and Kayak. I call them “Yes Dave” and “No Dave.” When my husband bought me my first kayak a month after arriving here (in December) Yes Dave said ‘You are going to have so much fun paddling this kayak around on the Chesapeake Bay!’ and No Dave said ‘You aren’t going to paddle in the cold, right? You know you will die if you fall in the water. You will breathe in icy water and your lungs won’t be able to handle it . . .’

Head-Spinning Choices in a Head-Spinning Place

I tried to learn as much as I could about how to buy a sea kayak. So much to consider and a whole new vocabulary: rocker, chines, polycarbonate, rotomolded, tracking, edging, rudders, skegs, thigh hooks, and so much more. And then there were all the brand and model names: Tsunami, Tempest, Pyranha, Venture, Scorpio, Virgo, etc. My head was spinning as I scribbled notes while my husband and I drove to Starrk Moon. I was *determined* to return with the boat of my dreams.

At Starrk Moon we were greeted by a 12-foot dinosaur guarding a five-foot high pile of kayaks wrapped in plastic. Brad walked up with his cane and white beard and introduced himself. When I asked to use the restroom after so much morning coffee, he mumbled something about work being done and invited me to pee behind some trees.

"We're all mad here."

Brad entertained me with stories and I loved his whimsical décor of old boats in various states of disrepair along with a well-weathered statue of Elvis. I rifled through the kayak jumble looking for a boat that would fit me, to no avail. I did sit in a boat called a Cetus LV, that Brad said might be good for me. I ignored the mold growing on the cotton that swaddled the boat and instead focused on the rush I felt just sitting in my first ever sea kayak. But instead of fitting like a glove, something was digging into my thighs; I did my best to get out

gracefully. I left empty handed though I felt buoyed by a conversation I’d had with guy named Ricardo just before driving out to Delta, PA. He’d urged me “not to be in a rush” when finding the right kayak. *"A dream is not reality but who's to say which is which?"*

More Characters Along the Way

Another kayak store that looked promising online was The Maine Island Kayak Company. I saw that they imported boats made by Nigel Dennis, an English kayaker who circumnavigated Great Britain in 1980. As I’ve been married to a Brit for 34 years and worked in London as a journalist, I noted where the boats were made in Wales, only an hour from where we’d stayed at my nephew’s house.

In late March I was due to fly to Maine to attend a family memorial. I decided to try again to learn “hands on” about sea kayaks. Though it was snowing, I trudged 20 minutes to the ferry terminal and boarded a ferry for Peaks Island. I was one of three passengers, and as I attempted to look out the fogged-up window at the sleet pouring down I wondered what I was getting myself into.

On Peaks Island, I plodded another 20 minutes on icy roads looking for the kayak store, hoping to find employees huddled inside due to the cold, just waiting to tell me about the different kinds of boats. Instead I found a house with a few kayaks outside and a van with kayak racks. I double checked the address and knocked on the door.



The Dinosaur guardian at Starrk Moon. Photo: RARA



Tom Bergh, Maine Island Kayak. Photo: RARA

A tall man with a woolen cap and a long bushy moustache answered the door. “Is this the Maine Island Kayak Company?” I inquired. “Why yes it is! Come on in,” he said warmly. I recognized him from his “About” entry on the website: Tom Bergh, company founder and sea kayak guide. For three hours we sat in front of the wood stove in his living room, sipping herbal tea and talking about life and kayaking.

When it came up that in a previous life I’d been a motorcycle instructor, he showed me his collection of racing bikes, which were right next to his many pairs of downhill skis. He regaled me with stories of kayaking in Antarctica and other exotic places, and introduced me to the concepts of “Brain, Body, Blade, Boat.” He emphasized adding “Brain” into the mix as a way to be resourceful. His thinking fits well with all the personal development I’ve done over the years learning how to respond quickly instead of merely reacting. He also talked about how “contact is confidence,” referring how to be at one with the boat. *“Sometimes, I’ve believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast.”*

Like everyone, he reminded me to “not be in a hurry” to buy a boat (though I definitely was) and mentioned a woman named Randi Kruger at Capital City Kayaks. He also told me about a Greenland Paddle Event (Delmarva) that goes on in the fall on the Eastern Shore. Then he drove me to the ferry, where I met the woman who manages the business, Liz Johnson. I laughed remembering the conversation I’d had with her a few weeks before when I said I wanted to demo some boats in March. The tone of her voice during that conversation said “Lady, you’re not from around here, are you?” I thanked them for their time, encouragement and stories.

Getting Going

In mid-April I attended The Chesapeake Bay Paddler’s Association event, SK101, with about 50 other people at the Cult Classic Brewery on Maryland’s Eastern Shore. Taught by many different instructors, I could tell this was a good place to learn and further bring things together. I liked that they started with the basics of labeling a



SK 101 Fashion Show. Photo: RARA

kayak. As a rower, I often “sat bow” and always felt like I was in the back of the boat instead of the front (but of course we were moving backwards!). It was also useful to see all kinds of kayak racks being loaded. And I enjoyed the kayak fashion show where I saw my first dry suit and got to try on several PFDs. My overall takeaway was one of empowerment: “I can do this!” *“Well, I never heard it before, but it sounds uncommon nonsense.”*

Two weeks later I finally got to paddle a real sea kayak during CPA’s training event, SK102, in Mineral Springs, VA. It’s a camping event and I had to locate my camping gear for the first time after moving to Maryland. Seeing what was missing meant an extended trip to REI where I bought my first farmer john wetsuit and paddle booties. I luckily found my small two-person tent (but learned how hard it was to put on my wetsuit lying down).



First on water training. Photo: RARA

I couldn’t believe her generosity when an instructor named Paula volunteered to lend me her NDK Romany, just like many of the boats I’d seen at my first pool session. It felt soooo much longer than any other kayak I’d ever paddled. And tippy! My quads overcompensated for my short hamstrings and I got cramps all down my legs during my first self-rescue. But I did it! I felt capable rescuing another person and myself that first day, along with learning how to use my legs instead of just my arms to paddle. *“It would be so nice if something made sense for a change.”*

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Finally!

Still determined to get a boat for my first Cross Currents class, I called Randi Kruger for what she calls a “Sit & Fit.”

By this time I’d got the idea that many outfitting stores don’t really exist for sea kayaks; I wasn’t likely to find what I was looking for at Dick’s Sporting Goods. Randi at Capital City Kayaks had two boats ready: a Petrel Play and a Romany Plus. I knew I wanted a boat with a low rear deck for easier rolling and entries (though I didn’t have much actual experience with doing either). I knew I wanted something that fit me and, truth be told, I wanted to love how the boat looked. While I do understand that “good art won’t match your sofa” I also know I respond to color in ways a lot of people don’t. It gives me joy to wear lots of colors and each month I color my hair fuchsia and turquoise.

I trusted Randi’s guidance and things just felt right. The NDK Romany Plus fit me and I loved its teal



Finally! RARA in her new boat. Photo; Randi Kruger

color. While I wouldn't necessarily have chosen the two white racing stripes on the boat, I joke that they help me keep up with younger paddlers. I put down my deposit and drove away feeling absolutely thrilled to have finally found my boat! I believe that she will "teach me" in the same way an old pony can teach a novice rider. I also bought two cool sea glass mobiles that Randi had created – a woman after my own heart. I love being around artists of all kinds.

My hullevator was the next hurdle. It required five different pieces in addition to the actual hullevator as my car didn't have the right bars and I wanted to have locks on the rack. I saw it as a good omen that it was the department head – a woman-- at REI who put on my rack and showed me how to use it. And I only **once** had to hear that horrible grating sound resulting from entering a parking garage with a lower clearance than necessary. UGH. I knew I was becoming a real kayaker though I still hadn't had my Intro to Kayaking with Cross Currents yet.

Into the Fray!

In June I got to do more wet exits and rescues at the Intro Class at Rocky Gorge reservoir with instructors Shelly Wiechelt and Richard Essex. It was a small class and a beautiful day. I think Shelly might have thought it was a bit weird that before the class that I wanted to look briefly into people's eyes (instead of into their sunglasses) but that was an important class for learning more about trusting myself and others on the water. I've spent many hours learning how to move from my "reptilian brain" to instead responding; I wanted to see if I could apply this concept of thriving instead of just surviving to kayaking.

The Women's Skills Weekend with Paula Hubbard further boosted my confidence though I do still hear my inner critic screaming: "will you ever get this right? Remember: - "more rotation, more rotation," "sit up straight!" "relax your shoulders." While every male kayaking instructor I have worked with has been incredibly nice, there is no substitute in my book for learning from and practicing with other women.



Feeling strong! Photo: James Adams



Photo: Suzanne Elliott

I've paddled a sea kayak 49 times so far this season and started stretching and lifting weights more regularly. Older kayakers always laugh when I tell them the specific number of paddles. "Awwwww, you're still counting, that's sweet!" they say as they think about their own paddles probably numbering into the hundreds.

For some reason it encourages me to keep counting; it's a way I can stay present and honest with myself. It's sometimes hard for me to "stay current" with life and pause to reflect. Writing "Paddle 42" or "Arms 30 min." on my calendar when I kayak or weightlift helps me to see my progress and to stay motivated.

The Kiptopeke Challenge

My biggest paddling challenge this year was simply to survive the Kiptopeke Symposium. Gathering my new gear and driving to Cape Charles was challenging. Six hours a day on the water for three days was challenging. Remaining open to all the great learning that was offered, despite leg cramps, was challenging. I saw cars that got flooded by King tides and heard about three- to five- foot waves. I did a roll for the first time assisted by a guy named Cowboy. The first night I laid down for a 15-minute rest before dinner and I woke up nine hours later!

Onward and Upward!

I've had a good start in sea kayaking and I plan to keep going. Playing with my own boat in the pool; learning to roll; it feels like I've come full circle and it hasn't even been a year.

I keep looking for when the new UnCon 1 dates will be announced and feel cool just saying "UnCon." I'm excited to go to Belize with Cross Currents in March. So far, I love the people I've met and the skills I am learning. I also love that kayaking is mostly not as competitive as rowing. Because it is usually done in an individual boat (instead of a pair/double, four or eight) I think there is more room for individuals to do things their own way. I generally feel more "wiggle room" to be who I am. Sea kayaking invites people to be inventive and resourceful.

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I couldn't have guessed how my previous experiences with life coaching and group facilitating, motorcycling, horseback-riding, rowing and being a part of a Women's Wilderness Group would ultimately come together to propel me into this vast ocean that is sea kayaking. I especially appreciate being able to remain calm while being upside down in my boat to "make a wish and count a fish." Each day I feel more at ease in myself and in my boat.

"Dear, dear! How queer everything is to-day! And yesterday things went on just as usual. I wonder if I've been changed in the night? Let me think: was I the same when I got up this morning? I almost think I can remember feeling a little different. But if I'm not the same, the next question is, Who in the world am I? Ah, that's the great puzzle!"

Here's to riding more educational waves that will no doubt challenge me to live up to my boat's name: The Alice in Wonderland. I learned that Alice means "noble" when I took it as my middle name 15 years ago. Many people have called me RARA (my initials) since then, remarking that it reflects my enthusiasm and positivity. "Rah! Rah!" I think it fits as my mission in life to "honor and encourage myself and others." I use it now as my "sea name," because, well, why not? I feel open and capable as I await whatever will happen next in 2025. Bring it on!



RARA. Photo: selfie

"I almost wish I hadn't gone down that rabbit-hole—and yet—and yet—it's rather curious, you know, this sort of life!"

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Weekend at DelMarVa

Christina Adamson



Christina. Photo: Javier Castano

I haven't left my apartment yet but I'm already questioning if this weekend will be more trouble than it's worth. I should have been on the road by now, but a combination of running late at work and needing to pick up gear at Queens Landing has left me scrambling. By the time I reach Manhattan's west side, I'm faced with a city's worth of weekenders creeping toward the Holland Tunnel.

I trust not everyone is also headed to DelMarVa, the aquatic intersection between Delaware, Maryland and Virginia. And as time passes and traffic thins out, I close in on a campsite on Delaware's South Inlet. Under a bridge and down an access road, I pull up to a somewhat rural RV park where I'm

soon joined by Fiona and Alan, two of my companions from North Brooklyn Community Boathouse (NBCB). We hurry to set up camp against the wind and the dark, then chat logistics. We agree to leave early for Camp Arrowhead in the morning so there's enough time to check-in and eat breakfast before the first day of programming. It's getting late, but before retiring to my tent I turn off my headlamp and look at the stars. I don't know where I am, but I can tell we're close to the ocean from the smell and feel of the sand caught up in the breeze. The sun set before I made it out of New Jersey. I'll have to wait for the morning to orient myself.

The next day comes and I'm still lost. My GPS insists "you've arrived!" but all I see is forest, marsh, and the sand swept road bending before me. I keep driving, almost missing the sign on my left. At the west end of Angola Landing off Rehoboth Bay sits woody Camp Arrowhead.

The Retreat

Home to the 35th annual DelMarVa Paddlers Retreat, a festival celebrating Greenland-style kayaking. This weekend it's home to a handful of us from NBCB, along with about a hundred other paddlers from all over the world. I park and reunite with Fiona and Alan at registration. We soon meet up with other NBCB members Tania and Javier. Javier is a Greenland rolling connoisseur, and the trip leader at NBCB who suggested we participate in the festival. The dining hall is abuzz with Greenland enthusiasts; and each, old or new, brings an earnest passion and eagerness to teach and be taught. As I fill out a waiver, I hear the paddle carving workshop has been moved up to 8:00. I'm relieved I arrived early, and make my way to the Wright Pavilion.

Paddle Carving

One distinction between Greenland and European style kayaking are the paddles. Greenlanders use a thinner paddle where the blade contours naturally into the shoulders and shaft. A euro blade has the more common curved "power face" blades on both ends of the shaft. With all the detail and precision that go into Greenland paddles, I'm doubtful I'll be able to carve my own from a block of wood in just two days. But our instructor Don Beale is confident everyone in our group will leave with a finished paddle, so we get to work.

Don tells us he's been crafting and selling custom paddles since 2002, but today is all about taking measurements and carving down our shape. I glean that it's most important for the measurements to be equal on all sides of the paddle. What might not seem like a discrepancy now will matter very much during a long kayak trip. A sentiment that seems to



Prepping: Photo: Javier Castano.

be true universally across gear, equipment, and planning.

All of us craftspeople are working with red cedar. Combined with the wind blowing through the open air pavilion creates what I imagine a Norwegian spa would smell like, if not slightly smokey and salty. Unique to my block of wood is the spaced-out grain running lengthwise, which Don excitedly tells me is a good thing. It means it will be lighter, sturdier, and perfect for rolling.

Rolling Goal

At that mention, I'm snapped out of my wood-shaving-induced meditation and back to reality: that my goal at DelMarVa is to successfully roll a kayak. This was my intention when I registered a few months ago, and Javier keeps reminding me it's "the whole reason you are here!" I've been trying to get my roll down for well over a year and am so bent out of shape over it, by the time I'm in the boat I actually feel nauseous.

Rolling a kayak is exactly what it sounds like. It's being able to capsize and upright your boat without having to do a wet exit. There are over two dozen styles of rolling and I struggle to accomplish even one.

"The water is your friend!" shouts Javier wading out to meet me. "Ok!" I say. I think, or I know, at



The boats of Delmarva. Photo: Javier Castano

least that I love kayaking and want to be better at it. I like gliding through still water, paddling into waves, and am grateful that my organization in North Brooklyn has been such a steady presence in my life over the last few years. NBCB is a non-profit dedicated to connecting people to New York waterways, and a trip like this to DelMarVa is one of the many benefits. In the moment though, I'm not thinking about why I love kayaking and instead am trying to run down the clock here on the water.

I do not get the roll on the first day. Although I feel relieved when I paddle back to shore, I know I still have Saturday to get through. I decide in advance to try a different boat.

Greenland Boats

I've never been in a traditional Greenland kayak, but the DelMarVa festival is accessible to novice kayakers because veteran paddlers share their boats with participants. These boats are different from the sea kayaks I'm used to in Brooklyn. The cockpit is smaller and more circular, some are even the traditional skin-on-frame. They are incredibly easy to roll, or capsized.

I learn all of this and more at a lecture given by special guest Dr William Fitzhugh, director of the Smithsonian Arctic Studies Center and curator of the Department of Anthropology at the National Museum of Natural History. I'm awed but not

surprised that the organizers have secured such a prominent guest; it speaks to DelMarVa as an institution with decades of influence and leadership in the Greenland community, not just an annual event. The evening wraps shortly after. Sunburnt and spent, I and the crew from NBCB turn in to our cabins and tents. I stay up later, toiling over what Saturday will look like.

Mornings at DelMarVa start early with either yoga or functional training, followed by breakfast. I skip the four-mile Indian River Life-Saving Station Tour, the all-day Cape Henlopen Open Water Trip and any classes like basic strokes, rescues, and rolling fundamentals. Instead I start the day with the second section of my paddle carving workshop.

Maybe it's the zeal from last night, or the camaraderie I feel with the other NBCB members, because as I sand down my paddle, my mind wanders to rolling. I know the anxiety is all in my head, but what's very real is the fear of wasting someone's time. Like Javier's or any of the other rolling mentors at DelMarVa, who would spend hours trying to help, all the while I couldn't bother coming in with a good mindset in the first place. Letting them down sounds worse than rolling, to me.

At lunch, I open up about my new perspective with Fiona, Alan and Tania. I wished they were rolling with me this afternoon but have opted instead for a sculling workshop. So, I'm on my own back on the water, this time committed to a different boat that feels more snug and easier to move in. Off to a good start.

Balance Bracing and Hip Snapping

My nerves are secondary to the absolute resolve I have to complete a roll. Javier isn't out yet so I pair up with another mentor. We work on balance braces and easing into submersion. These baby steps help, and by the time Javier is in the water I am eager to show him my progress. But instead, Javier brings me back closer to shore, where the water is only a few inches deep. Here I work on refining my balance brace, and the snappy movement you have

to make with your legs to upright the boat. There's so much build up to the actual roll – the anticipation is the worst part – it helps to not think about it too hard. By the time we're back in deeper water, I'm desperate to get the first attempt over with.

Being upside down in a boat underwater is straight up disorienting. None of the movements or exercises click, at least not right away, but I know I need to relax and trust where I am. Javier tells me I have to be like *~the snake~* wrap around my boat to build the momentum in order to flip back up, then find a balance brace and complete the roll.

Yes!!!!

After a number of tries, the confusion slips away, nerves turn into motivation, and I finally complete my first Greenland roll. I'm thrilled but no one is happier for me than Javier. We spend at least another hour on the water workshopping and building muscle memory. I get a second roll, the butterfly, before I eventually run out of steam and

return to shore. I bask in the afternoon sun and the relief of my accomplishment. I can't wait to celebrate with Fiona, Alan, and Tania at dinner, and with the rest of NBCB later.

Early next morning, my time at DelMarVa is over. From under the same blanket of darkness of which I arrived I pack my gear and new paddle, only this time I know right where I am. Pulling out onto the sandy roads and away from camp, I have a long drive back with plenty of time to think. The talented Greenland paddlers I met at DelMarVa hold a commitment to passing down knowledge, spreading interest, and honoring history – what a special community. That was made clear from my first introduction, and reinforced with every encouraging word and detail at the festival. I feel immensely lucky to have NBCB waiting for me back in Brooklyn, where I can continue to practice, and hopefully pass on what I learned to someone else. One thing I don't have to think about is if the drive, time, and energy are worth it – I already can't wait for next year.



Setting up. Photo: Javier Castano

Kayaker's Leg Amputated in Middle of River After 20-hour Rescue

Grace Dean



Scene of the incident. Photo; Tasmanian Police

Ed. Note: I don't usually put stuff like this in Coastbusters, but this is just too dramatic; too terrible, and at the same time a cause for relief and thankfulness. This originally appeared in BBC Online. Thanks to Mark Baskeyfield for calling it to my attention.

A tourist in Tasmania has had his leg amputated in the middle of a raging river after getting trapped between rocks during a kayaking trip with friends.

Medics said they made the "life or death" decision in consultation with the international visitor during a complex rescue on the Franklin River lasting some 20 hours.

The visitor in his 60s was partially submerged in water throughout the ordeal, and rescuers said it was clear that "had he remained in the location

where he was, and trapped in the rock crevice he would not have survived".

Multiple attempts to move him prior to the amputation were unsuccessful, police in the Australian island state said.

The tourist was kayaking with a group in the southwest of Tasmania when his leg got stuck between rocks in an area of rapids on Friday afternoon (22 Nov.).

Emergency services rushed to the remote and inaccessible area after the man's smartwatch called for assistance, police said. After a number of unsuccessful attempts were made to free the man overnight and as his condition deteriorated, the

decision was made to amputate his leg so he could be winched from the location and airlifted to hospital.

"This rescue was an extremely challenging and technical operation, and an incredible effort over many hours to save the man's life," Doug Oosterloo, acting assistant commissioner at Tasmania Police, said in a statement.

'Life and death situation'

"This was a life and death situation," Oosterloo told Australian national broadcaster ABC. The man is now in a critical condition in hospital (in Hobart, Tasmania).

Oosterloo said that though the kayaker was "well prepared", he wasn't prepared for spending "that significant amount of time in a rock crevice with that temperature and the torrent of water that was he was under". The other 10 travelers who were kayaking with the man were being airlifted from the area and police plan to speak to them about how the accident happened, the Australian Associated Press reported.

Oosterloo told the news agency that the tourists had stopped kayaking and were on the shore when the man slipped. "He was scouting the area and he slipped and fell into that rock crevice," Oosterloo said.



Franklin River. Photo: Pinterest



Franklin-Gordon Wild Rivers National Park (circled)

Franklin-Gordon Wild Rivers National Park

The Franklin River is one of the most remote, challenging and committing rivers in Tasmania and should only be attempted by experienced paddlers or those in the company of a qualified, experienced guide.

This river contains numerous grade 2 – 5 rapids, with some grade 6 at high water; with water levels that can fluctuate quickly at any time of year. There are numerous hazards such as log jams and strainers requiring compulsory portages.

The Franklin River was the site of the most widely known wilderness conservation battle in Australian history, the Franklin Dam blockade. After years of protest, the Australian Federal Court blocked the construction of the proposed hydroelectric dam.

Source: Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service

Winning Photos: The 2025 Cross Currents Calendar Contest

Rick Wiebush

Every year we hold a contest to select photos for inclusion in the following year's Cross Currents calendar. For the 2025 contest, we received 82 photos from 29 different photographers. They represented 12 states and three different countries. The photos were reviewed and voted on by a panel of judges who selected their favorites – and had a hard time doing it - during two rounds of judging.

Thank you to this year's judges: Richard Essex, Cathy Smith, Laurie Collins, Renee Riley-Adams, Beth Emery, Kathryn Lapolla, Ricardo Stewart, Tom Noffsinger and Jill Allbritton. The following pages show the 13 winning photos (12 months + cover), the winning photographer, and where the photographer is from. Congratulations to the winners and thanks to all who participated!

Note: a few copies of the calendar are still available. \$20 (at cost) includes shipping. Contact Rick at rwiebush@gmail.com



Adirondacks, NY – Debbie Anderson (NJ)



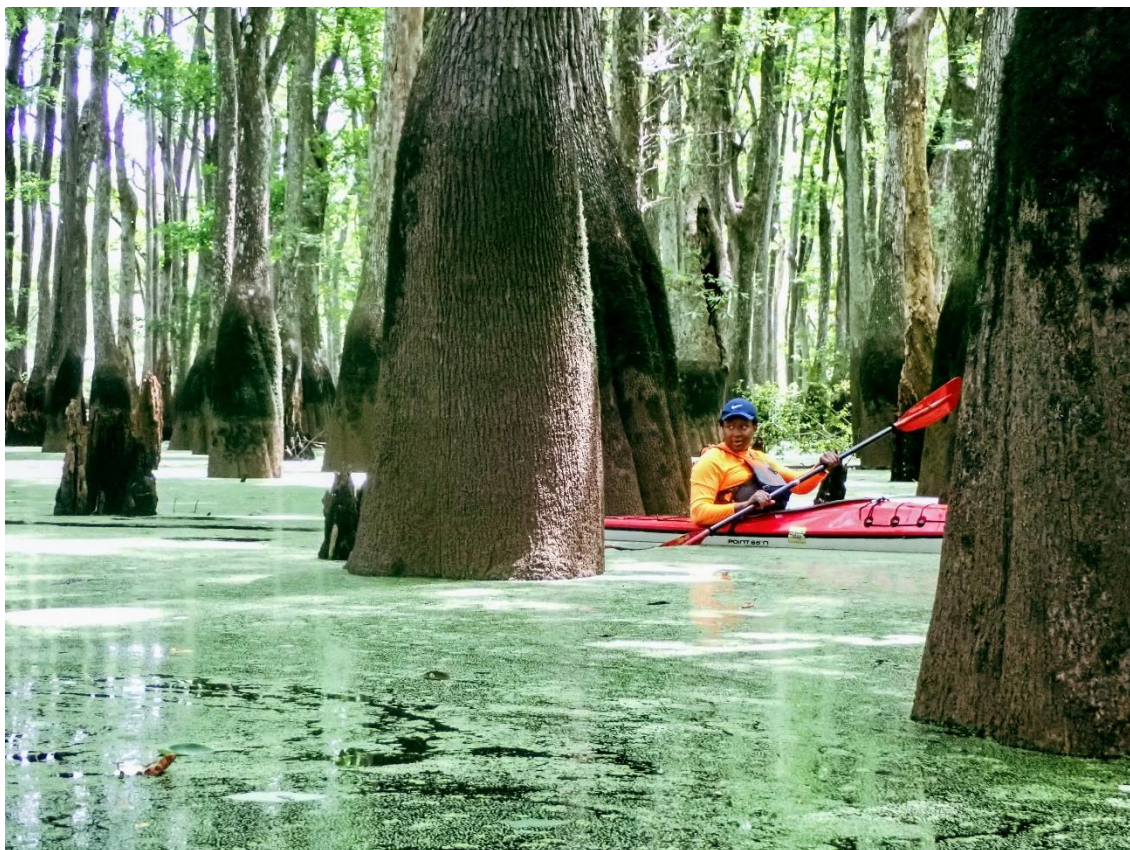
Sea of Cortez, Baja – *Ginni Callahan (MX)*



Lighthouse Reef, Belize – *Beth Emery (CT)*



Mendocino, CA – *Bill Vonnegut (CA)*



Ebenezer Creek, GA – *Ricardo Stewart (MD)*



Matanzas Inlet, FL – *Fran Lapolla (GA)*



Teahwhit Head, WA – *Susan Nord (MI)*



Wise Point, Virginia Eastern Shore – *Ricardo Stewart (MD)*



Tadoussac, Quebec – *Bill Vonnegut (CA)*



Pictured Rocks, MI – *Coleen McFarland (MI)*



Delmarva Gathering, Rehoboth Bay, DE - -*Ricardo Stewart (MD)*



Shank's Island, Chesapeake Bay, MD – *Mike Allison (PA)*



Hobuck Beach, WA – *Bill Vonnegut (CA)*

Knowing Stuff Helps: Tethering Kayak Anecdotes

Paul Caffyn

Dickson Fjord

On September 16, 2023, the collapse of the side of a 1,200 meter high peak sent a massive rock landslide tumbling down into Dickson Fjord, in northeastern Greenland. Crashing into the sea, at 90° to the axis of the fjord, the collapse is thought to have initially created an initial pressure wave (tsunami) of up to 200 meters in height, which within minutes settled down to seven meters. The subsequent wave sloshing generated seismic waves that were recorded over the next week in a host of world-wide seismic recording stations.

With no tour boats or paddlers in the fjord at the time, it took 68 scientists from 40 institutions in 15 countries almost a year to solve the mystery of what triggered the seismic waves. Before and after photographs of September 16 rock collapse, show up to 25 million cubic meters of rocks crashed into the fjord. The cause, sadly, is global warming and the retreat of a glacier's weight on the rock face.

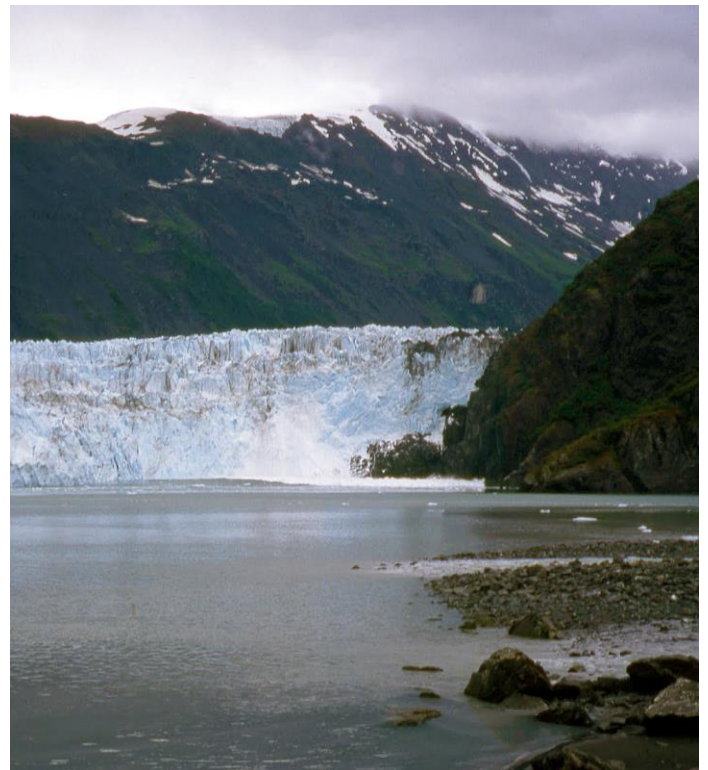
Reading this Dickson Fjord tsunami story reminded me of two paddling tsunami stories, not nearly of the same scale, and also two historical incidents, all of which emphasize the importance of tethering your kayak when landing – on land or on ice. Always!

Prince William Sound

When my expedition paddling mate Conrad and I were in Prince William Sound, we had launched from Whittier and spent a marvelous morning high on a rock headland, watching a sustained calving event in Blackstone Bay. Later that evening at the

head of Barry Arm, we landed on a grand, sandy camping beach, just shy of where three tidewater glaciers calved into the arm.

This sandy beach offered superb tent sites, just above the high-water mark. However we were both very aware of pressure waves generated during glacier calving events. Despite the beach offering a great spot to put the tent up, we instead set up the tent about 10 meters higher on a glacial scoured granite knoll, but with excellent views of the calving glaciers. We carried our kayaks close by, tied up to small bits of shrubbery.



Calving glacier in Prince William Sound. Photo: Paul Caffyn

After dinner, we watched a group of paddlers from the lower 48 land on the enticing sandy beach. They left their boats just above tide level and set tents up. The boys then joined Conrad and I sitting on a high point from where we could observe the beach and the stretch of rocky shoreline around to the calving glaciers.

Obviously well pleased to have arrived at this 'sheltered beach', this rowdy team of blokes celebrated their safe arrival with a bottle of cognac - which we sampled - and huge cigar shaped joints, which we didn't sample. Their dress standards, denim jeans and T shirts, suggested this could well be their first group paddle into the calving glacier country of Prince William Sound.

After setting up their dome tents close to the high tide mark, the boys joined us on the bare granite knoll, patiently watching and waiting for a calving event, from the big one, Barry Glacier.

Here it comes!. Patience was soon rewarded with a huge calving event that was observed by all. Not just a single towering icy serac, but a long section of the glacier front. Generation of a bigish potential tsunami wave was obvious by the up-thrusting of a dome-shaped pressure wave, a big bulge in the sea surface under the glacier front.

Conrad and I didn't say a word. We didn't need to. We knew a rather good tsunami would roll into the lovely sandy, camping beach, where the boys from the lower 48 had pitched their tents and had their kayaks (untethered) just above the high-water mark.

... the up-thrusting of a dome-shaped pressure wave, a big bulge in the sea surface under the glacier front.

Just like a slow-motion movie, we knew exactly what could transpire, as the boys passed the joint around, slugged on the bottle of cognac and we raised eyebrows as the initial tsunami wave developed.

Tis a matter of sea depth versus wavelength, as to how a how high a tsunami can develop. In deep water, it's just a matter of centimeters. But in shallow water, powerful breaking waves can develop - like the recent mountain collapse in Dickson Fjord, initially gauged as up to 200 meters high.

That initial seismic wave rolled around the rocky shore to where we were perched, rolling around our solid granite headland, into the shallows of the sandy bay, where it reared up into a series of powerful breaking surf waves.

Whether it was ignorance, the happy baccy or the cognac, the boys just watched open-mouthed, as the first gentle wave rolled into the bay, morphing into the shallows as a breaking surf wave, sending tents and kayaks flying. Only then did the boys stagger to their feet, stumble down into the surf, and set out chase floating tents and retrieve drifting kayaks.

The two Kiwi blokes just exchanged another raised eyebrow, a mute form of acknowledgement of a wise decision to move kayaks and tent above the level of calving event tsunamis.

East Greenland

During our first expedition to East Greenland in 2007, we were paddling southwest from Tasilaq (Angmagssalik) to visit the site of the 1930-31 British Arctic Air Route Expedition base. On the eastern shore of Sermilik Fjord, Conrad and I landed on one of the those really rare Greenland sandy beaches, unique really, tucked away in an offshoot of the fjord; an unusually flat shelving beach, so rare in fact we had to land and have a brew, a look around and a pee.

We carried the kayaks five meters or more beyond high tide level, parked them by two (rare) drift logs

and set up the MSR cooker for a hot brew of sweet tea, along with well-earned salami/cheese sandwiches, on a rocky ledge below the really steep surrounding cliffs.

In this narrow offshore arm of Sermilik Fjord, we had been paddling through heaps of ice, big bergs, flat pans of leftover winter sea ice floes along with plenty of brash ice, but no really huge bergs in view. Nothing to cause trepidation in terms of a big collapse event.

Sheltered from the wind, with such a doozy sheltered landing beach, and no noise of breaking seas or rebound chop off rocky cliffs and bergs, the scene was one of great tranquility – until we both heard the slow toppling noise of a distant berg slowly rolling, then a monstrous crash, as it calved (broke up).

Although nothing was visible to Conrad and I, we both instinctively anticipated what could ensue. Conrad ran for the kayaks, and I bundled up the brew kit, billy and lunch stuff, into my carry bag.



Sermilik Beach East Greenland. Photo; Paul Caffyn

And just in time, as a series of ‘tsunami’ waves rolled into the wee bay. Worst case scenario, just watching and waiting, we would have had to swim after the kayaks. Even worse we could have lost cooker and the salami/cheese sandwiches, if we had not been so intuitively tuned to the noise of a berg calving event.

Historical Untethered Incidents

Gino Watkins

On August 20, 1932, Gino Watkins was seal hunting in the northern arm of Tugtilik (Lake) Fjord, in East Greenland, while his two of his expedition mates (John Rymill and Freddie Spencer Chapman) were out surveying in the small expedition boat. There are two arms to Tugtilik, a northern arm fed by a calving glacier and a westerly trending arm, with a flat shelving sandy beach where the expedition camp was based.

Rymill and Chapman both heard the noise of a calving event in the morning, but took little notice until Gino failed to return to base from his daily seal hunting foray. From the boat, they eventually found Gino’s floating sealskin kayak, along with his trousers and sprayskirt on a floe in front of the glacier, but despite many hours of searching, no sign of Gino was ever found.

Tis only my speculation, but Gino landed on a flat sea ice floe after shooting a seal, and was installing a wound plug so he could tow the seal back to base, when a glacier calving event generated a wave which caused his floe to tip up. This sent his kayak gracefully sliding into the icy water.

Gino then had two choices; he could either wait for a few hours until John and Freddie came looking for him, in the boat, or he could strip off and very quickly swim after the stern of his drifting skin kayak.

With his sprayskirt and trousers on the floe, it was obvious to John and Freddie that Gino had swum to retrieve his kayak. Gino had no extra fat layers to protect against the sub-zero water temperature –



Gino Watkins. Photo: Henry Cozens

very much a slim bloke, like my good self – and within minutes must have succumbed to hypothermia/drowning in the frigid water, unable to catch up with his drifting kayak or return to the ice floe.

When Conrad and I paid homage to Gino, with a paddle in to Tugtilik, and under the face of the calving glacier in the northern arm, the day was so serene, a flat sea, a sunny sky, with no noisy calving events from the glacier. So calm, that we could add morsels of brash ice to wee caps of Irish whisky in a toast to Gino, of the heritage he left for future paddlers.

The lesson from Gino's demise, when landing on sea ice floes: always (secure) tether your kayak. For our four summers in Greenland, Conrad and I both carried ice screws for tethering our kayaks on sea ice floes.

(Note: For more on the incredible story of Gino Watkins' expeditions, see the January and March 2022 editions of *Coastbusters*.)

Fridjof Nansen

After a mission with their dog team (and folding kayaks) from the ice-bound *Fram*, Fridjof Nansen and Johannsen finally reached solid rock on Franz

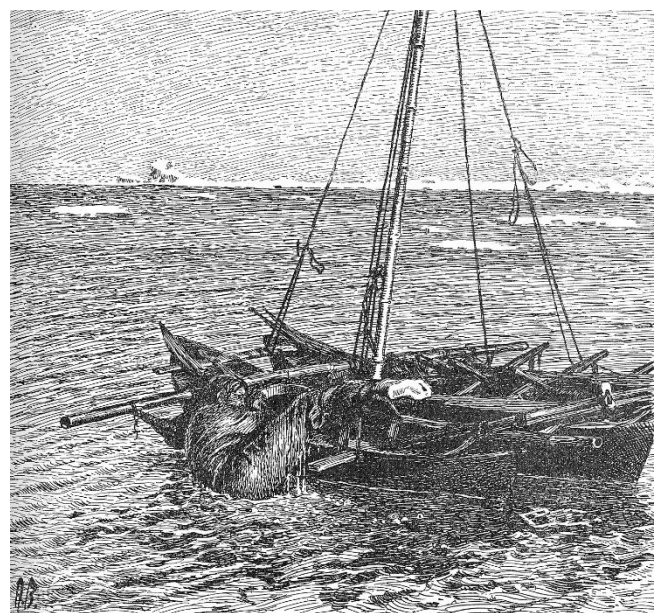
Josef Land and became the first to reach the North Pole. They still had their bamboo-framed, canvas-covered kayaks. All the poor dogs were killed and eaten before Nansen and Johannsen reached solid rocky land.

Perhaps the wonderment of finally setting foot on the solid rock of Frans Josef Land led to Nansen's kayak being blown offshore. Not a lot of choice - with the loss of his kayak, it would be just Johannsen and Nansen to survive with one kayak. In a really gutsy move, Nansen stripped off and swam until he caught up with his errant kayak, but had barely the movement in his frozen extremities to be able to paddle back to shore.

Lessons Learned

There are so many 'secret squirrel' stories of paddlers losing contact with their kayak. Tis rather embarrassing to have your kayak drift offshore during a pee stop! Or not to tether your boat overnight!

The essence of this story is no matter how tired or exhausted you are after landing, no matter where you land, on sea, ice or on land, ensure you tether your kayak to accommodate high tide levels, storm surges and tsunamis.



"I MANAGED TO SWING ONE LEG UP."

Nansen reaches drifting boat

Upcoming Events

Dates	Event	Location	Sponsor	Website/Contact
Apr. 8 - 13	Wave Paddler Spring Gathering	Seabrook Is SC	Wave Paddler	ww.wavepaddler/events
July 16-20	Great Lakes Symposium	Grand Marais MI	Power of Water	Greatlakesseakayaksymposium.net
Aug 15 - 17	Ladies of the Lake	Munising, MI	Downwind Sports	Downwindsports.com
Sept 19-21	Kiptopeke Symposium	Cape Charles VA	Cross Currents	Crosscurrentsseakayaking.com
Oct. 4 - 6	Bay of Fundy Symposium	Argyle, Nova Scotia	Chris Lockyear	Bofsk.com
Oct. 10 -12	Delmarva Paddlers Retreat	Lewes DE	Qajaq USA	Delmarvapaddlersretreat.org
Oct 30 - Nov 1	Ocean Gathering	Tybee Is., GA	Sea Kayak Georgia	Seakayakgeorgia.com



Photo: Beth Emery (This photo was a semi-finalist in the calendar contest)

Book Review

Chesapeake Requiem: A Year with the Watermen of Vanishing Tangier Island

Jaclin Gilbert

Note: this article originally appeared in the July 2019 issue of Coastbusters. It is reprinted because time is running out on Tangier. See “Shrinking” insert, next page)

Tangier is an island that has long been under siege by the changing forces of nature. The island has lost two thirds of its land mass since 1850, substantially diminishing this unique community. The physical forces that cause this loss are a matter for contention: Are they man made or natural? Scientists and data point to climate change working hand in hand with geological forces. Tangier islanders tend to reject climate as causal and point instead to forces such as erosion.

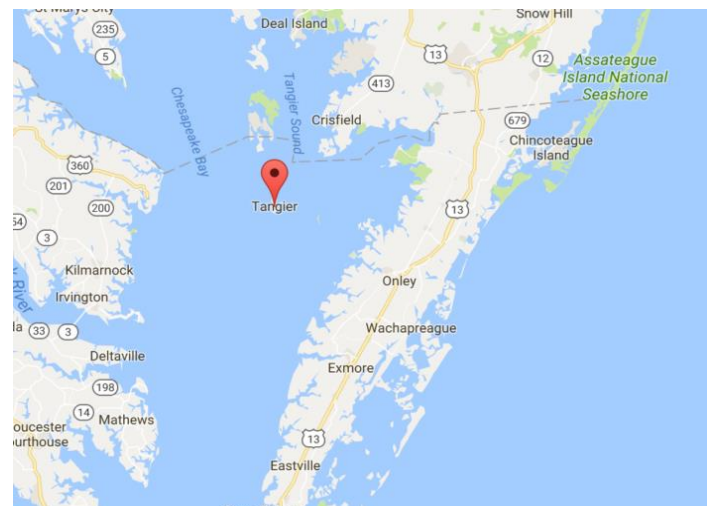
Earl Swift grapples with these contradictions in his beautiful book *“Chesapeake Requiem: A year with the Waterman of Vanishing Tangiers Island”* (Dey Street Books, 2018,) writing with a delicate balance of scientific inquiry and deep respect for the Islanders. His book nestles its climate argument into the historical, sociological, and environmental development of the island. Yet Swift keeps the story firmly focused on the community at the center of this particular climate change issue.

After spending time with this isolated community you get why Swift uses “requiem” in his title; the word requiem has a current of regret running through it, and regret lingers long after you finish this book. Swift makes a heartbreakingly clear case for the preservation of Tangier while accepting that it is unlikely to happen. As a matter of fact, he states that within fifty years the islanders are likely to be the United States’ first climate change refugees.

Tangier is caught in a triple threat of environmental and geological changes that have all contributed to

land loss. Swift explains the science behind these three factors - subsidence (sinking land), sea rise, and erosion - and gives each their due. He lets islanders speak their own piece about erosion (which islanders believe is the primary cause of land loss) without condemning their beliefs. He simply follows up with experts who clarify the more complicated effects of subsidence and sea level change.

Regardless of the underpinning science, Tangier is washing away. The Army Corp of Engineers has been tasked with remediating the erosion but has spent years studying the issue. Part of the question seems to be whether the economics support the projects- Can you spend millions of dollars fixing an island that has a population of five hundred?





Tangier harbor.

Where will the funding come from? The harbor at the center of the island's fisheries has been alternately silting up and eroding. Over 11 years ago the Corps recommended a Jetty to protect the economic heart of the community. It is finally slated for construction this year. Projects that would contain erosion elsewhere around the island have languished in the study stage for even longer.

Swift listens to the watermen in the Situation Room - a post-work gathering spot where all the island news, worries and gossip get a proper discussion over a cup of coffee - chewing over Maryland's Poplar Island project. Many of us local kayakers have paddled this island habitat made from the spoils of dredging Baltimore harbor. Swift carefully records the discussion; the Situation room consensus is that Maryland is better at handling land

Shrinking

In the face of the multiple threats outlined in the book, residents are leaving Tangier. The population shrank 16% (from 411 to 346) between 2021 and 2022. Right now, 10 of the 179 houses on Tangier are for sale. Five years ago you'd be lucky to find two on the market. Listing prices continue to fall as no one is buying. As a result, you could get a three BR, 2 bath house in nice shape for \$110,000.

loss, but with the caveat that they justify the project because of habitat loss for birds. The Watermen want to know: Where is the concern for protecting human habitat?

Swift doesn't romanticize the islanders and island life; instead he does something more difficult. His portraits are full of honesty and humor, allied with affection and respect. He makes each individual islander feel fully fleshed out. He spent over a year living on Tangier, crabbing with the waterman, and joining them in their regular gatherings in the Situation room. He had unusual access to island life. He visits them in their places of worship, highlighting the long connection the island has had with the Methodist Church. Fundamentalist religion is the touchstone on which many decisions are made by the islanders, sometimes for better, sometimes for worse. Swift is careful when he writes about the islanders, but he doesn't pull his punches. He is clear that islanders often have trouble moving from discussion to action, and are occasionally their own worst enemy.

The island is also taking a hit from changing demographics. It is hemorrhaging young people at an unsustainable rate, and the island population is rapidly aging. One of the most poignant chapters in the book talks about Cameron Evans, who was seventeen during the time Swift spent on the island. Evans is viewed by many islanders as a hopeful example of a budding generation of new watermen.



Tangier's main street. Most people get around in golf carts



Tangier Island, looking north. Photo: Neil Caye

But when pressed about whether he should stay on and making his living on the water, Cameron waffles. He is attached to his community but has a hard time envisioning an actual future on the island. And sadly, many of the older generation interviewed by Swift agree with him.

The book weaves a powerful narrative about the importance of unique places by delving deeply into the history and daily life of Tangier Island. Swift is one of the rare people allowed such access by the islanders, and it shows in his portraits of the people who live there. In an Interview with NPR on August 27, 2018, Swift discusses the impact the Islanders had on him:

"They were tough and self-reliant, as you'd expect in such an outpost, but also warm, loving, and full of humor. And they all were players in a true community — Tangier lived up to that label more than any place I'd ever been."

The question is can - and maybe even *should* - this community be saved? Swift himself cannot decide even as he outlines steps that must be taken to prevent the island from washing away into history.

Note: I listened to Chesapeake Requiem as an audiobook. The reader did an excellent job and it is a nice alternative to the written book if listening is your thing.



Launching from the town dock. Photo: Rick Wiebush

Cross Currents Spring 2025 Classes and Trips

Belize March 3-12, 2025



Lighthouse Reef basecamp

Basics:

5 Days on Lighthouse Key - 50 miles offshore;
4 days interior Belize
Leaders: Greg and Luci Hollingsworth
Cost: \$2,995 + airfare and misc
Spaces available: Two

Activities:

Glamping tents on Lighthouse Key; Airbnb Ranch for interior portion; Blue Hole snorkeling, kayaking, kayak sailing, SUP, culture, wildlife + interior with local market, hike 250 ft waterfall and huge cave, kayak caving, ancient Mayan city of Tikal

Jacksonville, FL/St Mary's GA March 8 – 15, 2025

Basics:

7 Days/nights, house-based in St. Mary's
Leader: Rick Wiebush
Cost: \$795 + housing: \$495
Spaces: One

Activities:

St. Mary's to Cumberland Island Nat'l Seashore
Carnegie Mansion ruins
Talbot Is.; GA barrier Islands
Jacksonville Urban paddle;
Matanzas River/St. Augustine



Cumberland Island

Cross Currents Spring 2025 Classes and Trips

10,000 Islands Florida Expedition, March 17 – 22, 2025



10,000 Islands sunset. Photo: Jeff Atkins

Basics

Six days, Five nights, expedition style;
Everglades City to Flamingo
Leader: Jeff Atkins
Cost: \$595
Spaces: Four

Activities

Paddling about 10 NM per day
Camping
Prep own meals
Navigation
Various skills
Shuttle set up required

Wave Paddler Spring Gathering, April 8 - 13

Basics

Wave Paddler is a Cross Currents partner
Five days/nights
Camp St Christopher, Seabrook Island, SC
Coaches: Jeff Atkins, Ashley Brown, Dale Williams, James Kesterson, Chris Rezac
Cost: \$945, includes housing + some meals
Spaces: 20

Activities

Instruction in Surf, currents, touring
Stay in motel-like rooms, double occupancy
Get ready for summer; have a blast!



Jeff Atkins breaking through. Photo: TBD

**Cross Currents
Spring 2025 Classes and Trips**

Outer Banks Expedition, April 22 – 27, 2025



Basics

Five days/nights, expedition-style
Harker’s Island to Ocracoke; approx. 10 nm/day
Leaders: James Kesterson, Jeff Atkins
Cost: \$595
Spaces: Six

Activities

Paddling, camping; prep own food
Navigation and trip planning/logistics
Maneuvering and rescue skills

Finding Your Way: Practical Navigation; May 3- 4, 2025

Basics

Two days/two nights
At Janes Island State Park, Crisfield, MD
Camping or lodge room
Instructors: Paula Hubbard, Marilyn Cooper, Rick
Wiebush
Cost: \$195 + camping/housing
Spaces: 15

Activities

Indoor and on-water sessions
Understanding charts, aids to navigation
Plotting course with chart and compass
Route planning/finding
Matching chart to the real world
Ranges
Orienteering games





Tangier crab shanty at sunrise. Photo; Rick Wiebush

Contributors

Renee Riley Adams – has been paddling for about one year, is totally enamoured with the sport and who will take the sea kayaking world by storm in a year or two. RARA is a recent transplant to Annapolis, MD from Oregon.

Cristina Adamson – is a Senior Designer for the Washington Post's Brand team and an avid kayaker who paddles with the North Brooklyn Community Boathouse. She lives and works in Brooklyn,

Paul Caffyn - lives on the west coast of New Zealand's South Island. In addition to being the first person to circumnavigate Australia in a sea kayak, he has circumnavigated the British Isles, New Zealand, New Caledonia and Japan and has done major expeditions in Alaska (the whole coast) and Greenland. Paul also served for 27 years as the editor of the newsletter of the Kiwi Association of Sea Kayakers. Check out his website at <http://paulcaffyn.co.nz/>

Grace Dean – is a journalist who works for the British Broadcasting Corporation. Grace lives in London.

Jaclin Gilbert - is an ACA L2 Instructor and BC 3* paddler who lives in Silver Spring, MD

Rick Wiebush - runs *Cross Currents Sea Kayaking* and is the editor of *Coastbusters*. He is an ACA L3 IT (retired) and British Canoeing 4* Sea Leader. Rick lives in Baltimore.

Coastbusters welcomes submissions of trip reports, incident descriptions and analyses, skills and “how-to” articles, boat and gear reviews, book and video reviews, and photographs. We are interested in receiving submissions from all paddlers.

Articles should be limited to about 1,000 – 1,500 words and submitted in Word. Photos should be submitted in .jpg format. Please send your submissions to Rick Wiebush at rwiebush@gmail.com.

Coastbusters is a publication of Cross Currents Sea Kayaking

