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Spring 2006 • Issue 57

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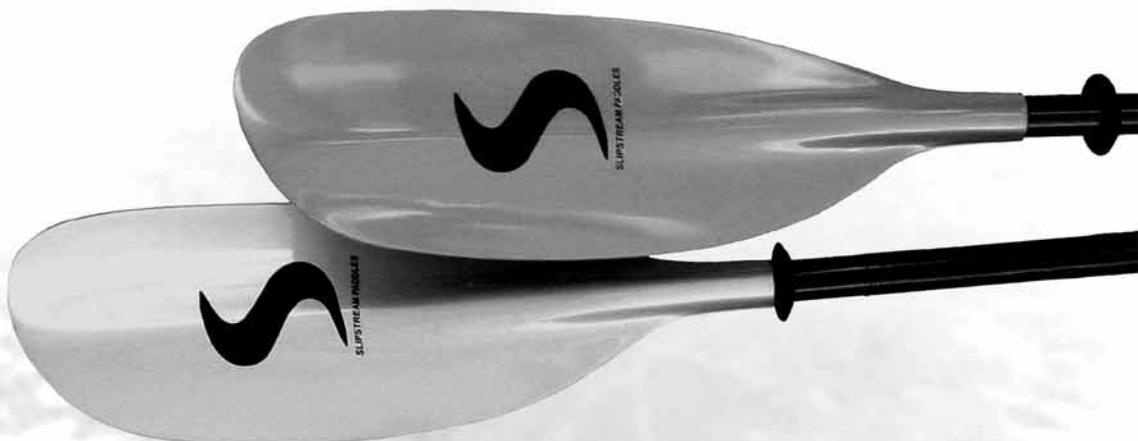
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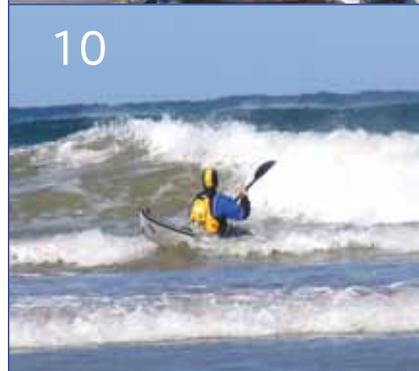
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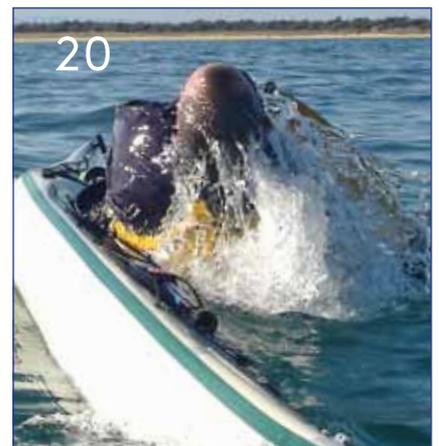
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Cover — Andrew Mathews braves the cold to head north to Alaska and Aialik Bay

sea trekkers three

Editorially

With the sense of invincibility that comes from being male and having recently qualified for VSKC Grade 2 Proficiency Certificates, Derek Wilson, Greg Gleason and I recently headed off from Ricketts Point. A 25 knot northerly was blowing with gusts above 30 knots.

We decided to see how far we would get, and, with a rest stop behind the Cerberus at Black Rock, we managed to make it to Sandringham. The trip home was somewhat speedier and left us feeling quite exhilarated. Back on shore, 3 fifty (plus) year olds made a solemn vow never to grow up and repeat the process whenever we could.

Reflecting on this trip, it struck me that one of the benefits of our club is the introduction it provides to like minded people and the opportunities it gives to test your skills and experience different paddling conditions. A quick scan of the News and Events section of the website shows the broad range of trips and activities on offer – from social to blue waters paddles (even some on the brown stuff for those so inclined) and an array of rolling and skills nights.

The website also enables members to email others and organise paddles on an unofficial basis. With daylight saving, sunset paddles are a real option. So there's really no excuse for not getting out on the water.

On a final note, Peter Costello, Alan Wallace and I have now completed a year as the *SeaTrek* production team. Doesn't time fly when you are having fun?

We would like to thank all those who have written articles and provided comments, criticisms and suggestions for improvements. We hope we have taken these on board.

Happy paddling and see you at the AGM.

Peter Dedrick



The President comments

by Peter Treby

"Sumer is ecumen in, the water is getting warmer, becomes a less rigorous experience from those grim winter days when a practice roll needs a neoprene skull cap. Welcome to good weather and plenty of trips. Make sure you get along to the AGM on the weekend after Cup Day.

Mark 2 and 3 December in your diary as a trip to Malla-coota, when the VSKC will get together with the NSWSKC for socialising, drinking, and maybe even sea kayaking.

This is my last epistle in my present role in the club. I have enjoyed my time as president, and thank all our hard working committee members over the last few years. Good paddling."

Cheers PT



The welcoming party

Again this quarter we have a healthy intake of new members and to help you recognise them when you meet them, here they are:

Marc Bellette; Christopher and Lyn Butler; Vincent and Paulette Drane; Sam Elliott; Glen Evans; Lawrence Geoghegan; Peter Gleisberg; Russell Irving; Matthew Mann; Patrick McCormack and Babette Fahey; Barry McIlwain and Ann Anson; Eric Peterson and Maria Beger; Patrick Platt; James Sloane; Grant Suckling; Elizabeth Thompson; and Denise Whitehead.

Letters

PS. Two of us went out in the fog yesterday and its nice to have a bearing that works even better when 4 idiots in a stink boat asked for directions (No map no compass or idea of what the sun is for) they were almost 180 degrees out.

David Stewart
18 Sept 06

Information on camping in the Nadgee Howe Wilderness Area

Dear Peter

Attached is a letter outlining permit requirements and other information pertaining to camping within the Nadgee Howe Wilderness Area situated on the far south coast of NSW and adjoining Croajingolong National Park.

Whilst I know the majority of your members would already be aware of this information I thought it would be opportune prior to the Christmas holidays to familiarise members and people that may access your web site on camping requirements within this area.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions regarding this letter.

Lyn Evans
Ranger Far South Coast Region
Merimbula Area
Parks & Wildlife Division
Department of Environment & Conservation

Ph: (02) 6495 5019, fax (02) 6495 5055
mobile 0429 838 113

Email: lyn.evans@environment.nsw.gov.au

Stick it in the sack

Can't think of the perfect Chrissy gift?
Impress your rellies, make your wife shake her head, your kids groan, and leave your mates in wonderment.

Perfect for decorating the back of the dunny door or the 'I'd rather not be here' spot on your work desk.

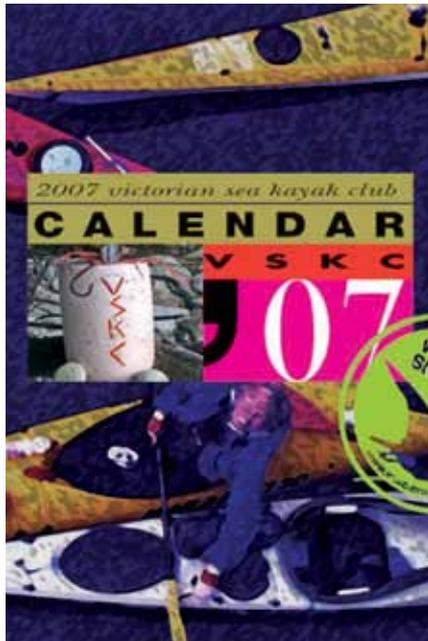
I want my VSKC 2007 calendar!

Just \$10 each will get you a first edition VSKC sea kayakers calendar produced at A5 size in glorious color by the VSKC and friends.

Make your cheque payable to VSKC and mail to VSKC Calendar, PO Box 161, Black Rock Vic 3193.

Calendars will be mailed out.

Keep in mind that you and your adventures can appear in the 2008 calendar, so take plenty of high resolution photos and send the best on CD with your details to Peter Costello, 45 Kenneth Street, Sandringham, Vic 3191



Sandy's long Australian paddle (SLAP)

My name is Sandy Robson and starting on 18 December 2006 I plan to launch from the Paul Caffyn 'Dreamtime Voyage' launch site at Queenscliff with the intention to paddle as far around Australia as I can in one year.



My trip brochure has been kindly placed on your web site so have a look to learn more www.vskc.org.au_uploads/slap.pdf.

I am seeking some assistance from members of the VSKC with necessary trip logistics and planning. I do not have a support vehicle at all, so I would like to develop a list of contact people in Victoria that may be able to assist me if required with vehicle support, food drops and paddle float plan advice as required.

I wouldn't mind talking to some locals about the 90 Mile Beach/Croajalong sections in particular.

I hope there will be members of your club interested in launching from Queenscliff with me as well as paddling some sections of the Victorian coastline with me.

Well, please let me know your thoughts.

Thanks

Ms Sandy Robson
Outdoor Education Coordinator
Penrhos College WA

Well, the VSKC has been in contact with Sandy and we will post information as we learn more on the web site. Sandy's web site link will also be listed as soon as it is live so you may view updates of her exciting challenge.



Andrew paddling in Aialik Bay, Alaska

On a recent backpacking holiday to the United States, I set off on a four-day sea kayaking adventure within the Kenai Fjords National Park, Alaska. A highlight of my time overseas, this trip was filled with incredible scenery, amazing wildlife and unique experiences.

With no kayaking gear to speak of, and given I was travelling alone, I researched outfitters that would take me into some of the remote areas I had identified as excellent sea kayaking destinations. I signed up with Kayak Adventures Worldwide who rented me a kayak, camping gear and provided a guide for myself and three other like-minded clients.

Our destination was Aialik Bay in the south coast region. The bay was formed by the retreat of several glaciers and extends 35 kilometres from the Gulf of Alaska to the face of Aialik Glacier. It's a great area for an all-encompassing trip amongst rugged mountains, huge glaciers, icebergs and abundant wildlife.

Day one: whales, bears and thunder

Getting to Aialik Bay involves a water taxi ride from the small town of Seward. Whales are commonly spotted in these waters and it didn't take long before the spout from a humpback's breath was spotted several hundred metres straight ahead. With the boat positioned nearby and engines shut down, two whales put on a show for us for about 15 minutes.

Further along, we stopped once again to watch other humpbacks cruising the ocean with one coming right up alongside the boat. At this point the grin on my face couldn't get much larger, but more excitement was yet to come, as we came across a pod of orcas (killer whales) near Aialik Cape.

At least ten animals were swimming the waters all around our boat, after another 15 minute viewing session and many more photo snaps, we were forced to make some progress towards our drop-off point on the east side of the bay.

Upon arrival, we hurled gear onto the beach, said goodbye to our water taxi, loaded the kayaks and started paddling in perfect conditions of flat seas, not a breath of wind and 17°C air temp.

Travelling north towards Aialik Glacier we passed snowmelt waterfalls streaming down onto our boats. Bald headed eagles gazed at us as we floated underneath their pine tree outlooks and for the bird lovers out there, I'm told I was very lucky to see a kittlitz murrelet (a very rare bird only seen in this part of the world).

After a brief lunch stop, we continued coastal touring towards day one camp when we passed beside a black bear at the mouth of a stream munching on a feed of fish. Following an easy 18 kilometre paddle, we set up camp on Aialik Glacier North Beach. While walking around trying to find a flat area to set up the tents, four bears appeared about 200 metres away.

They didn't seem to mind us on their beach and we were happy to share it also. Most of our first night, these bears were

Humpback whale — thar she blows



Orca (killer whale)

mucking around in the distance, it was kind of like an evening watching a nature documentary, only much better, given I was right there part of the action.

The other great aspect of this campsite was the sound of ice calving off Aialik Glacier every few minutes or so. We had been hearing it all day and even though our camp was 3 kilometres away, the sound was as loud as thunder and it made for a unique disruption to falling asleep.

Day two: Aialik and Pedersen glaciers

More typical Alaskan weather greeted us on day two, cloudy and a chance of rain. After brekkie, our water supplies needed to be topped up from the stream where the four bears had been frolicking the night before.

As we approached, one bear stood between us and our water supply. Fronting up to the bear and some confident words sent it on its way, allowing us to fill water containers while keeping on eye out!

Once in the kayaks, we paddled up to the face of Aialik Glacier by negotiating our way through the floating ice and trying not to scare the seals from their positions atop the icebergs.

Once at our safe zone of 400 metres from the face, we floated and watched this natural wonder. The glacier's active face is 200 metres high and it put on a great show of ice breaks crashing down into the ocean.

After 20 minutes of sitting around and with an icy wind coming off the glacier, it was time to keep warm by moving on. But we were all waiting for a big break from a section where falling ice had exposed an unsupported, larger section of ice. It didn't disappoint, with a huge break, cracking sound and massive splash into the ocean.

After feeling the gentle rocking of its shockwaves, we got moving south along the west side of the bay. During our lunch break, fresh bear footprints were evidence of an animal nearby, and sure enough, while feasting on my first ever peanut butter and jelly sandwich, another black bear appeared from the bushes and kept us company.

For the afternoon, we had a leisurely paddle to meet a 5 pm high tide, which would allow us entry to Pedersen Lagoon. This lagoon sits at the base of the Pedersen Glacier and is full of large icebergs. Water temperatures here are very low, the bottom of my kayak felt like the inside of a freezer.

Nearer to the glacier, the icebergs became so thick they restricted us from paddling

any further, so a short hike was made to enjoy sensational views of the glacier and lagoon. A coyote hopping from iceberg to iceberg entertained us while we waited for the tide to retreat and assist our departure.

More flat water, no wind and with the rain not eventuating, it made for an easy paddle to day two camp. That night, after setting up tents and while preparing dinner, another black bear appeared from the bushes and walked towards our tents.

Our guide instructed us to approach the bear to avoid it disrupting our campsite. He had educated us that by sticking together as a group we dramatically reduce the likelihood of a bear charging us. Sure enough, the bear got disinterested in our tents, but walked along the beach towards our kitchen.

Not wanting the bear to associate humans with a meal, we stood between it and our kitchen. Standing in between a bear not 20 metres away and a pot of jambalaya which it was sniffing is a moment I will not forget. Fortunately, knowing it was outnumbered was enough to drive this bear away and we ate in peace knowing we had just had an intimate brush with an amazing animal.

Day three: Holgate Glacier

An 8:30 am rise and not long after, with camping gear packed into our kayaks, we set off for the Holgate Arm. Overnight rain had made way for calm conditions with 0.5 metre seas and a gentle breeze. Holgate beach was our lunch spot as well as day three camp.

With full stomachs and tents erected, we launched for an afternoon paddle along the northeast coastline to Holgate Glacier. Sitting amongst icebergs and with the occasional forward stroke to combat the icy 10 knot breeze streaming off the glacier, I watched in amazement at the scale of the wall of ice in front of me.

Although less active than Aialik, this glacier still managed to shed some huge chunks of ice giving rise to big cheers from our group. Returning to camp along the southwest side of Holgate Arm, we caught views of Surprise Glacier and enjoyed more amazing coastline.



Does the bear want a paddle too?



Water taxi drop-off — not a bad place to start a paddle, eh?



There's no room in this tent for you!

Day four: ice breaker

A very relaxed breakfast this morning, 20 kilometre paddles each previous day left us with only 13 kilometres to travel on day four. Overnight storms and the tide had littered the entire Holgate Arm with bits of ice from the glacier. To cross the arm, plastic singles took the lead to break a path in the ice for the fibreglass doubles to follow.

I crunched through the chunks of ice and my paddle got as much purchase from the water as it did the ice, this was a kayaking experience I was not going to get back home and a heap of fun.

With the ice field negotiated, we paddled south while being kept company by all manner of wildlife including seals, sea otters, bald headed eagles and puffins.

Puffins nest on steep sea cliffs to avoid predators, the entrances to their nests are often narrow tight spaces and we had many laughs watching puffins misjudge their landing on several occasions, requiring a fly around for the next attempt.

Quicksand Cove was our lunch destination, huge numbers of salmon had gathered at the beach and were jumping out of the water in preparation for a run up a nearby stream. More bear prints nearby meant their journey may be a treacherous one!

After lunch we rounded Quicksand Cove into McMullin Cove, our water taxi pick up location. This cove was magnificent, huge snow capped mountains stretched out from the sea and misty clouds created an eerie atmosphere. Given we were a bit

early for the water taxi, I took some time to float in my kayak and soak up the beauty of this place. It was so relaxing that I almost feel asleep in the cockpit. Once the water taxi arrived we were off on our way back to Seward, the excitement wasn't over just yet though, as more humpback whales kept us company on the return journey.

A big thanks to my guide Dave, Sarah and the rest of the crew at Kayak Adventures Worldwide (www.kayakak.com) for all their assistance and for helping me get the most out of my time in Aialik Bay.

The trip was one of a lifetime and for anyone with a sense of adventure, Alaska is an amazing place with so many wilderness areas to explore. I'd encourage you all to get there at least once. I know I'll be back!



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Warneet to Cowes — 28 June 2006

By Peter Costello

Jurgen Weller
George Appleby
Raia Wall
Neil Brenton
Roger Taylor
Geoff Brewster and Barbara Burns
Peter Costello

Nagee Expedition
and trip leader
Pittarak
Dagger Cortez
Power Raider X
Nagee Expedition
Mirage double
Valley Aquanaut

Conditions were pristine. We had a 45 km day ahead, so as the sun came up with a mist across the water, we filled out kayaks ready to take advantage of the outgoing tide.

One of the young locals came down with an open 'soldier' to show off his early morning drinking prowess and chat about how good the fishing has been.

Easy paddling and chatting soon saw us into a rhythm as we slid along toward the end of the channel and across to Crawfish Rock. Fishing boats were the only other competition as we cruised along the side of French Island past Fairhaven where Geoff and Barbara left us to do some exploring.

We reached Cowes still feeling fresh, but very hungry and the café on the start of

the jetty is the perfect location. I had a quick jog into town realising my backup money in my lifejacket had run out after numerous cappuccinos on Williamstown paddles. Big hamburgers were the go and conversation soon turned to digital cameras and housings, as well as the latest gadgetry in GPS.

Full ready to burst and the tide had run its race, so time to saddle up and catch the incoming flow. A slight tail wind saw George and Neil's sails go up, but with the tide we all moved up the center channel easily. Roger was even navigating the shallow areas using his GPS to avoid bottom drag.

The speck out from Palmer Point proved to be Geoff and Barbara heading back and we met up again as we headed up the river. Roger flopped a roll in before the water got a bit murky. Feeling a little weary after a day in the sun with a pristine day out on the water had by all.

Thanks Jurgen for leading a most enjoyable paddle.



Whetting the social appetite 2 – 3 August 2006

The Prom, attended by thirty bunks worth of members and family.

When the idea of booking out the big lodge at the Prom was proposed to the committee by Terry B and whether: 1. we would be interested in going and 2. would the club through the committee accept any shortfall if the thirty beds were not taken up, it was such a good idea that there was no hesitation.

It did not take long after listing on the web before it was fully subscribed.

A race home from work on the Friday night, pack the car as the rest of the guys we were travelling with all rocked up outside our place. As Andrew Mathews strolled up the drive, Lachlan, my 3 y.o. was heard to say 'here comes my brother' – must have been something to do with the same colour tee shirts, and so 'my brother' it was for the rest of the weekend.

We headed off in convoy appropriately armed with two-way radios and proceeded to 'talk-nonsense' all the way to Korumburra, where we stopped for a very tasty pizza dinner.

Quite late when we eventually arrived at the Prom – kids very excited to have seen all the wild life along the way, with wallabies and wombats a plenty. No one at camp asleep as yet and so a quick shuffle to organize sleeping arrangements and then time for a chat till around midnight before crashing.

Saturday brought more arrivals and the weather was looking good for a paddle out of Norman Bay in two groups. One staying more local as the wind was expected to blow up in the early afternoon and our group heading down past Whiskey Bay to Tongue Point to have a bite of lunch on the water.

Sure enough, on the return the wind picked up progressively giving us long surfing rides on a one to two metre swell with half metre sea. We all sought waves into Norman Bay with some of us staying out a little longer to play in the surf and put in a few rolls.

Those who had not gone for a paddle had donned the boots and either gone to Squeaky Beach or Mt Oberon to check out the view and assess the re-growth and re-vegetation since the bushfires.

After a fine day in the waves or on the trail, all were ravenous and the scene was set for a big Saturday night. A toast was raised to Greg Murray, whose birthday it was and well wishes for his move north the next day to Thirroul, NSW with Elizabeth from the NSW club.

It didn't seem long after eating before the red wine taste-off started, followed shortly by the nip of finely aged scotch. In a room of thirty people all talking at once, the volume was amazingly loud. Yvette took the liberty of videoing the room at one stage and on replay, it looks like everyone is talking and laughing with no-one actually listening.

Before long Greg Gleason had the guitar

out and the story-telling was complimented by some singing. Eventually we all crashed and fell asleep wondering what the next day would bring forth as there was a strong offshore predicted for the morning.

This was followed closely by a toast to Terry for organising such a great weekend and many vows of we'll have to do this again next year.

Greg Murray managed the biggest laugh of the morning, searching for his glasses to read the paper and not finding them, being told, "get some contacts to help you find your glasses, Greg" and other such smart comments. Well Sienna had tidied them up the night before, wrapping them in their cloth and putting them into the glasses case, as she does with her own.

Greg had opened the case, looked, seen the cloth and figured they were not in there and kept looking elsewhere, progressively gaining the help of half the camp. Eventually a second check of the case unearthed them, but not before Greg had copped plenty.

Sure enough, about 25 – 30 knots direct offshore at Norman Bay with very steep four-foot waves coming through. Two groups were quickly determined. Those who wished to get cold and surf, and those who wished to paddle the river.

I can tell you about the surf. We struggled our kayaks down with the wind pushing from behind. Sitting them on the sand left them swinging around in the flying sand. Bill Zombor was first out and once through the break, needed to keep paddling in to stop being blown out to sea.

I followed, waiting while a set came through and then made it out ok, followed by Peter Long, Andrew Campbell, Robin



XXX and Andrew 'brother' Mathews. After an hour or so we had cooled off enough and those not used to surf had gained some valuable experience.

Back to the lodge before check-out, in time for a hot shower and then cruising contentedly home with a car load of tired family.

Heaps of fun, great walking, great talking, great paddling and I am already looking forward to next year.



An alternate view of history — Wilson's Promontory

Matt Flinders and Bass had just started
their journey
On a voyage they hoped would wind up in
Burnie
They'd hired an old boat and a crew of just
eight
From Patrick the Stevedore at a discounted
rate
George Bass was a doctor, with his scalpel
and tweezers
Had saved half the Royal Navy from social
diseases
And Mattie had done his bit for the King
In sailing round Sydney and that sort of
thing
So, a trip off to Tassie would make history
And set out a course for the VSKC
Now they'd sailed far past Waratah Bay
The weather was clear and they could see
quite a way
When Georgie espied a large piece of land
And exclaimed out aloud, "Good Lord, I'll
be damned."
(It was actually quite a bit stronger than
that
And in those days bad language could earn
you the cat)
Flinders then crawled from under the
spinnaker
Where he'd been sipping on wine that
tasted like vinegar
And he said, "Hey, ho Georgie. What do
you see?"
"An island with treasure, for you and for
me?"

George soon responded, "Just look what
you've missed."
"In wasting your day by getting half
pissed."
"That land over yonder amazes the eye"
"With verdant hills reaching up to the sky"
"And see how the coastline doth gleam and
doth shiver"
"Just to the left of Tidal River"
"Well, we'll have to claim it" said Matt in
a flash
"In the name of Old England and all that
balderdash"
"What shall we name it? Let's think for a
while"
"And study the landscape, its contours and
style"
"Observe how it juts far out, like a limb."
"What strength, poise and beauty doth lie
therein."
"I recall how, in London, an acquaintance
I'd made"
"Tommy Wilson, by name. A merchant by
trade"
"Had similar features – strong and
impassive"
"With some physical aspects alarmingly
massive."
"You see, dear George, Tom was built like a
dromedary".
"Yes, I think we'll name it 'Wilson's
Promontory'"

Graham Williams

2 Fools go to sea

Grant Kelly and I went out on a foggy
Sunday morning from Bayview Road,
Hastings recently, with no map or GPS
but it is our back yard, so we estimated
a bearing to the top of French Island and
stuck to it and we popped out at about the
correct spot. The bearing was conservative
to ensure we hit the island.

We then followed the coast to Borellier
Island. Just before Borellier Island, we
were hailed by four idiots in a stink boat
– totally lost. They were heading west
along French towards Hastings, claiming
they were trying to find Warneet. No map
no compass and no idea!

Some people don't know how to find
directions even if the sun is visible. We
pointed them into the sun and said 'go'
hoping they'd find Warneet. The fog did
lift a bit later, so they would have made
it. We calculated our back bearing at 250
degrees magnetic. That would have been
good enough to bring us home. The fog
had lifted by the time we would have
needed it and the most direct bearing was
240 but with the tide pushing us south the
250 bearing would have worked out spot
on.

It's nice to know that the theory all works
when you need it.

David Stewart



Cape crusaders on show

Cape countouring is alive and well with a bundle of the VSKC now having dipped their heads off our illustrious coastline.

Here are some details of the trips and a good look at the undersides (better angles?) of some of the cape contourers.

Cape Schanck

Saturday 23 July 2006

Paddled By Roger Taylor Peter Treby, David Golightly, Jurgen Weller and Chris King

Launched from Gunnamatta Beach, completed at Flinders Beach

Trip distance was 14 nautical miles

Weather: sunny, calm. Winds northerly, <10 kn.

Sea state: seas basically calm, but the 1.5-2 m swell demanded respect



Cape Woolamai

Saturday, August 05, 2006

Bill Zombor, Roger Taylor (leader), Chris King, Julian Smith, David Golightly, George Appleby and Dana Halsvik

Launched from Kitty Miller Bay.

Trip distance was 16 nautical miles

Weather: cool overcast. Light NW breeze less than 10 knots.

Sea state: SW swell to 1 metre. Seas less than 0.5 m

Cape Patterson

Saturday 26 August 2006

Paddled By Chris King Jurgen Weller, David Stewart, Roger Taylor, Dana Halsvik, Tina Rowley, Terry Barry, Grant Della and Les Bognar

Launched from Shelley Beach near Kilcunda, completed at: Cape Patterson

Weather: light variable winds

Trip distance was 10 nautical miles

Sea state: calm



Cape Liptrap

Saturday, 30 September 2006

Christopher King Jurgen Weller (leader), David Golightly, Tina Rowley, Terry Barry, Dana Halsvik, Neil Brenton, Raia Wall, Geoff Brewster, Tim Fryer and Vincent Duncan

Launched from Walkerville North boat ramp

Trip distance was 15 nautical miles

Weather: wind s/w 10 knots or less fine

Sea state: 1m+ S/W swell

Cape Wellington

Sunday, 29 October 2006

Tina Rowley (leader), Christopher King, Robin Boundy, Russell Blarney and David Golightly. (Jurgen Weller accompanied the pod until JS Cove.)

Launched from Tin Mine Cove, Corner Inlet. 38.49 S, 146.25 E, completed at: Little Waterloo Bay, Wilsons Prom. 39.04 S, 146.26 E

Trip distance was 26 nautical miles

Weather: fine but overcast with approx 15-20 knot west-south- westerly winds

Sea state: very choppy and confused seas at Cape Wellington 1-2 m swell

Plenty more capes yet to be explored, so take advantage of the warmer weather and get onto some cape trips.



Five women and five men in sea kayaks

by Ross Armstrong

Barmah to Echuca 21 – 22 October 2006

The evening of Friday 20 October saw nine kayakers camped out on the shore of the Murray at the Barmah caravan park (tel 5869 3225).

Well, really it was six, due to a late arrival and not wishing to disturb their fellow paddlers, three members of the party had regretfully forgone the diverse pleasures of camping for the uncomfortable confines of an on-site cabin with en-suite bathroom.

This may not have happened at all if the trio had not serendipitously been met by Raia Wall and Peter Sharp, who had kindly taken the trouble to walk up to the main road and look out for them. Two people walking around Barmah at 11.00 pm wearing headlamps could only have been fellow sea kayakers! The car shuffle to Echuca was done on Friday night. Barmah is about 40 km by road from Echuca.

9.00 am Saturday morning found ten paddlers on the bank with well-packed boats and champing at the collective bit to get on the water.

The party comprised co-leaders Raia Wall (Dagger Cortez) and Neil Brenton (Dagger Cortez), Anne Sharp (Current Designs Squall), Peter Sharp (Current Designs Storm), Les Doyle (Q Kayak Penguin), Helen Doyle (Q Kayak Penguin Lite), Peter Manning (Perception Ecobehzig), Louise Dadge (Dagger Baja), Debbie Towan (Perception Swordfish) and Rosscoe Armstrong (Current Designs Storm).

Debbie Towan is a newcomer to paddling and did very well, especially considering she had only paddled once before. Peter Manning is from Corowa and a new VSKC

member whose first saltwater paddle was at the recent AGM.

All the boats were plastic. This was a flat water river trip but we were all properly caparisoned with pfd's, spray skirts, tow ropes, pumps, first aid kits, etc. 'Stuff happens', even on trips like this and it's always important to be properly kitted up and prepared.

There was a noticeable current on both days which was in contrast to the trip Raia and Neil had done with the Sharps, Dana and Roger T in June (Tocumwal to Barmah) when the river was slower, colder and 1.4 m lower.

Rosscoe and Louise had paddled the area in early September when the current was similar to this weekend's. If you're considering a river trip river heights can be checked at http://www.bom.gov.au/hydro/flood/vic/rain_river.shtml. The heights can then be compared to recommended heights for paddling in a guide such as *The Rivers and Lakes of Victoria* by Chris and Yvonne McLaughlin (ISBN 0 646 37424 9 ~\$20). Neil and Peter Sharp had brought their GPSs and we were able to get a good measure of our speed. (Current 1.1-1.8 knots, our cruising speed average 3.1 knots.)

Charts used were *River Murray Charts* by Maureen Wright (www.rivermurraycharts.com.au). These A4 charts cover Yarrowonga to

Renmark and are available as a book (ISBN 0 9598463 6 0) or as a CD. Also used were the recently released Parks Victoria A4 sized *Murray River Access Maps* (www.parkweb.vic.gov.au/1process.cfm?subj=15&publication=5).

These give more detail of the surrounding area and access, but less on the river features such as historical points, snags etc. Raia and Neil had copied and laminated the A4 sized charts, this was a great idea.

After a briefing from Raia, we disembarked from the very good put-in area at the bottom of the caravan park. Saturday's destination was Flemings Bend (1732 km from the mouth of the Murray) and 30 km down river from Barmah (1762 km).

Distances are generally marked every 2 km on the NSW side of the Murray with prominent blue and white markers. The day's paddle was very relaxing and enjoyable with brilliant blue skies, fluffy



The Echuca wharf, a kayak's view



Plastic fantasies

white clouds, warm but not too hot and occasional zephyrs that were either 'for or agin us'.

Raia and Neil had planned this to be a cruisy trip and so it was. Occasional snatches of Italian operatic arias were heard on the river, attesting to the conditions and general ambience of the day. This stretch of the river is sparsely populated with no towns and few roads and a good selection of bird life including swamp harriers, wedgies, pelicans and ubiquitous mobs of raucous sulphur crested cockies.

Mid-afternoon saw us at Flemings that was occupied by power boaters, so we collectively eschewed this spot. Just past Flemings on the NSW (right) side on the top of a low bank was a good campsite in a State forest where we disembarked, set up camp and watched Raia have her first swim for the season.

A real plus was being able to have a fair dinkum campfire. Early evening saw us sitting around the fire enjoying a golden still dusk, a lively apres pagayer scene and partaking of various tasty and nutritious hors d'oeuvres and restorative libations.

Dinner followed with libations and concluded with further libations. It was a fine balmy starry night, some might also say barmy given the libations, and mercifully free of mosquitoes and other airborne annoyances. Several folding chairs were much appreciated. The evening was rounded out with tales and yarns of 'daring do' and great humour before we retired to our tents for the sleep of the just.

Sunday morning found us on the water at 8.00 am and heading towards Echuca a further 20 km downriver. During the morning someone came out while enthusiastically practicing their bracing. Even though they were only in about one metre of quiet water and near the bank, the opportunity to practice an assisted re-entry was recognised and exploited.

The weather and conditions were the same as Saturday but there was more river traffic, including houseboats with two or three occupants that could comfortably house a medium sized tsunami devastated village, water-ski boats driven by descendants of Sir Donald Campbell, an inflatable pool toy with one occupant (resplendent with drink holders, a palm tree and inflatable esky holder in tow), humble tinnies and paddle steamers including the dowager duchess of the Murray, the *Emmy Lou*. Les parked himself behind an enormous houseboat and made out as if he was giving it a push, those on the houseboat failed to see the joke but we all

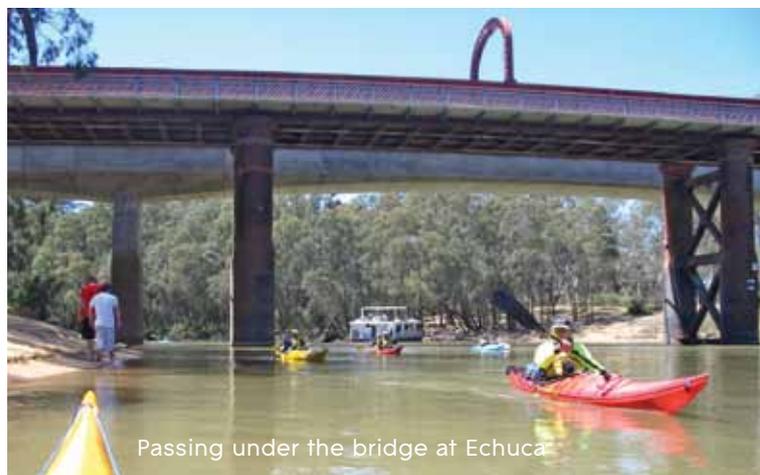
thought it was very funny. Over the whole weekend we saw maybe two other paddlers.

The wharves and other buildings and structures around Echuca and Moama are remnants of the days when the Murray-Darling system was the major inland transport network in Australia and it is very interesting to see it all from the river and at a paddler's pace.

Not so interesting were a few drunk jobboes on a houseboat who took great delight in loudly and repeatedly sharing their observation that there was a rather tenuous similarity between our boats and giant priapic devices. I admit to contemplating, but not communicating a suggestion that they may like to actively participate in a practical exercise to establish the extent of this similarity.

We arrived at Echuca around noon and the take out was at a convenient boat ramp on the Victorian side just past the centre of town. After a quick car shuffle and loading of boats and gear we went to a bakery in town and had a lunch which included live entertainment from an earthy local blues duo.

It was a great weekend, well organised and well led by Raia and Neil, very relaxed and much enjoyed by all.



Passing under the bridge at Echuca



Annie and Peter Sharp



Les gives a house boat a helpful push

Kayak camping – getting started

By Terry Barry



warmth), some sort of inner zip cover (similar to the muff collar) to stop heat loss through the zip. Ability to open the bag out to form a doona for the warmer nights.

Choose one with a compression bag to reduce its size and again watch the weight. Good quality synthetic bags with quallofill (4 air tubes running through the fibres to increase the insulation) should cost around \$150.

Sleeping mat

The basic function of a sleeping mat is to provide insulation from the cold ground. Comfort is a secondary function, although important as our bones get older! You can use a closed cell foam mat that cost around \$10, but they don't provide much comfort.

Most people use a self inflating mat such as a "Thermarest", there are many good brands on the market. They all come in various thickness's, some designed for car camping. Look for one that is a compromise between weight, thickness and size that you can fit into your kayak.

Another more recent addition to the market I have discovered is an inflatable insulated mat called an "Insul-Mat". It is much smaller, lighter, cheaper and more comfortable than my thermarest. Sleeping mats range in price from \$10 to around \$250. Expect to pay \$200 for a self inflating mat and \$100 for an "Insul-Mat".

Stove

A fuel stove allows you to cook a meal without the need for a fire and is considered essential. There are lots of different types and brands but they all boil down (pardon the pun) to three main fuel types- gas burners, methylated spirit, and shellite.

Each has advantages, but the most popular is methylated spirits, in particular a "Trangia" brand. They are good in the wind, have no moving parts, are relatively safe and come with all pots included. The extra expense of stainless steel inners on the pots makes them easier to clean and you don't have to worry about consuming aluminium in your food.

Shellite stoves have moving parts which require maintenance and don't take kindly to sand and salt but offer a hotter flame and good temperature control. Gas burners have little wind protection and you are never quite sure how much fuel is left in the disposable canisters, which are also not very environmentally friendly. It's all personal choice.

Torch

A head torch allows you to cook, read and do other tasks using two hands. LED head torches are light and usually have a battery life of around 80 hours on three AAA batteries. There are many options, but expect to pay around \$30 for a decent one, but you can also pay a lot more.

The greatest pleasure I get out of sea kayaking is without doubt exploring the coast and camping with good friends at otherwise inaccessible places, with all the comforts that one can bring along in a sea kayak.

Getting started in kayak camping can be a bit daunting. For those that have done a bit of lightweight camping before, such as bushwalking, it's quite easy to adapt the equipment and skills to a sea kayak.

For those that haven't, here are a few tips on gear and other stuff that I hope will assist to help get you started.

Here's a list of the basics you will need; Tent, stove & pots, food, rain coat and pants, 4 litres of water per day, toiletries-tooth brush & paste. , Insect repellent-tropical strength, non aerosol , sleeping bag, torch, dry bags, toilet paper & trowel, unbreakable cup, bowl, cutlery, personal medication, sleeping mat, change of clothes, matches/lighter, water resistant sunscreen, lip balm, rubbish bag, first aid kit and communication equipment.

With all this gear there are three things to keep in mind;

1. It must all fit into the kayak
2. You have to paddle it to where your going, so keep it light
3. Never trust your hatches to keep it all dry, use dry bags.

Now let's look in detail at some of the gear you will need.

Tent

With a large range on the market it's easy to get carried away. Remember that most of the time you can simply camp under a fly or tarp. A tent is just a lot more insect proof, wind proof and dry! Camping near the ocean as we do its often pretty windy and the pegs are only in sand, so choose a tent that has a low wind profile. (I don't recommend dome tents for this reason.) Choose one that has an inner and fly, a usable size vestibule (the covered area between the inner and outer of the tent that you can store gear in and sometimes cook in, in foul weather.) , aluminium poles (lighter and stronger than fibreglass) , is light weight (around 2 kg for a good size 1 1/2 person) and doesn't cost the earth. You should be able to pick one up for about \$120-150. But you can also pay over \$500! Mine cost \$120 and is still going strong after 3 years of continuous use.

Sleeping bag

There are two main fillings – down and synthetic. Down is still the best warmth for weight ratio. But is more expensive and badly affected by moisture. As it is uncommon to have a frost near the ocean, I choose to use a synthetic bag and use my down bag for the snow!

Main features to look for in a sleeping bag are; hood (you lose 30% of body heat from your head), muff collar (draws around your shoulders to seal in the



Remember, it all has to fit in

Clothes

At the end of a day on the water you will be looking to change out of your paddling clothes. You will need to take clothing that is versatile enough for warm or cold/wet conditions. Multiple layers of clothes allow you flexibility and are warmer than one thick garment.

I recommend thermal long johns and top, light weight quick dry long pants, light fleece or second thermal, wind block fleece, light weight long sleeve shirt, beanie, sun hat, warm socks, lightweight runners, rain coat or poncho, over-pants. This all compresses down to a small bundle and allows me to be comfortable in most conditions with protection from sun and insects in the hot weather and the ability to rug up when required.

Food

- Should be compact and light weight as possible.
- It might also be subject to violent movement and immersion, therefore double bagged in plastic bags.
- Food can be carried in leak proof containers as long as it is not bulky.
- Putting food in snap lock bags is a great way to go, label the bag e.g. Thurs dinner
- Perishable foods can be carried if it is used in the first two days, but fresh vegetables should not be over ripe because of hot weather.
- It is best to take fresh food and eat it first and then eat the dehydrated food over the last days.
- Make sure you measure portions required exactly, and don't carry unnecessary quantities.

In addition, plan for one emergency meal. This should be light weight and basic, and not necessarily be your favourite food, eg. Deb potato and dehydrated peas and corn.

Menu suggestions

Careful thought should be given to choosing foodstuffs that provide adequate energy and are not too bulky. Two-minute noodles, while quick and light, are not suitable in nutritional terms. If you have a food dehydrator, or have access to one, this will be an asset. You can dehydrate just about anything, including fruit, vegetables, pasta sauce, Thai curry etc.

It tastes heaps better than packaged stuff that you buy and costs a fraction of the

price, however is not essential!

Also, remember that foods need to have preservatives in order to last (ie mountain bread will not last, you need a pita bread with some preservatives).

Some good ideas for meals include:

Breakfast examples: This is the most important meal of the day. You cannot afford not to have a good breakfast when you have to paddle all day!

- Cereals/muesli/porridge with milk powder, breakfast bars.
- Dried biscuits/raisin buns/muffins with jam/vegemite/honey (in film containers)
- Tea/coffee/milo

Lunch examples

- Pita bread with cheese, cucumber, hommos, tomatoes, lettuce, avocado
- Dry biscuits – vita wheat lunch size biscuits work well
- Tinned tuna
- Salad things will keep pretty well – roma tomatoes are the best and most sturdy tomato
- Mustard
- Fruit/dried fruit
- Cheese spreads

Dinner examples: It is worth taking time to work out a good dinner menu. There is nothing worse than getting into camp and realising everyone else has a great dinner to look forward to – except you!

- Pasta: tinned tuna (sundried tomato and basil) + vegies + tomato paste + cheese to taste!
- Fresh veges and commercial pasta sauce (i.e. Five Brothers)
- Deli fresh tortellini or ravioli with deli fresh sauce (add some fresh vegies or dehydrated veges.)
- Vegetable curry – these are great with rice as long as you bring a heap of veges (dehydrate them), coconut milk powder and some curry paste.
- Pesto with parmesan cheese and pasta
- Japanese noodles and veges
- Dried peas and corn work well in a lot of meals
- Custard
- Caramel pudding – in individual containers

Other

- Tea/coffee/milo in snap bag
- Dried fruits/nuts
- Sweet and dry biscuits

- Chocolate/sweets – musli bars are great on the water

- Nutella

Dry bags

It is essential to keeping everything dry in your kayak in event of water entering the hatches. Many small/medium size bags make it easier to store your gear than just a couple of large ones. Consider one bag for your lunch stuff, this makes it easy to grab from the kayak without going through a few bags to assemble your lunch. Light weigh bags are ideal for sea kayaking as they are well protected inside your hatches, weigh less than heavy duty bags and are cheaper. I use around six bags to store all my gear: food, lunch, sleeping bag, sleeping mat, clothes, first aid kit. I don't worry if the tent or stove gets a bit wet. You can get away with one or two dry bags at the start and use garbage bags, then add to your dry bag collection over time.

Water

The most popular way to carry water is in a water bag/bladder (Sea to Summit is one brand) They are simply a wine bladder with a convenient carry bag covering. To start off you can simply use an old wine bladder (with a couple of good washes) or buy water in a cask from the supermarket (4 litres) and leave the cardboard packaging at home.

The advantage of this system is that it reduces in size as the container gets emptied. Also remember you need water while paddling, most use a bladder arrangement secured in the bottom of the cockpit or on the back of a PFD with a drinking tube .

I carry some 'Puritabs' as part of my first aid kit if I ever have to use suspect water, although I've never had to resort to them.

Hope this is not too confusing. Remember there are plenty of experienced people in the club to ask for advice. Get the basics first then add and refine your gear as you get experience and see what others are carrying, remembering the first basic rule – you have to carry this gear all day in your kayak. Keep it light, but don't compromise your safety.



Don't forget the essentials

On the wild side – the good, the bad and the just plain ugly

by Peter Dedrick

On Saturday mornings, I often run into the Red Eye lot at Ricketts Point. Normally I'm just arriving when they are coming in. Nevertheless, it's good to catch up and find out what they have seen on their morning paddle.

One morning, the conversation turned to the sea stars they had seen on the sides of the Cerberus at Half Moon Bay. Were they the dreaded northern Pacific sea star (*Asterias amurensis*) that has reached plague proportions in Port Phillip Bay? That morning, I paddled up to the Cerberus and, as the buoys marking the exclusion zone had vanished, I could have a close look.



Yellow form of the northern Pacific sea star

During my fishing days, several years ago, I would often scrape a few mussels from the side of the ship (It was legal at the time) on my way to catch a few whiting.

Now, there were virtually no mussels to be seen and the sides of the ship were populated by two species of sea star that have often been confused with the northern Pacific variety. Their texture is similar and they are from the same family (Asteridae). They also have the same voracious appetite. However, they are part of the natural order of things and should be left alone.

The bad — the northern Pacific sea star

The northern Pacific sea star is distinctive because it has

- five arms,
- arms that taper into pointed, upturned tips,
- colour on the top and sides of the arms that ranges from a uniform pale yellow with purple arm tips to mottled yellow/purple. The underside of the arms and central disc are a uniform yellow.

It was most likely introduced into Australia through ballast water from Japan and was first confirmed in the Derwent River in Tasmania in 1992.

From the Derwent River, it is most likely the sea star travelled in the ballast water of a ship to Port Phillip Bay, where it was first confirmed in 1995.

In August 1995, the first adult northern Pacific sea star was caught off Point Cook in Port Phillip Bay. Despite a major effort to find and eradicate the sea star, only three more adults were found over the next 30 months.

Eradication efforts were not successful and, in 1998, there was evidence that the sea star was breeding in Port Phillip Bay. In January that year, four juveniles were found off Dromana and by the end of April, over



Mottled purple-yellow form of the northern Pacific sea star



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100 juveniles had been caught in the same area.

By February 1999 the sea star covered about a 100 square kilometre area in the eastern and central part of Port Phillip Bay. Baring some natural catastrophe, it seems they are here to stay.

Throughout their natural range, the northern Pacific sea star prefers temperatures between 7 and 10 °C, but has adapted to warmer waters (up to 22 °C) in Australia and other countries.

The sea stars prefer mud, sand or rocky habitats in sheltered areas of the intertidal zone down to depths of around 25 metres, and occasionally to 200 metres. They are not normally seen on reefs or in areas of high wave action. To date, none have been seen in the Ricketts Point Marine Sanctuary, although I have seen significant numbers on sandy substrates near Green Point, Brighton and the Sandringham breakwater

Juvenile sea stars grow rapidly, reaching sexual maturity when approximately 10 cm in diameter and around one year old. In south-eastern Australian waters, spawning occurs during winter when water temperatures are around 10 to 12 °C.



Eleven legged sea star

Females are capable of producing up to 20 million eggs each. After fertilisation the eggs develop into free-swimming larvae, remaining in the plankton for up to 90 days before settling and changing into juvenile sea stars. This long planktonic stage increases their capacity to disperse over a wide area.

Northern Pacific sea stars are also capable of growing a full body from a single leg, as long as a small portion of the central disc remains. Individuals live for up to five years.

Northern Pacific sea stars are voracious predators and will eat almost any animal they can capture.

In Australian waters they have been recorded feeding on a variety of native animals including shellfish (bivalve and gastropod molluscs, barnacles, crabs and other crustaceans), worms, sea urchins and other sea stars (echinoderms) and sea squirts (ascidians), although they seem to have a strong preference for shellfish.

Once alternative food sources have been exhausted, they can become cannibalistic. They can detect food from some distance away and will dig shallow pits to extract buried prey.



Zig zag sea star

The good — eleven legged sea star (*Coscinasterias muricata*)

As its name suggests, this sea star generally has eleven legs. Individual specimens however, can sometimes have between seven and eleven legs. This sea star (pictured below), can grow to approximately 40 cm from tip-to-tip. It is generally grey/green in colour and has spines along its legs.

The biggest I have seen were in the Jaw Bones Marine Sanctuary, during a Williamstown paddle. They are also common in the Ricketts Point Marine Sanctuary, where they can often be seen in the midst of a devastated mussel bed.

But, as is often the case in nature, they don't have it all their own way. A couple of years ago a ranger at the Queenscliffe Marine Discovery Centre showed us what happened when an eleven legged sea star was placed onto an abalone. The abalone spun its shell around, literally throwing the sea star off its back. Amazing really!

Zig zag sea star (*Uniphora graniifera*)

This species (pictured at left), closely resembles the northern Pacific sea star but lacks the pointed turned-up tips on its legs. The zig zag sea star has more rounded, blunter spines on its upper surface, and as the name suggests, these are often arranged in a zigzag-like pattern. It is most common on sheltered rock surfaces and is less common than the eleven legged variety.

So don't be in so much of a hurry to get from A to B that you forget to look at what you are paddling over. It's amazing what you can see on a quiet drift over a shallow piece of reef.

References: Northern Pacific sea star in Port Phillip Bay (Dept of Sustainability and Environment)

Australian Marine Life (Graham Edgar)

Sienna's paddle at Canadian Bay

We were paddling at Canadian Bay with lots of boats and I saw about 30 or 40 dolphins and Super Mouse came too. I dolphin came really close to me and made me jump. (nearly out of the kayak)

We stopped for lunch and shared some sandwiches and snacks and I tried my first red licorice. The day was really rough and cold and also when I fell asleep a wave would always come over in my face and make me wake up. I time a big wave went over my face and didn't wake me up. On the way back we caught some waves and were careful to not hit any rocks when we came back to the beach.



Snake Island paddle – 16 – 17 September 2006

by Greg Gleason

Participants:

Terry Barry – Arctic Raider, Derek Wilson – Raider X, Peter Dedrick – Southern Aurora, Raia Wall – Cortez, Neil Brenton – Nordkapp, Grant and Stephen Della – Homemade Selkie double, James and Harrison Bate – Mirage 730 double, Heather Bate – 530 single, Jarrod Frith – Greenlander, Tina Rowley and Nick – Mirage 730 double, Dana Halsvik – Mirage 19 and Greg Gleason – Raider X

I confess to some trepidation in preparing for the weekend. I had never been to the area, I had never been on an overnight paddle before, I had no experience in what to take and what to wear and, to cap it off, my kayak had spent all week at Canoe Innovations getting thigh braces and a pump fitted, so I didn't have any chance to practice packing my gear – scary.

However, with some advice from Peter Dedrick and Derek Wilson (with whom I regularly paddle when the Red Eye just isn't enough), I seemed to get it mostly right the night before, fingers crossed.

With David Moate's six stacker kayak carrier trailer behind, I set off at 5 am to collect Derek and Peter. We made good time to Port Welshpool, apart from two unplanned stops. The first was near Leongatha when I spotted three paddles skidding along the road behind us. Funny how the thought of a cattle truck running the paddles over can galvanise one into action! I did a sub 10 second 100 a la Matt Shirvington to grab them to safety (OK, perhaps not a la Matt Shirvington, but fast for me).

The second stop was near Toora to check the kayaks were still tied securely. They were, but Jarrod Frith was following at that stage, and he pulled up to see if we were OK. After a brief chat, we continued

to Long Jetty. Whilst packing wasn't quite as easy as it had been the night before, we were finally away.

The paddle to Snake Island was delightful. Light cloud and a very light breeze made for a comfortable paddle, and a slight aiding tidal flow did no harm. On the way down, I asked Grant and Stephen Della in the Selkie double how difficult it would be to find the track to the cattlemen's huts. Grant's response was that "Terry Barry and Peter Dedrick know this place like the back of their hand".

When we neared the shore, looking for the 'tell tale' upright post that marks the track to the huts, I realised how correct Grant had been.

We found the track first up, while I was still getting used to the incredible scenery. A short but testing struggle, gear laden, over about five dunes (one deserves to be called 'Coronary Incline') leads to an amazing sight, we walked out of the bush into the middle of 'The Man from Snowy River'.

With tents erected (why did Dana Halsvik set up so far away from everyone else? He said he is a light sleeper, but we suspect he eats baked beans), we climbed back into the boats for a sightseeing tour of the upper east coast of the Prom. We failed to make 3 Mile Beach, but alighted at a rocky headland to go exploring. I for one made the most of the 10 cm breakers to surf into the beach in fine style, the rest of the group showing they were completely underwhelmed.

Terry found a small cave system in the granite bluff that he then proceeded to explore. About three metres up the face, the cave system was occupied by a giant and very active bee colony. Cowardice runs strongly in my family. At my insistence, we looked elsewhere for entertainment, the

myriad bird, mammal and possibly reptile tracks in the low scrubby dunes providing an insight into the unseen faunal activity in these remote areas of the Prom.

On our return paddle, we encountered Sand Island on the rising tide, the centre being only 30 cm below the surface. A combination of tidal current and the small remains of Bass Strait swells makes for a fun ride through the middle of some very confused water.

Hugging the shore, we made our way back up towards Snake Island, meeting Derek Wilson, Peter Dedrick and Jarrod Frith. They had opted for 'nanna naps' and a walk respectively in lieu of Terry's guided tour but now, rested and ready, were out for a sightseeing trip across to the Prom and up to Bidy's Cove.

Evening meals were cooked as hog deer, kangaroos and a variety of bird life made the most of the dying sunlight. After a great night around the campfire, with a bottle of my single malt whisky 'doing the rounds', most had little difficulty getting a good night's sleep.

The morning ushered in another beautiful day in paradise. Breakfast menus ranged from 'continental conservative' to a range of exotic extremes. Packing up led us to another struggle, fully laden, across the dunes. With relatively practiced ease (I did say 'relatively', Tina) we packed and headed off.

A sightseeing tour extraordinaire ensued, the local bird lagoon, a huge emu strolling casually along the beach towards Bidy's Cove, the serenity of Bidy's Cove, Freshwater Cove and finally Tin Mine Cove, all interspersed with spectacular rock formations and shallow reefs teeming with aquatic life. About this stage, the wind died completely so our day's



paddling was almost entirely in dead glass conditions.

Lunch and some water aerobics at Tin Mine Cove ended with the loss of my prescription sunglasses in three metres of water. Ah well, they must have been well out of date by now. A comfortable paddle followed. Back to (and across) the channel for a visual feast – the shallow, crystal clear water revealing fish, reefs and plants etc.

Neil Brenton and I spent some time figuring out how power is supplied to the illuminated channel markers – turns out one of each pair has a solar panel, and we suspect there is an underwater cable across

to the other of the pair.

We disembarked at Long Jetty, packed up, said our goodbyes and, as we were driving away, it started to rain. Even the elements had been kind enough to hold off till we were safely under way.

As this was, at fifty-five years of age, my first such experience, I was (unkindly) dubbed 'the ultimate virgin'. I can state categorically that it certainly won't be my last such adventure.

Congratulations to Terry for a first class event (with the weather we had, he must have connections 'upstairs') and thanks to the senior paddlers whose support and advice was invaluable.



Towing

The tow rope and throw bag – an ideal formula:

Made from 15 m of 2 mm Venetian blind cord, quick release snap one end, shackle the other, flotation, visible and kept in a mesh throw bag. Why?

15 metres long

So all paddlers have towlines of uniform length. This enables paddlers performing a 'V tow' (refer below) to communicate easily as they are parallel to each other. It also keeps you a 'good' distance from the other kayak.

2mm thick cord

Thin enough to cut through the water with minimal drag. Strong enough to tow in all but severe conditions (ie: breaking waves or surf) in which case you do not wish to be attached by tow rope for safety reasons.

Quick-release snap

On the end of the cord used for attaching to the kayak you are rescuing. This will enable you to release their boat easily when safety is reached, or you are about to pass through a surf/dangerous area, especially if your hands are tired and cold. Stainless or strong plastic.

Shackle

This I have attached to the end of the cord that stays with the throw bag and is mounted onto an easily accessible and very secure mounting on your kayak, before you attach the quick release snap to the kayak in need of rescue. Stainless or strong plastic.

Flotation

I for one have watched my magnificent towline in its throw bag sink slowly to the bottom of the sea just out of my reach. Luckily it happened on a day when I did not need it. Tying around and then rolling

up around some high density foam or a cork sanding block will do the trick. It has to float in case you drop it, and it should be brightly coloured so you can see it to retrieve it if in a grey/black sea, or in surf.

Mesh bag

This allows the water to flow through it and will be less likely to wash off your deck, if under your bungees. Having it in a bag means you can bundle it up fast to get it out of the way in an emergency, rather than having to roll it up, although you may find that you need it several times over the space of a journey and getting knots out is not easy in rough water, so a rafting up for stability and coil it up neatly is a better option.

Accessibility

Make sure you can reach it easily when necessary. Either in your PFD, snapped onto your deck, or in your day hatch. No use in your front hatch, or even worse, the car.

In-line tow

Two kayakers with the tow rope clipped on the front of the trailing kayak. Suitable when the towed paddler is stable (otherwise use a raft and short tow, see issue 55). Suitable where mild seasickness, fatigue, injury, mild hypothermia or where there are no other options.

V tow

Method is per the in-line tow, but where two paddlers clip on to the front of the trailing kayak. They then fan out 3 metres to avoid clashing paddles. Again, this is used where the towed paddler is stable. This method enables the towing paddlers to discuss options and the towed paddler's condition whilst still making progress.

One paddler can easily drop back to check on the towed paddler. The only downside is that conditions may be difficult for both paddlers to be parallel to each other, ie: strong cross wind, or breaking wave caps.

Rafted tow

Here a second paddler rafts up with the towed paddler (possibly facing them, depending upon

their condition) to offer stability, assistance and reassurance. The third paddler does a single kayak in-line tow. If there are more than three in the group, either a V-tow, or a double in-line tow can be used.

A rafted tow is used where the towed paddler's physical condition is critical to their stability, they need to be monitored medically, the paddling conditions are well beyond their capability, or other similar circumstance. A prime example would be severe seasickness, where cramping is evident and assistance hydrating and staying upright is imperative.

The double in-line tow whilst being faster, is more difficult for communication on windy or rough days, and it is not so easy to have a paddler drop back to check on the towed paddler.

Rafted V tow or rafted double inline tow

These are fast and stable methods of towing. Little or no group speed is lost when a paddler is towed in either of these ways. A paddler needs to be rafted up and towed if their condition is critical enough to prevent them from paddling and to cause them to be unstable. Exit strategies to get the paddler off the water and to the safety of shore should also be explored at this stage.

Rotate your towing paddlers if you have a group and conditions allow, try not to exhaust your strongest members of the group as you may need their strength later.

Saving sea sponges

On many trips I've seen my sponge float away back to nature, so here is an old/new idea that has been floating around for a while (so to speak), which I thought I would bring to peoples' attention.

This is simply a small net bag available from a camping store (eg. a Sea to Summit bag) a cord and a C-clip to attach it to something in the inside of your cockpit.

Neil Brenton



Book review

“Deep Trouble” —true stories and their lessons

by Matt Bronze and George Gronseth

Paperback, 192 pages, publisher: International Marine/Ragged Mountain Press, 1997, ISBN: 0070084998

Available from some bookshops in Australia (try Borders or Readers Feast) or via the internet from Amazon (amazon.com) or *Sea Kayaker* magazine (seakayakermag.com) . Cost over the counter in Australia is about \$30. Cost from Amazon is about \$A33 including postage, cost from *Sea Kayaker* magazine. is US\$15 + postage.

Deep Trouble contains twenty real life accounts of sea kayaking accidents, some fatal, drawn from US magazine *Sea Kayaker* and based on interviews with accident survivors, witnesses, and rescuers.

Accidents described include surf zone incidents, capsizes and hypothermia to brushes with sharks and entrapment in sea caves. Settings are mainly coastal or offshore but also include a close call very near Manhattan Island.

In a number of cases, fatalities were only avoided because a boat ‘just happened’ to be passing by or someone on shore ‘just happened’ to be peering through their binoculars and, realising there was trouble afoot called the Coast Guard.

The circumstances of each accident are thoroughly described and followed by detailed analyses: what did the paddlers do wrong, what did they do right and most importantly, how might the accident have been prevented? The accounts are well written and extremely interesting, even enthralling at times.

Clear, useful maps are included along with thirty-six ‘sidebars’ generally giving good advice on equipment, techniques and improving your skills. The sidebar on page 88 discusses pumping out a kayak and mention is made of electric pumps and how paddlers in ‘Tasmania have used electric pumps for many years’. It’s surprising that in the US electric pumps are still not standard equipment.

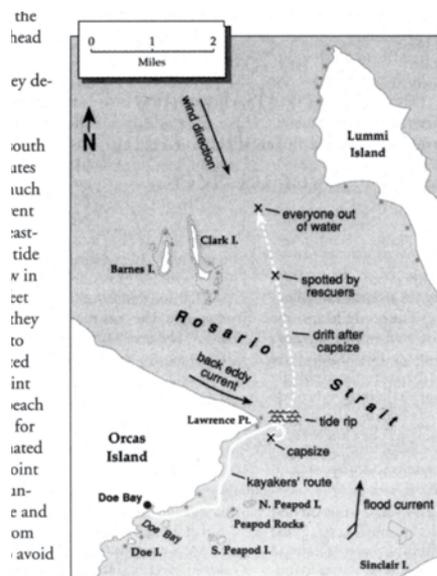
Some of the accounts are draw-dropping in how the basic fundamentals were ignored, taking raw beginners on dangerous open water crossings, not carrying pfd’s, paddles being lost because there were no leashes, boats without proper flotation and/or pumps. To mention just a few.

Something you realise when reading this book is that the VSKC is definitely ‘world’s best practice’ when it comes to safety and organising and conducting trips. Many of the accidents and incidents described here would be well nigh unthinkable on a VSKC paddle. This attests to, and justifies the high standards of equipment, skills, knowledge, experience and organisation that are the club norm.

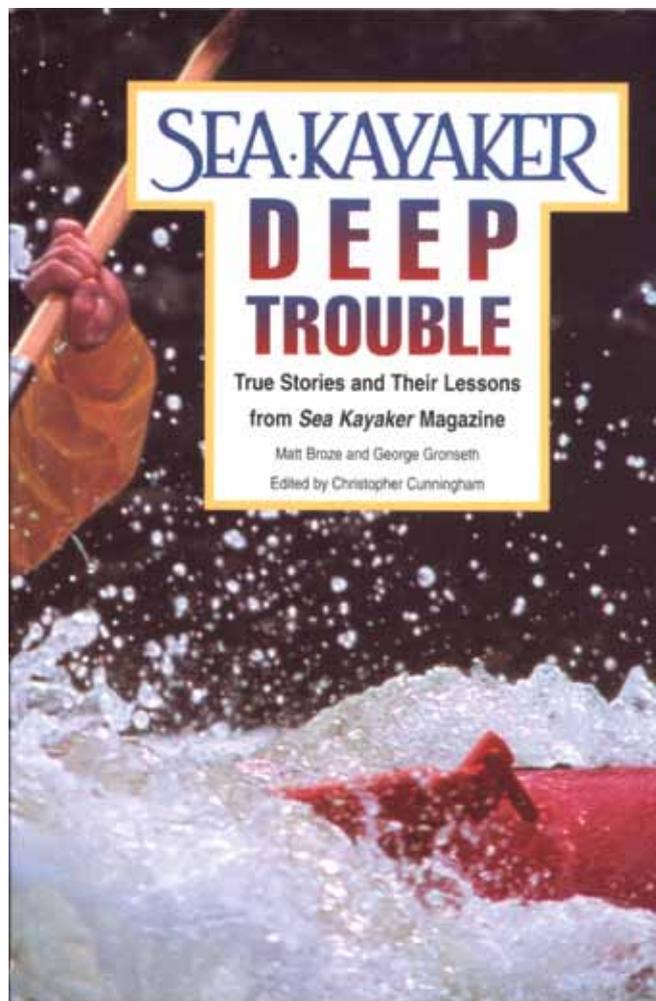
When I started sea kayaking, this was the first book I bought on the subject. As a pursuit with obvious inherent and significant risks, it seemed a good idea to focus on safety and how to avoid trouble from the very start.

I’ve never regretted the purchase and would strongly recommend this book to any sea kayaker.

It is hoped that future editions of *SeaTrek* will contain further sea kayaking book reviews. I would be grateful for any suggestions of suitable titles. These could be ‘old favourites’ or recent publications. Please email me with your ideas at



An example of one of the maps





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Mallacoota surf incident

On Saturday 22 July 2006 a group of paddlers led by a South Australian instructor attempted to paddle out from Mallacoota.

Around 2.00 or 3.00 pm, the group of five students arrived at the ocean exit to the Mallacoota lakes, intending to paddle through the surf, then east past Gabo Island and on to Howe Beach to camp the night. This was part of a Mallacoota to Eden trip, part of a TAFE course assessment. All of the students had previous sea kayaking experience, including in surf.

As part of the course, the students were leading and managing the trip. The instructor paddled out first and waited past the break zone. The rest of the group attempted to follow. Two capsized and exited their kayaks. One of these two ended up in the water for about 45 minutes.

The water was around 14°C. Wind at Mallacoota was light E and SE. Wind at Gabo Island was light NE, seas under half a metre, over a SE swell of under 2 metres.

The Mallacoota surf rescue boat was summoned by onlookers on shore. Andrew Mason, VSKC member, was observing the situation and after one of the capsized paddlers had not made it to shore after 20 minutes, made the rescue callout.

The police were contacted, ambulance alerted, and surf patrol came along in an

inflatable with motor. Andrew decided to enter the water and swim to render assistance. Andrew borrowed a wetsuit and PFD from the other paddlers on the beach. He swam to the paddler and arrived at around the same time as did the instructor. The paddler was put into his boat by the instructor. He was cold and shaken. The paddler again capsized. Andrew decided to return to the beach, angling away from a rip.

The surf boat was also capsized, righted but could not be re-started. An SES boat arrived and took the paddler to shore. Andrew was also picked up.

The group camped at Mallacoota for the night, not paddling again that day. They conducted their own discussion and debrief, launched the next day and completed the trip to Eden satisfactorily. They coped with larger surf later in the trip. From the instructor's point of view, the rescue had been called unnecessarily, while the students were still in the process of making several attempts to break out through the surf.

Comments:

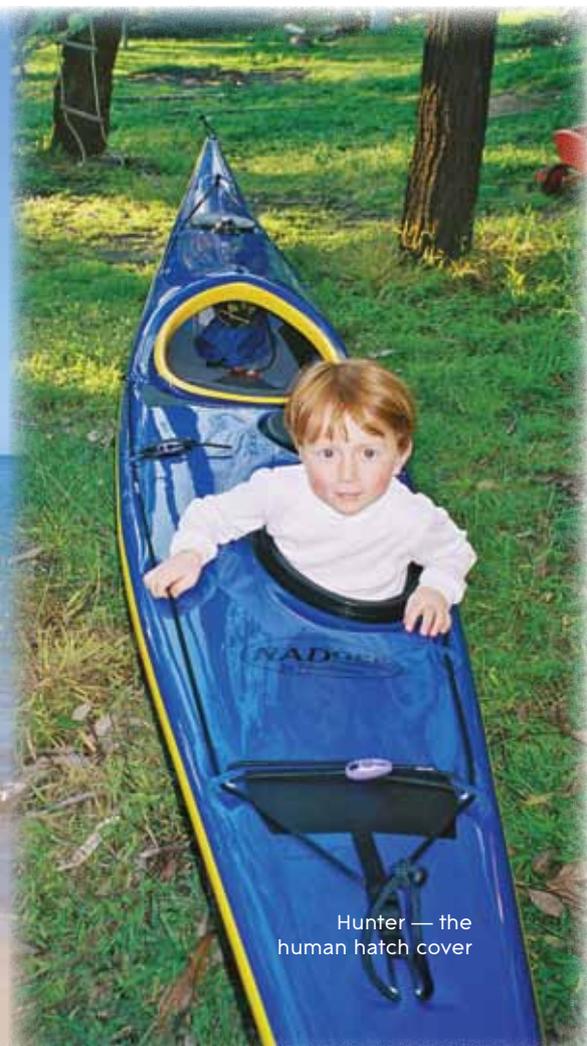
1. Consider having the strongest paddler the last to leave when launching through surf. The leader directs from shore, then launches last. This order can allow the strongest paddler to assist others launching, see events and assist more quickly with rescue if needed.

2. You need sufficient surf skills for the trip at hand. Ideally, a capsize in surf will be quickly corrected by rolling up. The situation always worsens when a paddler is out of his or her kayak.
3. It is not always possible or sensible to try and rescue others in surf. Those going to the rescue should not endanger themselves. It makes no sense to have the rescuers get into trouble.
4. Bearing this in mind, kayakers entering the surf need to have contingency plans for their own rescue. Before launching, spend some time studying the surf, noting rips, bars, break zones, how the situation changes with larger wave sets, and plan what will happen in the event of a capsize.

It may be best to swim the kayak to shore holding one end. The kayak will need end toggles which are proof against finger entrapment if the boat rolls. It may be best to abandon the kayak and swim for shore. The boat will usually wash up. Paddles should not be attached to the boat by a leash, which can wrap around the paddler, or tie the paddler to the kayak.

Since this event, Andrew Mason has been recognised for his bravery and is in line to receive a Royal Humane Society of Australasia Bravery Award, to be presented by the Governor of Victoria.

Sienna wonders "Where did you get the mirrors?"



Hunter — the human hatch cover

That Torquay incident — an extract

By Peter Dingle

The surf school incident at Torquay received a lot of publicity. According to the newspaper report (*Geelong Advertiser*, 5/4/2006), sixteen Year 9 students and four staff (two teachers and two West Coast Surf School staff), on Ocean sit-on-top kayaks, were blown out to sea (5 km) when the severe weather forecast arrived as predicted. They were rescued by observant rescue craft with the assistance of a helicopter. Their boats were lost to sea.

This article is an attempt to understand what occurred; through the eyes of the rescuers.

Before writing, I rang the director of West Coast Surf School in order to get the facts relating to two of his staff. He sent me an explanatory document and I was invited to contact him if I had further questions. He has since declined to talk further on the incident and declined permission to publish his letter. I find this understandable.

I then contacted two of those who were involved directly in the rescue, Marc Skelton of the Torquay Marine Rescue Service (as mentioned in the *Geelong Advertiser*) and Russell Clarke, referred to me by Marc. They were happy to tell their story, particularly if it would assist in the training of future ocean paddle leaders so that a repeat of this incident could be avoided.

Marc Skelton, of Torquay Marine Rescue Service gave the following information in a phone conversation on 11 July 2006.

Peter: Marc, can you tell me what happened on the day you were involved in the rescue of the group off Torquay?

Marc: I was called out at around twelve noon. There was a strong westerly offshore wind blowing. I went out in the Torquay Marine Rescue jet boat, accompanied by two towing jet skis (who raised the alarm). When we got to them their boats were tied together, students were both on the boats and in the water. The wind was blowing about 25 knots, offshore.

We brought in as many as we could carry on the first load. On our return trip, the surf club fortunately also assisted with two rubber ducks; we brought them all in. Just on reaching the beach, the weather turned wild. It began to blow 45–50 knots. If we hadn't got them in when we did, then we would have lost them for sure. There is no way they would have been able to hang on, stay together or survive in those conditions."

Peter: What were the conditions like at the time of rescue? Did you need the lights of the helicopter to be able to see during the rescue?

Marc: The visibility was very poor. There was heavy rain. We didn't need the lights of the helicopter, but if we did not have the helicopter hovering over them, then we wouldn't have known where to find them; the visibility was that bad.

After dropping off the second group of rescued students on the beach, the jet skis

went out to collect the kayaks, but the weather became too bad. The helicopter was keeping them in sight, but they eventually had to give up also. The jet skis struggled to get back as it was, for the wind was too strong, seas too rough and visibility too poor. They told me they couldn't see the shore when they were out there. The only way they knew which direction to go in was to head into the wind as it was offshore."

Peter: Do you remember what the weather forecast was on that day?

Marc: There had been a gale warning out on the news the night before and it was still current. Why didn't they take notice of it? The wind was blowing strongly from about 8.00 am that day and it would have been blowing 25 knots, offshore, when they left the beach.

Peter: "So, in your opinion, should they have been paddling that day?"

Marc: "No. They should have taken notice of the weather forecast. They should not have left the beach."

Peter: "How far out were they when you rescued them?"

Marc: "About 3–4 km".

Peter: "Did the leaders do a good job of looking after the group?"

Marc: "Having the boats all tied together was great. It made the rescue so much easier. They had the kids all calm and in good spirits. They did a good job."

Peter: Do you know if the leaders were experienced, trained or qualified in any way?

Marc: I've got no idea.

Peter: This is my first recollection of a rescue of this kind. Are you aware of any other rescues of surf schools along this part of the coast before?

Marc: None that I'm aware of. This rescue incident is the only one that I've heard of.

Peter: Have Marine Safety or the Education Department spoken to you?

Marc: Not yet. I believe Marine Safety Board want to interview me and the jet ski riders soon.

Peter: Did either the school or West Coast Surf School thank you or make any donations to the Torquay Marine Rescue Service for your efforts on the day?

Marc: No, neither has, as far as I'm aware.

Peter: Is there anyone else that we should speak to to get a clearer picture of what went on that day?

Marc: No, not really. I was right on it. It was pretty well me. You could though talk to the blokes on the jet skis. Try Russell Clarke.

I rang Russell Clarke, jet ski rider on 17 July to gain this account of the rescue at Torquay Beach of the West Coast Surf School on 4 April 2006.

Peter: Can you tell me what happened on the day?

Russell: I got a call-out from Jeff Sweeney through his wife, saying that a group of paddlers were being blown out to sea and could I help?

I knew immediately the seriousness of the situation. I had been out surfing at about 8.00 am that morning and the wind had been blowing 25–30 knots then. It wasn't a good day. I looked out the window and saw the front coming. I knew we had to act fast. I reckon I had the jet ski hitched up to the car and was down and on the water, heading out to them in under fifteen minutes. Jeff was there too.

We could not see the paddlers at all. We headed out to look. We found them about 4 km off shore. They were all rafted up, tied together. They had lost most of their paddles. They were all wearing PFDs.

Everyone was sitting on top, no one in the water. The leaders were in the middle, which I found a little strange. The kids were calm. I seriously didn't think they realized the gravity of the situation. We couldn't take them all in one go, so we asked for the weak swimmers first.

Jeff, in trying to rescue as many as he could, overloaded and capsized his jet ski. We eventually got back to shore, in around 25 minutes, me with three and Jeff extremely overloaded with four kids.

We got back out there again in 15 minutes, and we had two rubber ducks from the surf club follow also. I estimate that in the forty minutes between our two trips out, they had drifted about 1.5 km, that's how strong the wind was. We couldn't see land it was that choppy and getting rougher the further we went from shore.

We got them all in on the second trip.

Jeff and I went out to salvage the boats and I had one tied on. At the point of salvage, the cold front came through. I estimate the wind went to 40–45 knots. I immediately knew we should not be out here. I carry a knife for rescue purposes; I cut the boat free.

Jeff and I are pretty experienced. I've spent thirty years on the sea. We couldn't see where we were going, but knew where land was, but we still came in about 2–3 km away from where we thought we were aiming. The wind came from the WNW and hit us like a bomb. It was like a washing machine out there. The helicopter arrived and put its light on and escorted us in.

Peter's report of the Torquay incident continues with the conclusion of his interview with Russell and then discusses the lessons learned, lessons for all sea kayakers and their leaders.

Due to space restraints, the remainder of the report has been posted on the club's website www.vskc.org.au.

An encounter with a bhum of the sea

By Tony Chick
Pictures Peter Treby & Roger Taylor

The Rodondo Island trip

Peter Treby, trip leader	Nadgee
George Appleby	Pittarak
Roger Taylor	Nadgee
Tony Chick	Mirage 580

A visit to Rodondo Island has been on Peter Treby's agenda for some time.

I have been unable to find any account of Rodondo Island being visited under human power.

The only reference to be found on the net is of a Geelong College Ramblers' expedition, in January 1946, which lays claim to be the "first known landing and scaling of Rodondo".

To quote *Wild Life Magazine*, 1947 edition, "its sheer granite cliffs make landing a perilous task, as the waters are too deep to anchor in and no craft could be moored at the island, the expedition had to land in a small craft which was taken back to the

waiting larger vessel, which would return for them in eight days."

On Saturday 29 September 2006, the weather window looked very favourable, Peter declared the trip on.

I felt almost guilty doing this trip in the dead flat and calm conditions forecast, as Peter had made a solo attempt on Rodondo prior, only to be foiled by strengthening offshore winds. But I guess I will get over it.

In Victoria, Spring weather this stable is a rarity. The Australian pilot certainly does not rate Rodondo Island as user friendly.

The crew departed early, doing the boat drag down shallow Tidal River to the ocean.

All concerned are taking this paddle very seriously, all with full complement of safety gear, bivvy bags, food, water etc. At the days end, if we find ourselves somewhere other than our departure point, cannibalism would not become an issue.

On some trips, the journey is the attraction. Today for me, the focus was on the destination. Peter led the pod on the path of least resistance to Rodondo. Some mild rebound was encountered towards the bottom of the Prom, from which we angled offshore towards our goal.

As many may know, on a clear day, Rodondo from the Prom looks near enough to swim to. You can't!

I fancy myself as a reasonable judge of paddle distance. The sheer size of this rock throws your biological paddle distance meter right off the dial.

Marine charts denote an inshore shipping zone, lying between South Point and Rodondo Island. I wore my prescription ship spotting glasses especially for this occasion. All was going dandy, until spotted in the distant haze, loomed the biggest bhum in the ocean!

Container ship *Wana Bhum*, one of three oceanic Bhum sisters, is it heading dead at us? No speed limits out here, I don't think 20 kt is an exaggeration. A hasty conference, do we stay or do we go? Forward? Back? It's incredibly difficult to pick the path of a fast moving ship at distance. Something I for one have had little experience with.

Dolphins appear, possibly to intercept and play with the ship. We retreat slightly and she passes across our bow. Later, on analysing Roger's GPS track, there is a tight knot plotted in our otherwise straight and logical track, where the bhum crossed our course.



A close encounter with a Bhum of the sea

The next attraction is an immature black-browed albatross (probably third year i.e. 2+ years old).

As we drifted to within a few metres, it to be appeared at ease with our intrusion.

I guess at this stage of the paddle it could have probably taken us all on and won and it knew it.

There was another bird (adult at least fifth year or 4+ years old) on the water further away. There were some big gulls too at the same spot, the albatross-like adult Pacific Gulls.

George's ornithological talents come to the fore, he is quick to identify bird all sightings, later confirming with reference Prince, P.A. and Rodwell, S.P. (1994).

Ageing immature black-browed and grey-headed albatross using moult, bill and plumage characteristics. *Emu* 94 (4): 246-254.

Onward to Rodondo, up close it is even more impressive, very steep, high and imposing, wild and untouched. Deep, deep dark water. A solitary seal wallows by the granite.

Our fearless leader had a valiant and very optimistic attempt at seal landing, highly entertaining, no one expected the sea to recede so low. A steep backward slide, a boat and a half long resulted.

I'm claiming this as a nano landing on Peter's behalf, albeit brief. It may be a long time until another trail of finger nails and Nadgee gell coat are seen on Rodondo

Island.

A quick bite to eat in the lee. Much head twisting to the rocky heights followed. We explore further for a landing site, none was found. Roger checks out a small sea cave.

All are ecstatic at being in this special place, placing a hand on the rock becomes important. Time to leave.

On our return, a ship was again sighted on the horizon, this time the trajectory was clearly to be well away from our position, (relief). We sit and wait. Remarkable how fast these monsters travel in open waters.

The Prom gradually creeps back from the horizon, we set course for Anser Island to pull up in the lee for a five minute break, another beautiful spot. Landing is not really worth the grief, no weed on those sharp rocks, but do-able if you really had too though.

The return paddle to Tidal River is a cruise, George hoists his sail, the weather still holds near perfect.

We pull back into Norman Bay at 3.40 p.m.

As we tow our boats upstream in ankle deep Tidal River a woman approaches me saying, "That looks like hard work".

Eight hours in the saddle, an approximate 40+ km day, container ships, no this is the easy bit.

Thanks to Peter Treby for organising the perfect trip.



Trip leader Peter Treby

Training notes

The AGM is fast approaching, this will provide an opportunity for all of you waiting to be graded. The Training Committee will be running grading for all those interested in obtaining their grade 1 or 2 levels.

To assist in planning, please register your intention to be graded by emailing Terry tby@gwsc.vic.edu

Subject to interest, there will be a grade 1 intake, grade 1 grading trip, grade 2 intake and a grade 2 grading trip run at some stage over the weekend. Your next chance after this will be on the Labour Day long weekend in March, so don't miss this opportunity! Please make sure you bring your logbook and have your kayak up to club standards so as not to be disappointed.

The next grade 3 intake will take place sometime early in the new year, to be eligible for this you should ideally have a grade 2 certificate and have an extensive paddling experience in a range of conditions.

Positions on the 2007 training committee will be filled at the AGM, I would urge anyone willing to fulfil this vital role within the club to step forward. Ideally you should be an instructor (or a grade 3 wishing to go a step further) with a commitment to assisting others. After two years on the inaugural committee, setting

up the grading and standards, I intend to step down and assist the new committee as required.

Congratulations to the following members who have recently achieved the following grading:

Grade 3 – Neil Brenton

Grade 2 – Peter Dedrick, Jarrod Firth, Greg Gleeson, Derrick Wilson, Grant Della,

Patrick Platt Grade 1 – Stephen Della (our youngest graded paddler, well done).

Safe paddling
Terry Barry

VSKC skills training

This year's training group will conduct several days and weekend skill training trips to entertain and educate interested members. Members can view the three skill level requirements on the VSKC website, or contact the training group for copies to be emailed.

We aim to run the following:

- A one day surf skill session for sea proficiency/level three candidates, likely to be in early 2007
- A sea proficiency intake day, comprising half the day in off-water discussion, and half the day on the water
- A three day long weekend, 10, 11 and 12 March 2007, based at Cowes Caravan Park, 164 Church Street, Cowes, Phillip Island, telephone 5952 2211.

This weekend is for levels one and two training and assessment. If you are interested in this weekend, please book a campsite right now to avoid disappointment, and let the training group know what level training interests you.

- A one day surf assessment day for level three.
- A weekend assessment trip for level three.
- Further level one and two assessment at the November 2007 AGM

We can cater for up to say ten sea proficiency candidates, to ensure a high instructor to candidate ratio. A bit of action will be expected between intake and assessment, and the VSKC trip logbook given free to each member will help record the necessary trip experience.

Give it a go, you are sure to get cold, wet and bamboozled, and you might improve your sea kayaking ability!

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0418 507 828



Photo of the issue — Willi Wild in the surf

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