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SKCWA Photo Competition Winner: Les Allen, Southern Right Whale off Goode Beach Albany

WA SEAKAYAKER

Issue: November 2016

Welcome

to the November 2016 newsletter of the Sea Kayak Club WA.

I am always looking for contributions to the magazine. If you would like to share your paddling experiences or development as a kayaker with the club, please jot your stories down and send them to info@seakayakwa.org.au. Sharing these stories makes for a richer club.

To kick off this edition, Ian Watkins recounts his recent run in with a white pointer shark during a paddle off Albany. This story made news headlines across Australia and in his article Ian gives us an insight into the experience and discusses some ways kayakers can keep safe on the water.

Aussie Dave has been off on another adventure, this time on terra firma and at a pace many of us would find hard to maintain! Dave sent a couple of postcards as he passed through outback towns and these are included in this issue.

Pel Turner recounts a very pleasant Sunday paddling the upper reaches of the Canning River and Paul Browne describes the joys of night paddling and the wonderful feeling that comes with being on the water at night. Night paddling is a great way to improve your skills as you must connect with your boat through feel because you cannot rely on the visual guides and aids used in daylight hours.

Paul Cooper has been running club training days and these have been getting very good turnouts. Everyone is coming away with increased confidence and developing skills to be used in more challenging conditions. This edition also features an international flavour, with Jill Sievenpiper sharing her story of kayaking in Clayoquot Sound, Canada.

How's your rolling coming along? Richard Lailey has been on a journey that many of us make as we progress towards a successful roll. Save yourself some of the pain and frustration by reading Richard's story of his rolling experiences. If you are already a roller, Richard's article may give you some insight into why your roll is not as repeatable as you would like.

Heidi Hutton completes the story of her and Peter's great Fraser Island Adventure and don't forget Sandy Robson who has completed her epic journey. You can find the latest at <http://www.sandy-robson.com>.



We have also taken a leaf out of the Albany SKCWA's book and created a Viber chat group for Perth paddlers. It will allow sea leaders to communicate changes in paddling plan and for individuals to organise peer paddles at short notice. We currently have 15 members in the Viber chat group and would like to get more for it to be useful. If you want to join in, get the Viber app on your phone and let Callan know you want in.

Don't forget to visit the web page <http://www.seakayakwa.org.au> which is regularly updated with photos and details of club events. The club's Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/groups/SKCWA/> is also an immediate way to keep in touch with other club members.

I hope you enjoy this edition of the magazine,

Andrew

Close Encounters

Ian Watkins

After being introduced into sea kayaking some 5 years ago by Les Allen I fell in love with it. Since then I have paddled thousands of kilometres around the south coast and much of that around Albany. Most of my kayaking is done solo as I just love the feeling of being by myself in the elements. I have seen over 100 whales in that time, and to have them pass under and close by is a fantastic experience.



Ian Watkins - Albany SKCWA member

In that time I have never seen a large shark up close. I have seen two large sharks at a distance, one at Alexanders Bay east of Esperance and the other out at Bald Head. When paddling with the club, we have seen a few two metre hammerheads, but that's about it. I have always wanted to see a shark up close. Just a fin, and a maybe a photo and then it could move on. Well I had my wish come true at the end of July.

I paddled from Emu Point directly across to Seal Island on the lookout for whales and then out to Bald head. I then paddled back following the cliff

lines and beaches back to Emu Point. This is a normal paddle and love it to bits. As I approached Ataturk Channel close to Albany the local whale charter vessel passed by. It was finishing its whale watching and had pulled up sitting just off the old lighthouse at the entrance to the channel. I could hear Paul Guest (Captain) talking on the loud speaker about the history etc. The waves from the vessel were passing under the kayak tipping it about as I was paddling over them. Then a wave came from the left hand side. I thought, where on earth did that come from? Then I heard a big wave coming from behind me. I looked around to see a mound of water with a big fin coming out the top. It was a big shark.

I looked directly ahead and braced myself waiting for a

hit but it didn't happen. Then after about ten seconds, the back of the kayak was pushed around from the left to the right about a metre. I only caught a glimpse of the shark at that stage. Then after about 10 seconds it came up directly beside me on the left beside the cockpit. At that stage I didn't know what sort of shark and presumed it was a white pointer but wasn't sure. The head was brown and massive but didn't see the eyes or the recognisable nose. I looked directly forward ready to do a roll but it pushed with a firm and powerful push to the right about half a metre without tipping me. It then dropped down and headed under the kayak, I still had forward momentum so still didn't get a good look at it. I still paddled slowly ahead. My focus was on nothing more than rolling, the shark become less of an issue than me getting a bullet proof roll. I knew that if I went over I needed to get up as quickly as possible. I have always filled the rear and the front bulkheads with balloons in case a shark ever punctured the kayak so the shark biting me was not as much of an issue as being tipped over. It then once again came from the left and passed directly under the kayak, I could get a much better look and it was massive. I still wasn't sure what sort of shark it was.

I lost sight of it for a while but then saw it head out to the left, I did a few good strokes and then turned my Go-Pro on and pulled my marine radio out of my PFD and turned it on. At that stage I felt OK and was trying to make contact with the whale charter to tell them and to come back to at least be close to me if anything happened. Then it approached me again from the left. That is when I

saw that it was a white pointer and was looking at me. That is when I started to think he isn't worried about my kayak, he is looking at me. My call then went to Emergency....

My call was terrible with no clear description as to where I was, I said that I was looking at the whale charter, something that other boats had no idea where on earth that was. Luckily I could then hear Paul Guest (Captain) talking to others about exactly where I was. By now I was looking at the shark very clearly in the water. It was very close and circling me and getting faster. It was going around me in an anti-clockwise direction. My sick sense of humour thought "I wonder if they go clockwise in the northern hemisphere". My attention still remained with me having to do a roll.

The video doesn't show it but I was trying to release the lanyard for the radio off the PFD so it wouldn't get in the way if I needed to roll. I was still able to see the shark most of the time. The last sighting was when it passed from the right hand side directly under the kayak. This footage was what the fisheries used to determine that it was at least five metres.

It wasn't long after this when the whale charter came. The shark went as the vessel approached. At the same time a Marine Transport boat also pulled up. We loaded my kayak onto the craft and headed back to Emu Point. On the way back all I was thinking of was, "I am going to look like a complete idiot if I don't get any footage". As soon as I got back to the shore I rang Les. I told him that I wasn't sure what sort of shark it was and the shark was about four

metres, the same as what I told the Marine Transport rescuers. I didn't want to over play the size and the fact that I wasn't absolutely sure that it was a pointer. When the head came up beside me it was massive but just didn't fit my thoughts of what a white pointers head should look like. By the time I got home the ABC were on the phone. I did a live interview before I had got changed and more importantly before I saw any footage. After that I uploaded the footage, while I was doing this, ABC News rang wanting to do a TV interview. As I was talking to the presenter on the phone I was rapt to see the footage showed two shots of the shark, the lady couldn't understand that I had just been pushed around by a shark and I was somehow happy. The footage of it passing under the kayak showed its size. I then felt a sense of relief as I did have some confirmation. Before I had time to have a shower I was doing an interview to the ABC on the front lawn. Then the next few days was chaos.

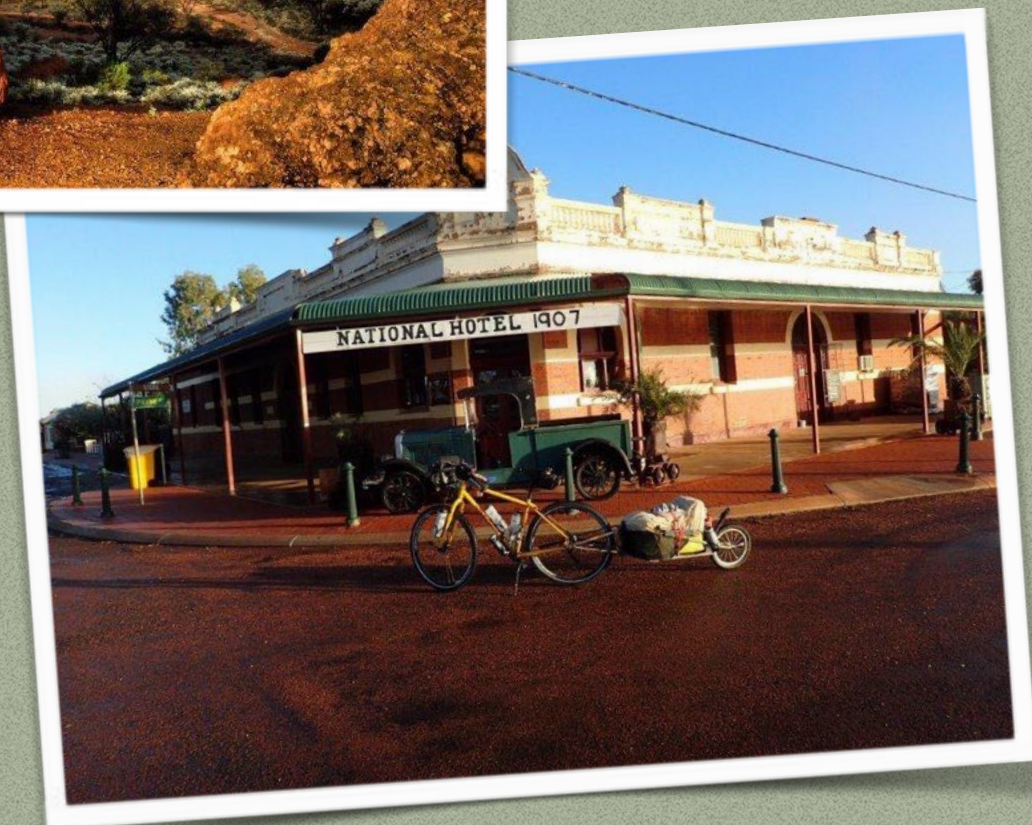
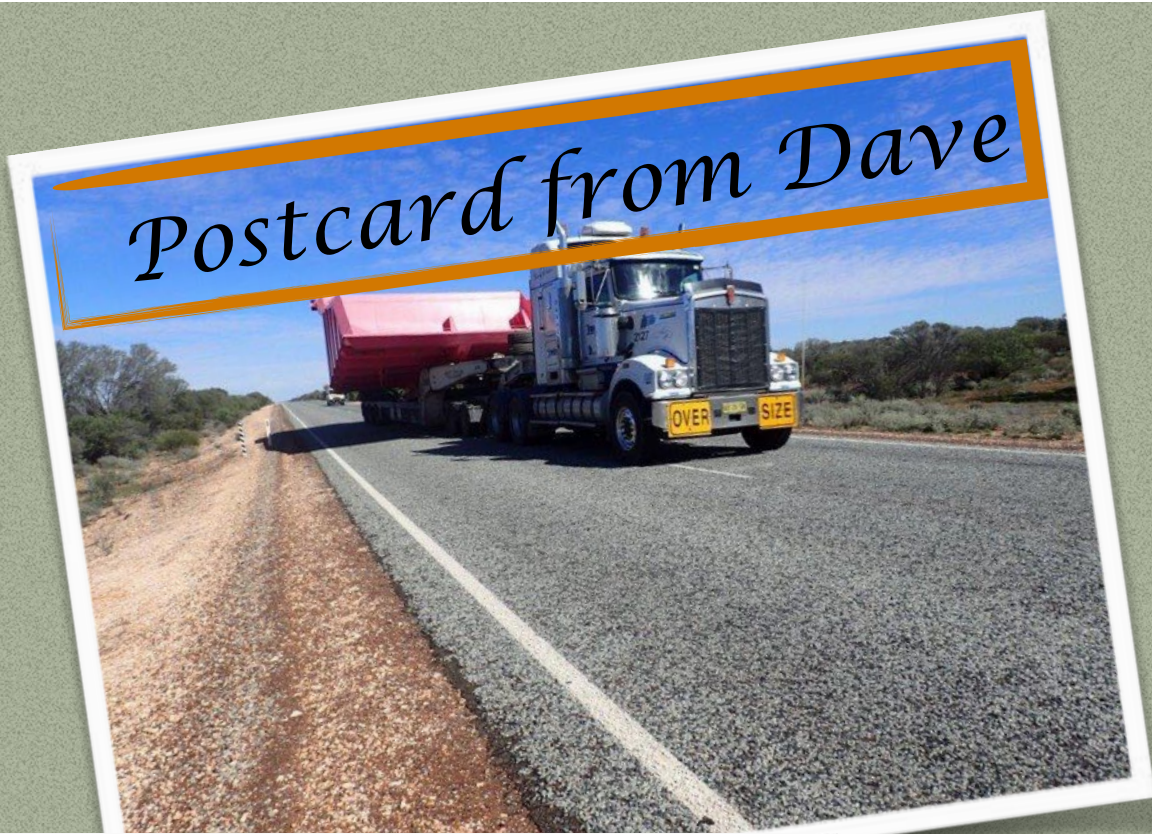
Anyway, back to normality.

I haven't let the incident get on top of me. I have spoken to Les about what I will do in the future and that is, keep paddling. Don't look at it and don't change my path. Aussie Dave has also seen sharks but has continued to paddle. In-fact Dave has changed his direction to head directly to the shark. I didn't stop for a start but did when radioing the whale watching charter. I then just stayed in one spot, I knew that help was coming so couldn't see the need to paddle on. I also don't think it would happen in a group situation.



Shark Stripes. Photo SKCWA Albany Facebook
Further information at https://www.ted.com/talks/hamish_jolly_a_shark_deterrent_wetsuit_and_it_s_not_what_you_think?language=en

I am hoping that this is a one off but I must admit if it happens again I will be better prepared. I have always filled the rear and the front bulkheads with balloons in case a shark ever punctured the kayak. I am now going to paint the underside of my kayaks in Les's new "Shark Stripes". Don't know if it will work but at least it is worth a go. I have been out over the last two weeks with the group, in fact over where it happened. I feel comfortable and will remain kayaking solo. I look at surfers and divers and I feel that we are much better off than them. We have protection and, in my case communication. I always take my radio and EPIRB with me, after the call for help the response was quick from a number of craft and this was through the week in winter. All of us down here take our emergency gear with us. We have had to use it in the past and this is no exception.



G'day Andrew

Something different..

It was time for another adventure, but what to do...??? After paddling Esperance to Albany I thought it was time for a change, so parked up the kayak and dusted off the push bike. Then sat on Google Earth looking for a remote loop starting within 1 days drive of Busselton. I've already cycled just about all of the Southwest to Esperance and North East to Kalgoorlie so I started looking North. I wanted outback, desert, hot days and cold nights, camp fires under the stars etc. so picked Mt Magnet as my starting point, then Sandstone, up a dirt track to Meekatharra, then Wiluna, Leinster and finally back to Mt Magnet. I had 10 days off, 2 days travelling up and down, left 8 cycling days. Easy I thought..... I managed to cable tie my push bike, bob trailer, camping gear and 8 days' worth of supplies onto my trusty motorbike and rode up to Mt Magnet. It started raining 100 kays south of Mt Magnet and didn't stop for 3 days, then the wind picked up.....

I left Busselton at 04:30 and was cycling west out of Mt Magnet by 15:30 after leaving my motorbike in the Mt Magnet campsite. By 17:00 I had covered about 30 kays, was soaked through, cold and tired. Managed to find some high ground that hadn't turned to mud and set up camp. I woke the next morning to horizontal rain. Breakfast in bed, into wet cycling gear, then broke camp. 11hrs later I was booking into a room in the Sandstone pub looking like a drowned rat... My plan from Sandstone was an unsealed road to Meekatharra but I soon discovered that it was impassable so a quick change of plan saw me cycling out to Leinster under clear blue skies which didn't last for long taking in London bridge and the old brewery.... Leinster was a quick supply top up then started riding north to Wiluna. Don't ask me how but the wind saw my change in direction from West to North and decided to do the opposite.. I cycled for 69 kays averaging 9.8 klm/h (I normally average around 23 to 25.. My max speed for that section was 13.9 klm/h. Cycling downhill was a struggle..)

From Wiluna I rode out onto the Canning stock route and up to Well 1 for a look before turning east to Meekatharra along a closed to all traffic road..

From Meekatharra I rode the Great Northern Hwy South through Cue back to Mt Magnet and again the wind knew... 890klm's in 7 and a half days with only 2 broken spokes and two sore knees....

Cheers

Dave







Trip Report

Riverton to Kent St Weir and return
15 kms.

Trip Leader Jo Foley

14th August 2016

Good fortune smiled on us and provided perfect river conditions for our band of 6 for what is one of the best flat water paddles in Perth. Led by Jo and attended by Russ and Sue, K P, Jill, Pel and young Andrew. The tide was about medium but we still managed to scrape a few sandbars but dodged submerged pylons along the old cattle jetties.

The stretch from the old Riverton bridge to the weir is about 5kms of beautiful river winding through bush reserve and it's hard to believe it is the middle of suburbia. A large variety of birdlife and the odd dolphin to see along with other paddle craft makes for entertaining paddling. A rest break on the grass at the weir, stretched out, as we shared stories and paddling plans for the future.

The paddle back stuck to the south bank winding through islands of trees and playing find the channel. The conditions back held, and the open water run home was easy, so a good day had by all with great company. Thanks Russ for helping the bloke with new knees (me) getting in and out of his kayak. My first club paddle for 9 weeks and glad to be back into it!

Cheers Pel



Under the Stars

Paul Browne

We arrive in the night,
We come alive in the night,
Strip the sky of its colour,
We'll run the expanse in the
absence of light,
Walking under stars we breathe
the night

This is chorus from one of my favourite Hilltop Hoods songs – “walking under stars” and it gives the background to the idea for this article. With a busy family life and hectic work schedule I always find it hard to fit in regular paddles which I need to keep my soul intact. The early morning paddles have got harder and harder to do on a regular basis and that feeling of having to rush off to work straight from finishing the paddle always add a level of stress that I didn't like.

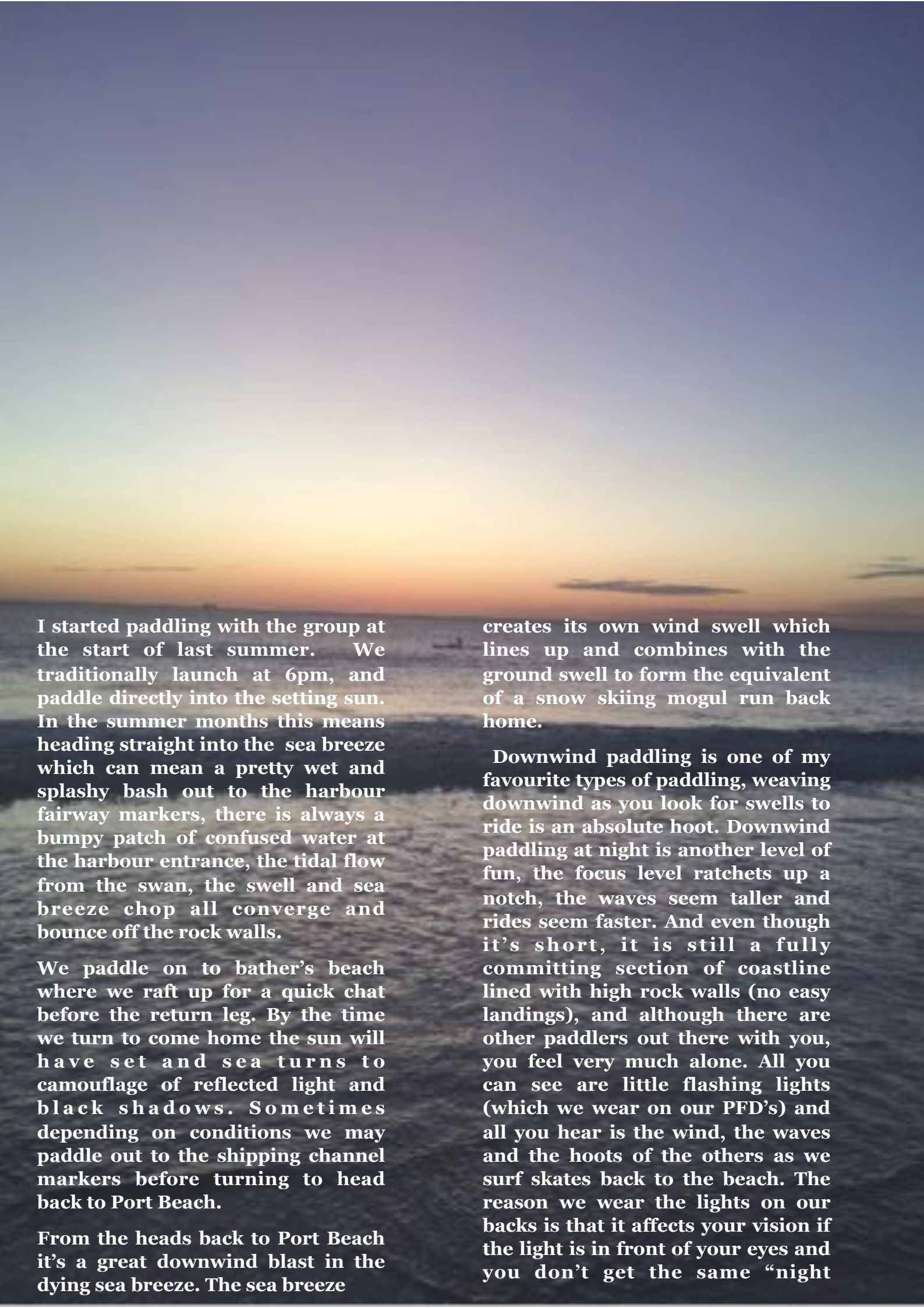
The solution is the night paddle.

I was introduced to regular night paddling through being invited to join a group of paddlers who paddle out from Port Beach once a week. I had often paddled in the river at night, especially over the winter months in training for Avon Descent.

It's generally pretty calm, there is not much boat traffic, it's fairly well lit up all along the river bank and the shore is only a short swim away (if needed). Paddling in the ocean at night is another thing altogether.

I was pretty nervous about night paddling on the ocean and it was really good to have a few other paddlers around. The standard paddle is to launch from Port Beach and to paddle south around the harbour heads to the beach at Bathers Beach in Fremantle with a return to Port Beach. It's about a 10km paddle with a variety of conditions on the route.



A serene sunset scene over the ocean. The sky transitions from a deep blue at the top to a warm orange and yellow near the horizon. A small, dark silhouette of a boat is visible on the horizon line. The water in the foreground is dark and textured with small waves.

I started paddling with the group at the start of last summer. We traditionally launch at 6pm, and paddle directly into the setting sun. In the summer months this means heading straight into the sea breeze which can mean a pretty wet and splashy bash out to the harbour fairway markers, there is always a bumpy patch of confused water at the harbour entrance, the tidal flow from the swan, the swell and sea breeze chop all converge and bounce off the rock walls.

We paddle on to bather's beach where we raft up for a quick chat before the return leg. By the time we turn to come home the sun will have set and sea turns to camouflage of reflected light and black shadows. Sometimes depending on conditions we may paddle out to the shipping channel markers before turning to head back to Port Beach.

From the heads back to Port Beach it's a great downwind blast in the dying sea breeze. The sea breeze

creates its own wind swell which lines up and combines with the ground swell to form the equivalent of a snow skiing mogul run back home.

Downwind paddling is one of my favourite types of paddling, weaving downwind as you look for swells to ride is an absolute hoot. Downwind paddling at night is another level of fun, the focus level ratchets up a notch, the waves seem taller and rides seem faster. And even though it's short, it is still a fully committing section of coastline lined with high rock walls (no easy landings), and although there are other paddlers out there with you, you feel very much alone. All you can see are little flashing lights (which we wear on our PFD's) and all you hear is the wind, the waves and the hoots of the others as we surf skates back to the beach. The reason we wear the lights on our backs is that it affects your vision if the light is in front of your eyes and you don't get the same "night

vision” with a light in front, a few paddlers also have a light mounted on the back deck.

As the summer evening’s draw shorter and the launches get colder, and are done in the dark more and more, the winter patterns bring the bigger swells but the seas are generally smoother with less wind chop. During the winter night paddling season, the phases of the moon become more noticeable. Paddling under a big full moon, with a big swell running, the seas a cold inky black is a wonderful experience. When there is a new moon and the sky is the colour of bundy and coke, the horizon line disappears, the seas and sky blur into a single large black sphere, there is a feeling of weightlessness and it’s a magical time to paddle on the ocean. At these times we tend to dial back and stick together and paddle in a pod, chatting and cruising along.

The most common reaction I get from people when I tell them about night paddling is “isn’t that unsafe, what if you come out and no one can see you or what about sharks”, my feeling is it’s just another aspect of my paddling and it adds a new dimension. We aren’t silly about what we do, we are all fairly competent paddlers, we all wear lights on our PFD’s, we each carry a PLB and cell phone and we always look out for each other. The section of coast we paddle is really pretty safe, and most paddlers wouldn’t give a second thought to paddle this section in the daytime. The section where we cross over the harbour mouth is probably the most dangerous part and we

always stop before the crossing to check for traffic and then paddle hard in a group across the mouth. The ferries and pilot boats certainly come through very quickly and would not see our little lights, so we definitely take more care in that section.

Landing back at Port Beach is normally pretty straight forward as it doesn’t really have a heavy surf break, but even in small swell, it really focuses your paddling, landing at night when you can’t see what’s coming behind.

We always have a cold shower on the beach and change into some warm clothes, before heading to our local for beers and burgers, and to plan our next sea kayak adventure. I think this is probably the main reason we always make the effort to paddle each week.

I would highly recommend night paddling, get a group together and try it out this summer when the evenings are a little lighter. It can be done safely and is a heap of fun. It definitely improves your paddling and increases your confidence.

Soon you’ll be eagerly waiting for those new moon nights to paddle in the pitch black.

As the Hilltop Hoods say “We come alive in the night”

2016/02/16

Training Day at Hillarys

Paul Cooper

27 August 2016

As I lay in bed the night before training day listening to the rain belting on the roof and thinking to myself, maybe I should have sent an email out cancelling the training as I doubt any one will turn up. Well a little late now I will just have to see what happens in the morning.

Saturday morning was not too bad, a few clouds around, and a 15kt wind blowing from the north, and the possibility of shower or two, but overall it was looking O.K. On my arrival, I was pleased to see a good number of cars were pulling up at the Harbour boat ramp and I had been advised that Andrew and Vanessa would be attending, so things were looking good.

In total we had 13 paddlers, they included Ian and Jacki, Debbie, Craig, Pel, Kim, Margaret, Glenn, Wolfgang, Lindsay, Andrew, Vanessa and myself. Barry Roberts also attended as the photographer for the mornings activities. Many thanks Barry, people love to see themselves on the water doing the training.

The day started off with a discussion on what was planned for the morning so everyone knew what would be involved and also putting all at ease that the training would basically be carried out in the walls of the harbour.

The first activity was to paddle backwards to Aqua where the majority of the training would be done. This exercise is normally a simply exercise to do, but with a 15 to 20 knot wind hitting the side of your kayak, things become a whole lot more difficult. As most discovered.

Once we arrived at Aqua we found a great spot sheltered out of the wind to commence our next exercise, we worked in pairs, moving towards and away from each other doing the draw stroke. All found this manoeuvre quite simple to do, but confess that they do not practice it often enough. In the same location we then moved on to the low and high brace, all the days exercises were working towards two exercises I had planned to do on the outside of the harbour.



The first one was a raft up, this was going to be a shark alert exercise, followed by a beach landing, again working in pairs. With a shark alert, once I felt it was clear to head to the beach it would be best to land as quickly as possible.

Unfortunately the wind was far too strong to perform the last two exercises, so after a few of us playing at the mouth of the harbour we decided to do the raft up and beach landing in the harbour. I was a little disappointed but felt a few people may have got injured in the day's conditions. But we can always do them on another training day.

We finished off the day with us all meeting at Spinnakers cafe for a coffee and chat. Many thanks to all the people who attended.

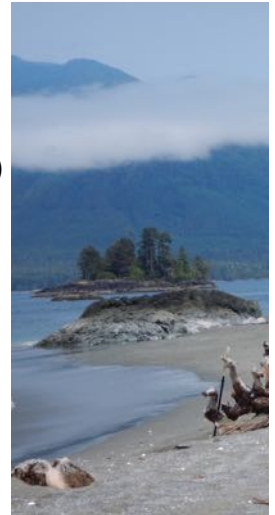
Cheers,
Paul.



Clayoquot Sound July 2015

A first sea kayaking trip

A year ago, I was invited to go sea kayaking in Clayoquot (**Tla-o-qui-aht**) Sound - how lucky! Many times on this trip, I felt so grateful to have taken up such a wonderful sport and with **SKCWA** with all the tuition and friendly support that gave me the confidence to do such a trip.



The plan started with the generous invitation from my dear friend Lorna – a Canadian who, in her earlier days was Tofino's first sea kayaking guide. She now lives in Alice Springs! We just happened to be back in BC at the same time so....with the generosity and trip advice from Lorna's good friend Mark (the first resident of Tofino to own a sea kayak), we borrowed sturdy, 'classic' kayaks and set off.

Our plan was to be dropped off on Flores Island and to paddle the west coast of Flores and Vargas Islands for four days with a rendezvous on the fourth night at Mark's float-house at the end of Lemmens Inlet on Meares Island. Sounded great, I was in!

So, on a grey morning in early July, we boarded our sea taxi and headed north to be dropped off at what we thought was Siwash Cove. The tide was low and our landing was treacherous as we slipped and fell on the seaweed – covered rocks as we carried our gear and heavy kayaks toward the steep shore. What was Mark thinking? Our first lesson soon dawned on us—to pay more attention to the chart as the cove was just around the corner of the point.



We decided to wait for high tide and to then paddle a little ways south to one of the beaches for our first camp. Meanwhile, we spent time exploring the point and an abandoned classic west coast squatter's cabin and, as we did so, the sun burnt through the low cloud. We later paddled south in a gentle swell (~1—1.5M) with little wind. It was superb, especially as we found ourselves surrounded by several grey whales with calves as they dived and surfaced, feeding on the nutrients in the mud of Cow Bay.



P2

Paddling off the west coast of Vancouver Island, even in summer, means dealing with morning sea fog and mists, often not burning off until noon. The good part is the long daylight hours that make up for late starts. Our first night's camp was on a beach south of Cow Bay. Until this trip, I had not realised just how many lovely beaches there are in this area, and with many great walking trails, too.

Before starting this trip we knew that the weather forecast and conditions were meant to be calm (BC was experiencing a summer heat wave), sea swell was to remain around 1.5 M and winds low, plus, there were no extreme tides. We also knew that we would paddle close to shore with only a few channel crossings.

Knowing that food attracts wildlife, we always made sure our camp kitchen and boats were well-away from our tents. There are several set campsites in this area with metal bear caches, but our camping was off the main track and one of our heavy kayaks had fibreglass hatch covers that proved to be secure, despite the odd visitor.



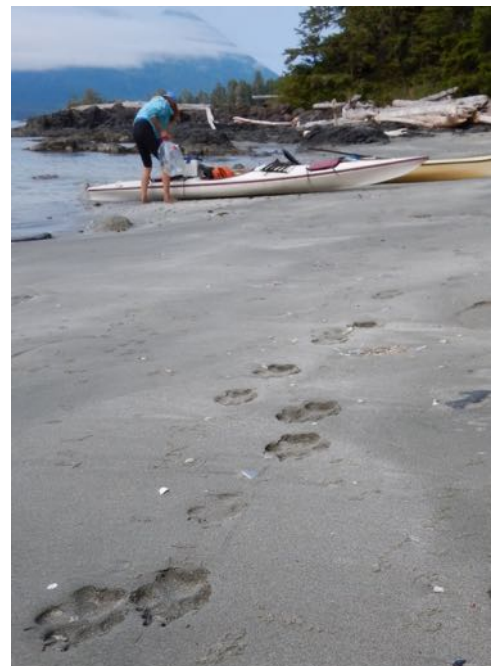
Day 2

It was on my first beach walk in the grey morning mist (feeling alone in the wild) that I came across my first set of coastal wolf prints suddenly coming out of the woods, onto the beach and then retreating further on. I quickly got over my initial panic, found myself a walking stick and got back to camp, ready to pack up and paddle.

We left Flores Island, heading to the north-western end of Vargas. This trip had many special events and on this day it had to be my first encounter ever with sea otters in the wild – how special! As we crossed Russell Channel, on our way to our lunch stop on Whaler Islet, we came across several pairs of otters, playing, feeding and sleeping amongst the bull kelp.



By noon the sun had burnt through so we spent a leisurely lunch exploring the island and enjoying the view of Clayoquot Sound with the iconic Cat Face Mountain in the centre. We later departed with a gentle sea breeze, heading to Vargas where we found another secluded beach camp that was clearly part of the daily (nightly) path of the local wolves as fresh prints were in the tidal zone (and fresh prints were left on our kayaks that night).



P 3

Day 3

We did not leave our camp until midafternoon after a long walk through the dark forest, along trails that would have been established as part of the traditional summer hunting camps of the first nation peoples in the area. Many times we stopped to observe 'culturally modified' trees with scars showing where vertical strips of cedar bark had once been collected for its many uses including rope and basket weaving.

Our late departure was possibly a mistake as the weather was beginning to change, with cloud building and the wind increasing and swinging to the S/SE. Our paddle across Ahous Bay was slow and steady against the tide, wind and chop, and the Southwesterly swell. Eventually we got to the shelter of the south corner of the bay, avoiding a noisy group of boys on an outdoor summer adventure, paddling double kayaks with guides.



Our camp was at yet another lovely sandy bay with our own mussel-encrusted island (at low tide) that fed us that night (our nod to Audrey Sutherland).

The only troublesome visitors here were the invasive ravens who managed to spring a leak in a water container while we were off exploring.



Day 4

We woke to the first drizzle of the trip, the arrival of a weak low front from the S/E. We had a relatively early start as we wanted to depart before it really started to rain, and also because we had a long paddle ahead to Mark's, with the promise of a fresh oyster dinner.

Paddling around the south west corner of Vargas Island was my biggest concern as I had read about it being full of reef and small islands and directly exposed to the SW swell. Luckily, the swell and wind remained relatively low and I felt secure under Lorna's guidance and in my stable, beamy kayak. Plus, we tended to hug the shoreline and often paddled in areas that were calmed by outer reef, islands and the bull kelp.



Being my father's daughter, I could not help but rig up a little fishing line (spoon with a two ounce weight on a stick) which I trolled whenever possible and without success. However, as we entered Father Charles Channel, my luck changed and I hollered to Lorna who kept me steady as I pulled in a small salmon, just perfect for three.



Lorna and I had a quick lunch stop on Stubbs Island, and it was good to stretch, eat and put on another layer of clothes. By this time the drizzle and mist was really descending and we were only half way. We then set off paddling over shallow mudflats before crossing a busy channel in near white-out fog. This was, perhaps, the most dangerous time of our trip, but we paddled closely together with headlamp and boat light flashing.

As we reached Meares Island we came across the Opitsat community with a beautiful dug-out canoe resting in the tidal flats. We then paddled up Lemmons Inlet for a couple of hours, against a weak outgoing tide and into the wind, passing float houses, crab pots and oyster farms along the way. Paddling up the calm inlet, where the forest, lichens and mosses grow to the waterline, was a pleasure.

By the time we reached Mark's, we were feeling chilled and stepping inside his floating cabin with the wood stove roaring and hot water waiting was a treat! We dined on fresh oysters, salmon, 'sea asparagus' and a bottle of Australian white – Ah – great company, great food, great trip!



Day 5

We had one more must-see stop on our way back to Tofino and that was a visit to the ancient cedars on The Great Cedar Trail. Again, seeing how the first nation people traditionally used these trees was impressive, especially where on one tree there was evidence of how slabs of wood for long house corner posts were harvested, but the tree was left growing.

Back in Tofino, this special trip was not yet over as my last night was spent at a Welcome-back-Lorna gathering and slide-show that included many of the grass-roots conservationists who were not only some of the early sea kayakers in the area, but also central to the Save Clayoquot Sound movement in the 90s. It is to Lorna, Mark and their friends that I am grateful – Thank you! In all, we paddled around 60km, a great introduction to future coastal explorations.



Rolling a Sea Kayak – My Journey So Far

Richard Lailey

One morning in September 2001 I was walking along the jetty in Palm Cove, Queensland when I noticed a guy trying to roll a sea kayak. I was fascinated – he was there for over an hour locked in a never ending loop of rolling over, wet exiting, dragging his kayak to the beach, emptying the water, climbing back in, paddling back out and off he would go again.....and again.....such dedication, and he never did get his roll that day! I remember thinking then, thank goodness I have a sit-on; when you fall out, all you have to do is climb back on – simple, why bother going through all that? Little did I know that years later I would be spending many hours, days and months doing the very same thing!

I attempted my first roll during a sea kayak expedition from Monkey Mia to Bottle Bay with Rivergods in 2006. The trip was a great success but my roll was a spectacular failure. I bought my first sea kayak in 2009 from Les Allen – a second hand Dagger Exodus previously owned by Paul Cooper (although I didn't know it at the time – but that's another story). Over the next couple of years and with the help of Rivergods, trawling the internet for articles and video clips, and reading books, I achieved some measure of success – but for some reason my roll was never consistent. I could roll perfectly well one day and fail the next. I can recall one Friday I achieved 25 rolls in succession off Lovers Esplanade in Freshwater Bay (one of my favourite rolling haunts), only to head up to Hillarys Boat Harbour the next day to paddle with the northern pier group of the Sea Kayaking Club and I couldn't even do one – what was going on? I certainly couldn't blame the kayak - the Exodus has a nice rounded hull for rolling!

Looking back, I can see that there were two major problems!

Firstly, I didn't know which roll I was actually trying to do. My brief research uncovered the Eskimo roll, the Pawlata roll, the Sweep roll, the Back Deck roll, the Screw roll, the King Island Roll, the Storm Roll, the C-C Roll and countless more – they all seemed similar and yet somehow different. Was I attempting one of these, or a combination of two or three may be? I had tried holding the paddle both neutrally and extended, each with varying degrees of success.

Richard demonstrates the Standard Greenland Roll (SGR)
Photo Barry Roberts

In my frustration I would ask people for help – look at the bottom, they'd say, look up, follow your bubbles, watch the paddle going over the top, look at the end of your paddle, you're bringing your head up too soon.....!

Secondly, I didn't understand what was actually going on. Whenever I did manage a roll, it was as though a miracle had happened. One moment you're upside down surrounded by water, and the next you're sitting upright in air. Unbelievable – rolling seemed to defy gravity and logic! Sometimes my roll would be so powerful I'd do a 360 and find myself upside down again (which I took to be a positive sign), and other times I wouldn't even come close. But whenever I did, it was truly amazing, like magic! The time between starting the roll and coming up went so fast, a blur almost - I had no idea what was happening! And because I couldn't roll slowly and analyse what I was actually doing, I couldn't work out what was going wrong.

Natural rollers (which I am not) seemed to pick it up very quickly and just get on with it! And yet I would spend ages on thought experiments, sitting in my kayak on the front lawn trying to visualise what was happening (with various comments from the neighbours: hey mate, the tide's out, it's quicker to walk, are you doing that on porpoise, about time you checked your GPS, you'll never cut the grass with that - heh heh)! I even tried supporting my kayak between the letter box and a heavy table and climbing in upside down, all to no avail – ridiculous now I look back on it!

One day I saw a book in Dymocks titled “Kayak Rolling – the Black Art Demystified”. My saviour!! I read it from cover to cover, and over and over. The book started by condemning the Pawlata (or any other type of extended paddle) roll. The author went on to advocate the C to C Roll as the best and most reliable roll to learn or, if you lack flexibility, the “less reliable” back deck roll! After months of following the exercises in the book and trying to master the C to C Roll, I finally gave up – I was going nowhere.

It was no good – for me, a more scientific approach was needed. I could see that fluid dynamics, moments of inertia, lever arms, and buoyancy could be brought into the analysis, but hopefully I wouldn't have to take it that far!



*Ian Hollick demonstrates the Storm Roll
Photo Barry Roberts*



And then one day, Paul Cooper lent me a video entitled “This is the Roll” by Cheri Perry and Turner Wilson. As it turned out the video was being talked about quite a lot around the club. The video looked really good so I bought myself a copy and it was this video that really turned things around for me. The video covers the basics of Greenland rolling and includes three types of roll – the Standard Greenland Roll, the Reverse Sweep Roll and the Storm Roll - and explains the differences. Amazingly, there are 35 different types of roll in the annual Kayak Rolling Competition held in Greenland and this video covered just 3 of them.

Over the next year or so, I was to spend hours analysing the video, watching many sections many times over, often in slow playback mode. It became clear that I would have to forget a lot of what I had learned so far and head back to the drawing board.

After a series of viewings I would head down to Hillarys Boat Harbour (usually on a Friday morning) and join Paul (and sometimes others) for a dedicated rolling session.

The video was amazing – it broke everything down into logical steps so you’d know what you had to do and why, and would point out common mistakes and how to correct them. The video showed the importance of slowing things down and exploring, enjoying, prolonging and even savouring the “twilight zone” – the period between coming up to the surface and moving to the back deck. And none of these rolls requires a well-timed hip flick, just a strong leg drive throughout the roll.

The roll I initially focused on, and the one recommended by the video, is the Standard Greenland Roll (SGR). This is a back deck roll and, once you have properly learned it, becomes very reliable! I found that initially you learn to do the roll fast and then you slow it down and break it down - this allows you to understand every step, correct any problems, until eventually the roll becomes “bombproof”. During my many hours of practising, I made myself a waterproof cheat sheet which I taped to my front deck:

*Paul demonstrates the Reverse Seep Roll
Photo Barry Roberts*

1. Tight rotated tuck before capsizing - maintain once you're over.
2. Hands shoulder width apart on paddle.
3. Strong leg drive (right knee up if going left) when capsizing - and throughout entire roll.
4. Before commencing sweep, paddle flat on surface!
5. Left arm bent, right arm straight, head facing up as close to surface as possible.
6. Sweep paddle out to left - keep on surface (do not pull down) - maintain climbing angle.
7. Do not start to roll up until paddle is fully extended - 90° out to side.
8. Pivot hand to pivot shoulder - keep left elbow tucked in - wallet under your arm.
9. When rolling up, arch your back, chin up/face up. Both shoulders flat on surface.
10. Use core muscles to slide your back and head onto back deck.

Maintaining a strong leg drive throughout the roll removes the need for any correctly timed hip flick. If you drive with your hip, as well as your knee, so much the better! When rolling up, opening your hip can help – this basically means lifting your butt out of your seat! I have found using a euro-blade with a large paddle blade can provide a lot of support to make rolling easier. However, I prefer a cedar Greenland Paddle – the paddle naturally floats on the surface and the smaller blade means a climbing angle when sweeping (to avoid diving) is not so important. That said I have found that maintaining a climbing angle, even with a Greenland paddle, can sometimes help when rolling with the paddle in a neutral position. The Greenland paddle also encourages good rolling habits – it forces you to rely more on your body motion than the paddle itself (essential for learning that elusive hand roll). In murky water, I sometimes slap the water with my paddle blade before starting the roll to make sure it's flat and on the surface.



*Jacki demonstrates the Hand Roll
Photo Barry Roberts*

I can remember one occasion I was rolling (not!) in Freshwater Bay and failing miserably. A man sitting on the bank shouted out to me “Sweep your paddle out to 90°!” Sure enough, as soon as I did this, my roll started to work (apparently I had only been sweeping to about 60°)! It turned out that the man was Dave Stevens, the founder of Western Paddle Sports. Another time, Paul Cooper was videoing my dodgy roll at Hillarys and when we played it back, hey presto – the problem – not keeping that wallet under my arm! Videoing yourself can help to show you what you are doing (but shouldn’t be), what you’re not doing (but should be)! The key to rolling – is knowing exactly what you’re trying to do!

After learning one side, I found it useful to learn the other side. For example, if you flip over sideways in the surf, you usually capsize away from the face of the wave (towards the beach). If you continue the roll in this direction, the wave will almost right your kayak for you as you are rolling with the wave rather than against it.

Once I learned the SGR (extended paddle), I gradually slid my hands down the paddle shaft into a neutral position. This roll works well when you’re in a hurry!

Fortunately for me, I love the water, do not mind hanging upside down in my kayak, and do not suffer from vertigo or sea sickness! Even so, my journey has been a long and challenging one - with plenty of blood, sweat and tears – but a satisfying and enjoyable one.

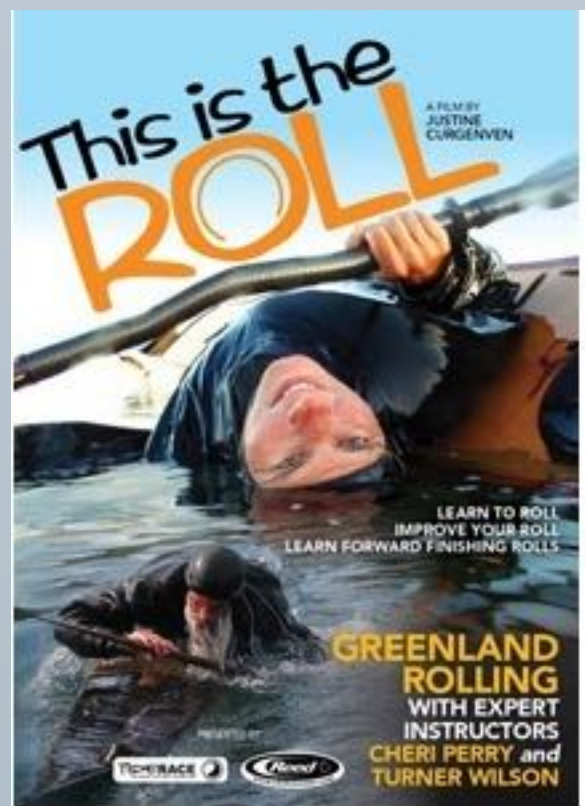
Once you have a reasonable roll in flat water, it’s important to practise in rough water, where you’re most likely going to need it! I sometimes practise with my eyes closed, as it can be hard to see when the water is turbulent.

To be able to roll is one of the most powerful things I know – it provides confidence and self-reliance and gives you the courage to try

out and learn new things – because if you go over, you know you’ll come up, with no need for a wet exit or rescue!

The northern pier group paddles from Hillarys Boat Harbour most Wednesday and Saturday mornings, and usually finishes off with a brief rolling session in the harbour (especially in summer); as a result many of the group paddlers can now roll very well.

We have also found that dedicated rolling sessions in pairs (or small groups of 3 or 4) can be extremely helpful. Through the winter months you’ll need to rug up well with a wetsuit and hood, or preferably a tuiliq to fend off the cold! When practising, ear plugs are a good idea, as cold water can eventually hurt your ears and a face mask is handy to help you see what you’re doing and remove the need for nose clips.



DVD on Greenland Rolling, available as a download from Cackle TV

<http://www.cackletv.com/shop/dvds.html>

Editors note- I inserted this image and URL not as an advertisement but as a guide to those members who would like to follow Richard’s recommendation.

But beware, rolling can be addictive. It's an amazing feeling when you finally achieve a goal after months and months of practice, like your first offside roll for instance. And what's even more amazing – my journey has only just begun – you can never stop improving and there are many rolls to learn!

I have included a few photos of the Standard Greenland Roll (myself), Reverse Sweep Roll (Paul Cooper), Storm Roll (Ian Hollick) and Hand Roll (Jacki Hollick).

My thanks to Tom Suffling (Rivergods) for getting me rolling in the first place. A special thanks to Paul Cooper for his inspiration and encouragement, for those amazing Friday morning rolling sessions at Hillarys, for “making” me roll on my offside, and for teaching me almost everything I

know (about sea kayaking that is)! And to Ian Hollick for teaching me the finer points of Greenland rolling and for showing me that land drills aren't so ridiculous after all!

Thanks also to Barry Roberts for taking those many hundreds of photos from which the photo selections were taken.

And a final thank you to everyone in the club with whom I have had many discussions about rolling and who have helped me along my way.

Final Note: In this article, I'm not advocating how to learn to roll, simply sharing with you how I have learned, and what has worked for me!

Richard

WANTED PHOTOS FOR THE SKCWA WEBSITE

The SKCWA website needs kayaking photos to create interest and vibrancy.

By submitting photos, you have the chance to win an end of year prize

Send your photos to

[Russ at](mailto:Russ)
webmaster@seakayakwa.org.au



Heidi and Pete's

Fraser Island Adventure
Part 2

Arrived at Bowal Creek for lunch. Once our batteries were sufficiently recharged we tackled the steep sand dunes - sliding down them on a piece of timber we found. Yehah! Enjoyed swimming and basically just playing around for the afternoon. I tried the "Solar Shower" that evening but it hadn't had enough time to heat up. Nonetheless, it did allow the luxury of a little soap (we kept the waterways free of soap so as not to pollute the creek so could only use soap on land - better filtration through the soil).

Monday 14/9/98: 21 km paddle Bowal Creek to Coongul Creek

Pete's birthday today!!! And what a way to spend it!! Paddled straight through to Coongul Creek in perfect conditions yet again, except for one thing - no whales for company today. We did see some dolphins and another great ol' turtle. Once more we were nearly upon it before it saw us - their eyesight must really be terrible.

We spent the afternoon reading, swimming and generally lazing around. An air of melancholy would overtake us from time to time - could it be thought of returning home?



Time out from paddling, some sand dune activity.

Tuesday 15/9/98: Rest day at Coongul Creek

Sometime during our starlit night last night a change occurred and we woke to thunder and heavy rain. Conditions barely improved as morning drew nearer. But, even so, a fire was still lit and our morning tea delivered piping hot as usual. Spent the morning making another batch of bread and then braving the surf to practice some surf techniques in the kayaks - bracing and catching waves to shore. They were extremely seaworthy in the waves and this practice gave us more confidence in them and us. I didn't stay in the surf too long as the gusty conditions made me freeze. Pete, though, was having a ball and was still catching waves in the single when I returned from a jog. He even saw a dugong amongst the breakers!!

By lunchtime the weather had improved remarkably. We played French Cricket on the beach and once we were hot and sweaty we all jumped in the ocean to do some body surfing. We probably would have swum longer if it had not been for some persistent sea mite that managed to get into Pete's togs and biting him right on the tip of his "most important part". After that, I think the guys found it hard to catch waves with one hand protectively covering themselves! Poor Pete was in such pain that the mere fabric of his clothing rubbing against him had him nearly writhing on the ground in agony. The only solution seemed to be a bandaid - the thought of which sent Les and I into peals of laughter...again. Still, I wasn't laughing for too long. Taking too long at dusk to do a pee I returned itching in at least 3 places on my butt from voracious mosquitos!

Wednesday 16/9/98: 22 km paddle Coongul Creek to Round Island against the tide and in strong S-W Winds

3 1/4 long hours of paddling this morning to reach Round Island. At one stage we were going so slowly that Pete thought he detected a rock overtaking us!

Round Island was well worth the effort. This tiny island had plenty for us to see and do. The afternoon was easily filled with all sorts of activities. We collected Pippies to be used as bait for fishing as well as to provide us with our entree for dinner. To cook, Les simply heated them in a pan over the fire. Once the shells began to open they were done. They tasted similar to an oyster but meatier and tastier. The fishing wasn't very successful with only 1 fish caught - not enough for 3 hungry fishermen! The island was also home to a family of ospreys and hundreds (or so it seemed) of other sea birds - always plenty to look at.

Thursday 17/9/98: 2km paddle Round Island to Urangan Boat Harbour

A short paddle back to harbour this morning and then, as they say, "all roads lead to Pizza Hut"!

Looking back over this trip Pete and I are just amazed - how were we ever lucky enough to experience something like this. So unique and exciting - it really was brilliant.