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# Sea Trek



Autumn 2013



Issue 76



## VICTORIAN SEA KAYAK CLUB

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VSKC paddle at the PROM

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## EDITORIAL



Summer in Melbourne is a great time for sea kayaking and this year has been no exception. The visit of Nigel Foster and Kristin Nelson in February continued the remarkable opportunity our club has to learn from some of the best international sea kayak coaches in the world. This issue of Sea Trek records some of the action of their visit together with an interesting interview.

Richard Rawling's reflection on his recent paddling trip in South America with his wife Helen is a terrific read as well and another example of club member expeditions well beyond the shores of Victoria. Add to these a wonderful mix of member yarns, trip reports and training tips and I'm sure you'll agree that this issue is a great read.

You'll also notice a new section in this issue, 'classic VSKC inventions'. Grant Stewart and I were out for our regular weekly paddle from Frankston when we came across Bill Robinson paddling out from Canadian Bay. As you do, we stopped for a bit of a yarn concluding with Bill offering an article on one of his fantastic sea kayak inventions. You'll read about one in this issue, and it's brilliant. Let me encourage you, whether with an invention article, trip report etc to put pen to paper and send it in to me. The article deadline for the next issue is the 1st June. Cheers, Bob



Greetings once again,

Many of you reading this will have had first hand experience of the successful visit by Nigel Foster and Kristin Nelson. The two weeks we had them with us, was a great success. If you missed out on a workshop with them all is not lost, as the 'Instructor Group' had a very enlightening and educational day with Nigel and Kristen and will be passing on their skills to members.



The club owes a great deal of gratitude to Rai Wall for coordinating the visit and to David Golightly and Heather Torbet, John and Tina Evertze for hosting Nigel and Kristen during their stay. Without this support we would not be able to enjoy such visits.

Thank you to those members who returned the survey on this visit. The committee will use this valuable feedback when considering any future visits from overseas coaching experts.

I'm very excited to announce that we have had great success in initiating a National get-together of state sea kayaking clubs- named the '2013 Australian Sea Kayak Clubs Networking Summit'. This

meeting of the senior committee members of the clubs has great potential to influence the future direction of the VSKC (and other clubs as well).

Representatives from the Queensland Sea Kayak Club, the Tasmanian Sea Canoe Club, the New South Wales Sea Kayak Club and of course the VSKC will be spending an extended long weekend on Snake Island in April to chew the fat and see what we all have in common and what we can share with each other. To my knowledge this will be the first meeting of this kind. I will be joined by Raia Wall as representatives of the VSKC and we look forward to giving you a report on the content and outcomes of this meeting in the next Sea Trek. Bob Fergie has agreed to act as facilitator for the summit.

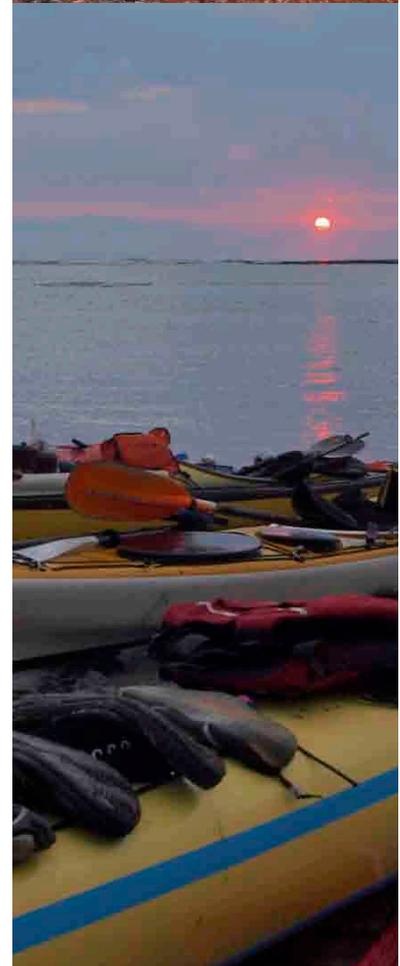
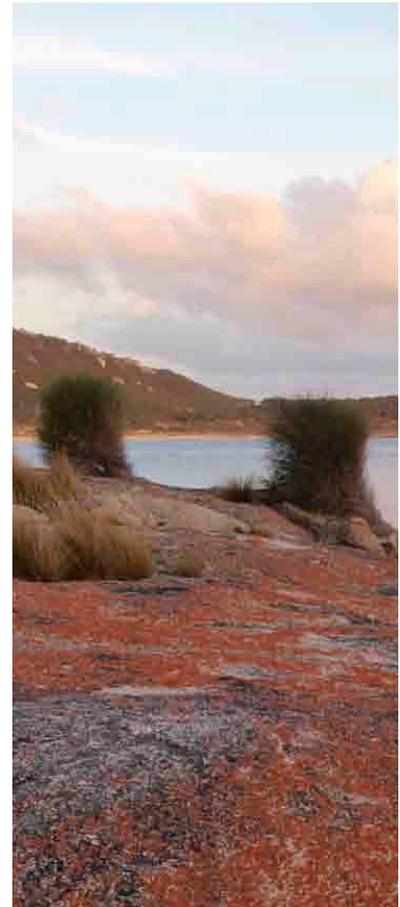
A very successful promotional day was held on the Gippsland Lakes at Paynesville recently. This day was organised by John and Anne Woolard after John noticed a need for information on safe sea kayaking in the area. The day was supported by The Gippsland Kayak Company who supplied a fleet of kayaks for trial paddling. Many thanks to John and Anne for all the work put into making this a success.

The committee has agreed on a set of guidelines for future life membership nominations and we intend to sign off on this at our meeting on the 25th March. It will then be available on 'Documents and Downloads' on the web to all members.

If you haven't noticed already there is a full years paddling calendar up on the web- just click on the link at the top left hand corner of the calendar and it will expand to show the full year. Much effort has gone into organising both a monthly paddle and a monthly training paddle throughout the year. Please support this by participating as much as you can.

See you on the water

Terry Barry  
VSKC President



## NIGEL FOSTER AND KRISTIN NELSON'S VISIT-FEBRUARY 2013



For the third year in succession, the VSKC hosted another world renowned paddler. Nigel Foster along with his wife Kristin Nelson spent a very much appreciated two weeks with the VSKC in Melbourne.

They presented a most interesting talk at Mordialloc Yacht club covering their more recent adventures paddling around Baffin Island, Ungava and Labrador. Well over one hundred VSKC members attended this collegial event.

During subsequent days they offered a range of paddling skill classes which all filled to capacity. They also spent a day working with club instructors helping them fine-tune their paddling skills and instruction methods.

All-in-all their visit was a great success according to VSKC President Terry Barry. Many thanks to all who helped organise the visit.







**Special Highlights**

*Kristin:* I was really, really impressed with the Friday night gathering of people who came to the talk. People were so warm, open and friendly and asked questions and were interested in what we had to share. Then we got to see many of those people later in paddling classes and other social occasions like the social paddle to Point Nepean, and the BBQ at Terry Barry’s home.

While I enjoy paddling in and of itself, the more interesting thing for me is the interesting people you meet and the places you get to see that make paddling in little boats so appealing. Our social paddle out of Sorrento was fascinating in this regard as we listened to people like Bill Robinson and Terry Barry explaining some of the unique history of that area, seeing the lime kilns and Couta boats. Similarly we really enjoyed seeing the Paul Caffyn plaque and Maritime museum at Queenscliff highlighting again some of the significant kayaking history associated with Melbourne.

Certainly this is another one of the pleasures of sea kayaking with the richness of appreciating affinities with the past in spite of the different cultures and traditions. These insights from the past continue to influence and inspire us and other kayakers today. Without question there is so much to learn and appreciate from sea kayaking.

*Nigel:* When I was a kid my earliest paddling experiences were paddling in places like Black Rock



and Brighton in England. Staying with David Golightly and Heather Torbet in Melbourne’s sea side suburbs of Black Rock and Brighton brought back great memories for me, except here it was sandy beaches and warm days, and little beach huts that welcomed us. Then hearing from David Golightly of the Port Phillip Bay paddling pastor from the past, Reverend Frederick C.B. Fairey was fascinating, especially given that his birthday is the same as mine. He came out from England in 1876 and started his paddling experience here, just as this trip has been my first paddling experience in Australia. So for me it has been nice to have those little connections from home.

**Kayaking pleasures**

*Kristin:* What I like most about sea kayaking is being on the ‘living’ water. Once I was in a museum in Prague watching a video of a pulsating heart. It reminded me of what it’s like being on the ocean moving up and down in sync with the rhythms of the giant swell. I love that feeling. It’s kind of a metaphor for life Bob reminds me.

Getting to know Nigel over the years also reminds me of the grace of movement possible in paddling sea kayaks. It’s kind of a groove sport and I like getting in sync with waves. I think it is sensuous and I don’t like to muscle the paddle even in heavy weather. I love to feel the harmony with the elements that is possible with subtle paddling strokes and body balance even in rough water. There is a real serenity about being in the middle





of white water tidal race chaos and yet be able to sit almost motionless on the fast flowing wave with little more than subtle edging adjustments.

**Nigel:** Sea kayaking for me was a way of getting out beyond the edge of the land. Sometimes life is all about those moments when one can stand at the edge of the business and chaos of city life and look out beyond the shore. For me, the kayak was a tool to get out on the sea without being in it. I don't really enjoy swimming that much, but floating around with just a thin watery skin in-between earth and sky is special.

I'm fascinated by this amazing impact zone where all the moving energy of the sea collides with the shore line, and its possible to be comfortable on it, and in harmony with it, all with minimal exertion. This really captures my fancy. It's like stepping just beyond the edge and being able to see both ways—the vastness of the sea and the comfort of the land. It's being so close to danger, yet safe. I try to learn from being in chaos--to understand it and operate safely in it. This way I learn to be in control, discovering in the process that often chaos isn't as intimidating as it may first appear most of the time (yet another metaphor for life).

**Kristin:** There's also something called balance. Nigel and I are both a little 'tippy', and when I met Nigel his kayaks were often considered tippy. Really though, a better description was that they were very responsive. Some of my ceramics and pottery are a bit tippy too, and I don't mind putting them just on the edge of the table. In that way we are both testing balance and finding the balance necessary to stay up-right.

While I enjoy being able to roll a kayak, I enjoy even more the ability to be in rough agitated water and yet remain in relaxed balance--another one of those harmony things. I also enjoy standing up in kayaks, something I never would have learned or wanted to do before

meeting Nigel. Again, its the joy of learning to balance in challenging circumstances that intrigues me. It's important to have balance in your life, like with the physical and the intellectual and I am never completely happy if I'm just doing one and not the other. Maybe that draws in the historical things that along side the physical paddling makes it for me.

Also I find it interesting for me to have a balance between city life and wilderness life. I really like being out in the wild in my little tent and making extended journeys in my kayak. I also find it very interesting coming into port and relate back to that dimension of contact with people.

**Nigel:** I did a solo trip once in the south of England, paddling at night in pretty cold late autumn-early winter conditions and I was coming to that point where I wasn't going as far as I wanted to because the daylight was running out. So I just kept carrying on into the night. The moon came up and then the magic of the slither of light running to me from the low-lying moon ahead. I seemed like I was paddling on this narrow pathway of light all on my own. It struck me that there could have been a million other people out there, all with their own parallel but unique and individual river of light (another metaphor of life, notes Bob).

## Kayak coaching

**Nigel:** What I enjoy most about coaching sea kayakers is seeing their techniques improve so that with greater balance they gain greater control of their kayak with less energy output and small subtle paddle nuances. I love seeing their joy as they discover they can do it.

**Kristin:** I also love to see people grow, but as a women who has never had children myself I never thought I'd be a teacher. However, Nigel has encouraged me in this, enabling me to experience the joy of instructing others. There is a nice fulfilment in sharing the work of helping people learn. I find that

kayaking is very personal to many people and when you can help some individual find personal success (without the added pressure of necessarily competing with others) there is a great sense of satisfaction and pleasure.

*Nigel:* I would say a really good kayaking instructor/coach should know not only the strokes and moves to make the kayak work, but also what it is to be in a differently shaped kayak with a different paddle, in differing conditions to make the kayak's moves work. However, it is also essential to know the different ways that people learn. You can be an exceptional paddler but if you don't understand individual learning styles you're not going to be able to put across any message whatsoever.

So above all, kayak coaching requires an understanding of people and what makes someone happy to learn and what puts someone off. Ideally you want to be able to make someone happy to learn and enjoy and appreciate for themselves without being told the little advances they make in their performance and their own understanding of what they are trying to do.

*Kristin:* I think it is also important not to focus on what you can do (as an instructor) but on what the student is trying to achieve, and with this to help them in their endeavor. It's a surrender of ego, a helping giving thing. It's also not a set monotone curriculum either, set in stone with no room for flexibility. A good coach is able to adapt to each student and bring a customized richness to the learning process.

## Cutting edge gear

*Kristin:* One of the significant new developments in sea kayaking technology in recent times I think has been with Nigel's new 'Nigel Foster Air' paddle. I've used all sorts of paddles in the past, but since recently switching to this new paddle I have found that it has helped me improve my forward strokes. I think it is cutting edge in subtle

ways. It's neutral in buoyancy (much like a 'stick', Ed.) so that it doesn't respond till the paddle gives it the cue. It finds a natural and neutral position on its own. It is also a large blade, meaning that it doesn't need to be too long in order to get a good catch. The shortness of the blade also helps you do some of the more subtle maneuvering-directional strokes more easily.

*Nigel:* My latest blade is designed to be angled onto the water when you are bracing for balance. When your moving it doesn't drag in the water so that you hardly feel that its there because it sits in a neutral position of its own accord. When angled however from neutral it gives a lot of secure support. When you do engage it it has a lot of power.

For me though as a designer of a range of kayaking boats, paddles and accessories, I'm always trying to come up with something new that helps improve performance so I'm always fine-tuning my designs. Its been encouraging to see how some of these innovations have been picked up and incorporated into contemporary designs around the world as has been the case with my Whisky 16 kayak design for example (with its rough water performance capacity). Now we're seeing a rash of new designs based on my design by many of the major kayak manufacturers.

## 'Sticks' resurgence

*Nigel:* I think there has been a little bit of a resurgence of traditional kayaking in recent years. However, this has been more associated with a focus on rolling rather than hunting or long distance expeditioning. Rolling competitions were not really part of the traditional Inuit's kayaking rhythm.

But anything that's fun and helps people learn skills is really good. Greenland paddles can be used in different ways and some of the more powerful ways are not necessarily traditional. This is kind of fun too, because it's pushing the sport in new and challenging





ways that can reflect a good deal of forward thinking. I had my first Greenland style kayak and paddle back in the early 1970s but I never really got to grips with how to get the best out of the paddle until I understood how paddles work in water. Coming back to it later saw me using it way better.

### On the VSKC

**Kristin:** I would say the VSKC is obviously a good club with lots of energy and effort. Just being a woman (but not an ultra-feminist), I think it would be nice to see more women in your club. Maybe helpful toward this end would be a more low key graduated, less competitive program that might attract more women, especially wives of guys who paddle. I also think that women are very capable, but often the way we like to learn things is different-- little more by observing and taking small steps rather than plunging in. Often women like to give more time to judge and consider paddling before deciding to commit to it.

**Nigel:** Many clubs start with a small youngish group of people who enjoy paddling together. As the club grows, that initial organism often evolves into a more highly organized group with rules and regulations etc. Unfortunately, unless new blood are encouraged to join, the club will fizzle out in time as the earlier founding fathers 'rest

with their fathers', so to speak.

Getting younger teenage people involved is a necessary strategy if a club is to continue on in time. In my own experience, I grew in my kayaking interests through the Scouts organisation together with my older brother. It could be that a club like the VSKC could develop particular programs catering for this teenage group. This will help with the regeneration of life within the club rather than the death of one generational group and the establishment of a new and separate organisation with no generational links to the past. There is a cycle of both in clubs I've seen around the world and the VSKC would do well to give some thought to ways of growing the club through inter generational initiatives perhaps. Further to this, I think that a key to longevity for any club has much to do with an openness to new things.

For me on this trip, I had my first experience with kayak sailing down in Tasmania and this was wonderful. Australia (and NZ too) more than many other countries where I have taught have developed these sorts of transferable developments. The truth is, there is so much to learn from others if we have an openness to learn. I think this is one of the obvious strengths of your club.

In subsequent issues, I hope to include additional insights from Nigel and Kristin, (Ed.)



## VSKC MEMBER YARNS

### A passion re-ignited

Peter Newman



I would like to start this article by thanking the VSKC for granting life membership to me and the other founding members of the club.

It is an amazing coincidence that after a nearly 30 years absence from the sport this bit of news came at the precise moment I had started to think about getting back into it again. I was really pleased – perhaps as you read this you will begin to appreciate why.

Kayaking for me was once a way of life. Perhaps in the same way surfing is a way of life. I wasn't the best kayaker in the land, but that is neither here nor there if you are doing something you love.

Kayaking was a love affair that started when I was about 14. Dad took me to the Melbourne International Boat Show. And that's where I saw it, in a display hidden



away in one of the far corners of the Exhibition Centre. Hidden behind the expensive motor cruisers and yachts, was the stand of the Avoncraft Canoe Company. Among the boats they so proudly had on display was a beautiful magenta coloured single man kayak

they called the Penguin. A kayak which by today's standards was just about good for nothing – except for having fun in (which really is what it is all about isn't it?).

I have no idea why Dad took me to the boat show that night. I don't remember expressing a desire to take up yachting, and certainly our family circumstances meant owning a yacht was never going to be an option. But anyway, when I saw that magenta kayak I was smitten. Before long I had Dad driving me down a bush track at the back of Carrum Downs to the humble resin-reeking abode that was the international headquarters of Avoncraft Canoes (run by Mike Orchard). Someone else had by this time bought the magenta kayak of my dreams, so I paid a deposit for a boat to my own colour specifications – a rather tasteful (perhaps tasteless) lime green and black number.

That kayak became the source of endless fun on our family holidays at Phillip Island where I was under strict instructions not to venture beyond the strip of coast from Ventnor to Cowes, although the odd trip further afield did happen when no one was looking. And then there were countless Bay trips with other kayak owning friends. From our home base of Ricketts Point to Patterson River it was possible on occasions to catch a wave of sorts in addition to the odd ear and throat infection. I don't think anyone really thought of it in terms of sea kayaking *per se* back then. It was really just a case of paddling your kayak on the sea. But when I think about it now, that kayak was in fact my first sea kayak.

For a long while, the lure of the rivers took over and the sea was forgotten. Poor Dad who really would have loved to watch his son play football and cricket was relegated to endless hours of car shuffles and endless waiting for the kayakers to reappear. I didn't think at all about paddling on the sea, until I became

aware of a great adventure being had by a couple of blokes who were doing a circumnavigation of Tasmania. Earle Bloomfield and John Brewster were their names. Once they completed the trip they hit the lecture circuit and I went along to hear them speak at the Camberwell Town Hall. And there in the foyer were their expedition boats. Nordkapps they were, designed by Frank Goodman the owner of Valley Canoes in the U.K. for an expedition he took part in to the northerly tip of the Norwegian Coast – Cape Nordkapp.

Well, in the same way that that



magenta Avoncraft captured my imagination, so too did those Nordkapps. They really looked the part with their fitted bulkheads, compasses, safety lines, deck bags and hand pumps. And all covered in sponsorship and destination stickers. Imagine what you could do with a boat like this I thought. And before too long, I'd added one of these to my collection.



That Nordkapp of mine was the best money I ever spent. It was the means to many a great adventure and epic: down the west coast; down the east coast; around Phillip Island; and how many times I did that classic trip from Port Welshpool to Sealers and Refuge I can't really remember. If only I had



kept a diary! The trips continued: Flinders Island; the Hunter Island Group; the Nadgee Coast--great adventures all of them! And I met some great people, some like Laurie Ford who I have recently made contact with again after all these years and who I am pleased to say are still out there doing great stuff.

So why did it stop for nearly 30 years? Well, it's lots of things: overseas postings (not much paddling of any description to be had in the middle of Saudi Arabia - although what flowed down one of those wadis during the one and only rain event during my time there did get me thinking); work commitments; marriage and then helping your kids achieve their dreams, have all taken me away from the sport I once loved.

Then one day I opened up a Wild Magazine and there was a story about someone I used to occasionally paddle with (John Wilde) who had just completed a trip down the Tassie West Coast. This guy is a couple of years older than me and here he was still at it. Good for him I thought. Then I went and saw Storm Riders at the movies about Tom Carroll and Ross Clarke-Jones, a couple of surfers in their mid-50s who are out there trying to ride the biggest waves. That got me thinking as well and I realised that if you have a passion for anything then you really should make a point of doing it.

So I typed in the magic words 'sea

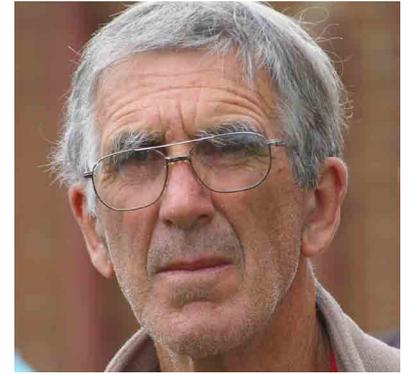
kayaking' into the web browser and that took me to the VSKC website. And there, lo and behold, were all these amazing reports about trips you guys have been doing including Bass Strait. It was one that I never did do but would liked to (it seemed quite an out there trip to contemplate back when I was paddling, but is apparently now quite commonplace). All these great trips, and I've missed them all! Then, as I said at the outset, came your invitation to rejoin the club. What perfect timing!

Anyway, it's great to see the club is thriving. The spirit of adventure lives on and I'm really grateful to be invited back as a life member despite not paddling for so long. What a great re-introduction to VSKC paddling when, on Tuesday the 12th February 2013 I had the good fortune to be paddling with Nigel Foster and Kristen Nelson. Their talk the Friday before about Nigel's Iceland expedition and their joint expedition along the coast of Northern Quebec was so inspiring. It certainly was a pleasure to paddle with these true lovers of the sport. It was just great to get back into a boat and see so many others of all ages (admittedly all over 40 it seems) and abilities enjoying themselves.

This is a great sport and I hope to be able to participate and contribute to the club in years to come. Thanks again for inviting me back.

## The new 'Julian' class kayak

by Bill Robinson



Julian was my land crew for the Murray marathon this year-----it must have inspired him as he has designed a new kayak to compete in the 2013 marathon After the marathon we went back to our property at Nagambie on the Goulburn river and he brought with him just four of his collection of forty chain saws

For two days he worked on the herculean task of crafting a superb kayak out of a century old poplar that had fallen in to the river

I attach a photo of Julian paddling his masterpiece



Julian comments-----

It is a little bit too heavy (8 tonnes), but when you get it going it has plenty of momentum.

The seating is a bit uncomfortable

I have not rolled it yet as it has a 1 tonne keel of a branch underneath, but watch this space---as rolling supremo of the VSKC no boat has ever beaten me

This boat looks like a certainty for handicap honours in the next Murray marathon

## The wash up

Peter Treby



The following appeared on the 3AW website 10 January, 2013 - 10:40 AM

<http://www.3aw.com.au/blogs/breaking-news-blog/suspected-missing-kayaker-found-safe-and-well/20130110-2chqi.html>  
Suspected missing kayaker found safe and well

Victoria Police has thanked 3AW after it was established the owner of a yellow, single-person kayak found washed up on Hampton Beach was safe and well.

It's believed the male owner of the kayak rolled out of his vessel after being hit by two-metre waves while fishing 50 metres offshore, but was able to swim to shore while wearing a life jacket.

Police launched a search over concerns for the welfare of the kayak's owner this morning, with the Air Wing and Water Police trawling waters of Hampton Beach.

A yellow single-person Kayak was found washed up 100 metres west of the local lifesaving club at around 7am, while fishing gear was also located last night. Police had hoped the owner might have left his belongings behind to pick up during daylight hours.

It's understood the owner of the kayak was contacted by people who heard the alert on the Justin Smith [3AW] program.

### COMMENTS:

1. A two metre wave, 50 metres offshore at Hampton Beach seems a possible exaggeration.
2. It can cause unnecessary efforts by Police if unattended kayak and gear are left on a beach.
3. Some means of showing that the paddler/owner is safe would save such trouble. For example, a note could be attached. Similarly, a sea kayak left on the beach could have its spray skirt or cockpit cover attached and closed to indicate all is well with the paddler.
4. The kayak could be tied to a solid object.
5. Local Police could be informed that the kayak is intentionally left on the beach, and the owner safe.

## The paddle of shame

Tony Chick



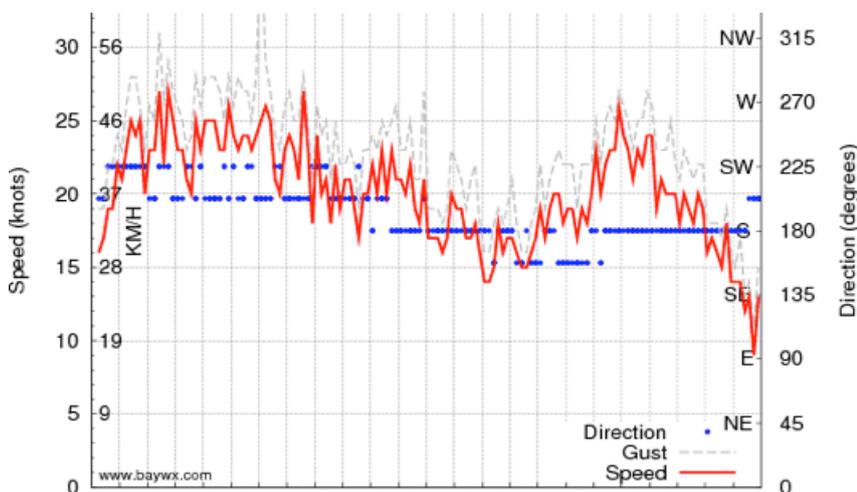
In breaking news, another kayak incident has occurred, adding to the long list of sea kayak sagas on the West Coast. This once respected local pod has once again brought sea kayaking into disrepute-this time for involving Marine Rescue Services in a case of "tired arms"

Tony C's son Tim happened across the hapless paddling bunch while doing training manoeuvres on the Torquay Marine Rescue Jet Ski. "I've never seen anything like it," he later explained. "A bunch of kayakers paddling all tied together nose to stern". "My training kicked in", "I offered assistance to the female in the centre of the tangle, she looked stressed." She told me in no uncertain terms that she was okay and to "see xxxxx at the rear". (We shall refer to him as Mr G).



"My arms are sore" he squealed. Mr G was last seen clinging feebly to the rear of a big black jet ski like a soggy koala speeding off for a long ride back to his car. The pod was stunned!

An embarrassed trip leader, Mr Evertze completed this paddle of shame, towing a now skipperless kayak back to Torquay. Mr Evertze has been unavailable for comment. Local paddlers are left red faced.



Rumor abounds that Mr Murray had his new go-pro camera in stealth mode so this whole sorry affair may have been captured on film!



Mr Murray is currently in negotiation with the victim and was unavailable for comment.

## Padding with the grandkids

Bob Fergie

I always knew being a grandpa would be good, just not this good. My wife Doseena and I have three of the little nippers (8, 4.5 and 1.5 yrs old). The two youngest (Arieta and Samuel) live close by and so we get to see them often and enjoy paddling together.



Our third and eldest grand daughter (Marley) lives in Cooloom on the Sunshine coast of Qld and we don't get to see her that often. However, earlier this year we visited Marley and took her paddling on a number of occasions over a week or so. She had a ball and took to kayaking like a duck to water.



## VSKC Paynesville PR

Anne Woollard



24 February 2013 saw VSKC members Terry Barry, Bob Fergie, John and Anne Woollard along with Glenn and Brett from Gippsland Kayak Company on the shores of the Gippsland Lakes to promote safe Kayaking on the Gippsland Lakes. Glenn and Brett had kayaks and gear for participants to have a paddle while John, Terry, Annie & Bob talked to people about the VSKC, kayaks in general and safety and had their boats on display. Transport Safety Victoria also came to speak to VSKC to determine their views on kayak safety as the peak recreational sea kayaking organisation in Victoria.

We estimate approximately 50 people visited with a large number of them experiencing kayaking in GKC kayaks, many for the first time. Some local folk came along with their own kayaks and others with an interest in sea kayaking came from as far away as Traralgon and Omeo as a result of hearing my husband John interviewed on the local ABC radio! Paddling safely on the Gippsland Lakes will continue to be promoted through the VSKC website.



Bob was active on the water giving a fine demonstration of rolling and paddle strokes and by the end of the day two paddlers were well on the way to rolling.



Apart from achieving our aims to promote kayaking, safety, and the Gippsland Lakes we experienced another pleasant interlude with VSKC members, enjoyed a glorious Gippsland day with a background of music from the Paynesville Music Festival.

This event was supported by Gippsland Kayak Company, Flat Earth Sails, ABC Radio Gippsland, East Gippsland Shire and Bairnsdale



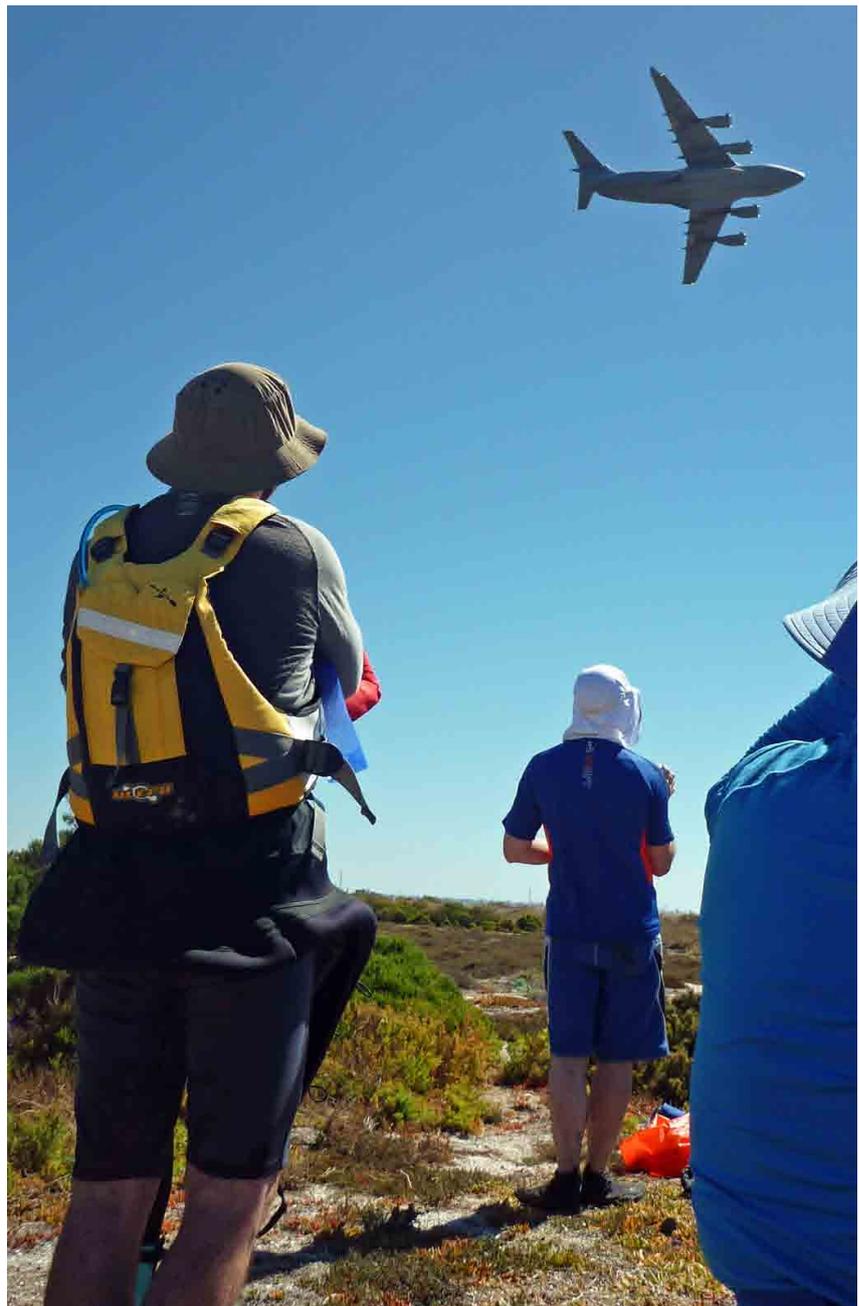
## **A sensory journey on Corio Bay: an introduction to VKSC**

“When nothing else subsists from the past, after the people are dead, after the things are broken and scattered...the smell and taste of things remain poised a long time, like souls...bearing resiliently, on tiny and almost impalpable drops of their essence, the immense edifice of memory”

Marcel Proust

I think I need to start this account by making it clear that I like aeroplanes and flying almost as much as I like kayaking, especially the hot towels and champagne they give you just after take-off. Actually, that only ever happened once when I got unexpectedly upgraded, but it's a persistent fantasy. So I jumped at the chance to do the Airshow paddle on March 3rd as my introduction to VKSC. The idea was to paddle from the entrance to Limeburners Creek on Corio Bay around to a point off the end of the Avalon runway and take advantage of the “incredible aviation action”, then return sometime in the late afternoon.

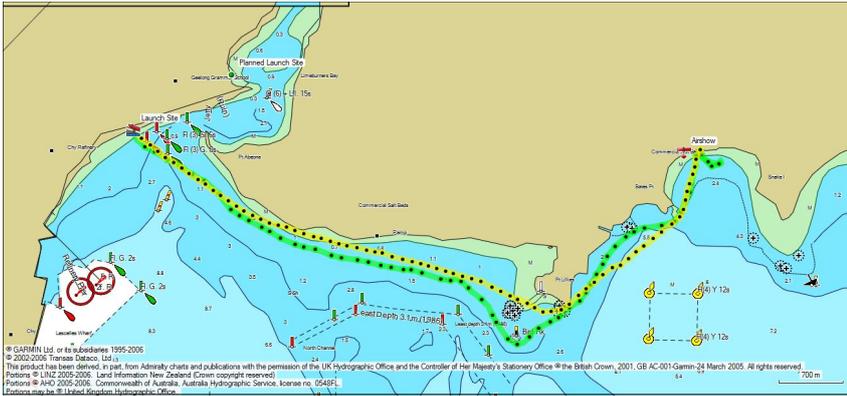
With the setting off point being adjacent to Geelong Grammar, I was hoping for a well-groomed strand with colourful pavilions and maybe the odd servant hanging about with a hot towel and champagne – sorry, I did say it was a persistent fantasy – but actually the boat ramp runs more to piles of smelly, dead seagrass with a backdrop of oil storage tanks. Nevertheless it was a very friendly group who introduced themselves before we heard David's briefing and set out on a flat calm bay. The route was along the north coast of Corio Bay, past the curious settlement of Avalon Beach to Point Lillias. I've plonked around in Corio Bay a bit in a boat, but I always steered clear of the north shore because of the abundance of poorly marked rocky hazards. However in a kayak these



don't matter and with the calm, clear, sunlit water this section was a pleasant journey over gardens of sea grass interspersed with seaweedy reefy bits and occasional sand patches. You hear seagrass beds described as important nursery areas for sealife, but in the bright sunlight this was clearly evident in the shoals of tiny fish darting about. The sandspit between Point Lillias and Bird Rock had just enough water to negotiate (although some chose the longer way round), then we headed into the bay past Bates Point. Here there was a scene of general bacchanal, with the bay

full of jet-skis (Why is it that when the police bust a Hell's Angels headquarters they always take away jet-skis?) and what my father would have referred to as “floating gin palaces” who had also taken the opportunity to see the Airshow on the cheap.

At this point the trip plan came a bit unstuck. The idea was to land on the beach at the head of the bay, and while you could see the beach there was a zone of barely submerged seagrass followed by an even wider strip of mud to be negotiated to reach it. There was a sug-



gestion that we have lunch standing in the water (I think this was said in jest, but it did have some appeal), but in the end we dragged the boats up onto the somewhat drier mud and then squelched up to the beach. I have walked extensively in Tasmania and regard myself as a bit of a mud aficionado, in my own small way, and I have to say that the Corio Bay mud is a leader in the smell department. If there was a Mud Olympics it would win gold in the smell division easily. The beach overlooked an area of samphire scrub and a channel from the old salt-works (which contributed it's own powerful smell with overtones of ammonia), with the Avalon runway a kilometre or two away to the north-west. The "beach" proved to be an extensive shell midden made up of cockles harvested from the mud, which was a reminder that despite its superficial deficiencies as a seaside resort this had been a highly valued venue long before

anyone thought of Airshows.

We had had an introduction to the Airshow while we were still on the water in the form of a fly-past by some historic planes, then a performance of aerobatics by one of the new F22 Raptors. On the beach we watched an old Super Constellation, then an enormous Globemaster, interspersed with aerobatic demonstrations of the "I bet you think I'm going to crash this time" variety. From time to time the air was refreshed by wafts of burnt jetfuel which added to the general odour overload. Incidentally, did you know that weightlifters are allowed to sniff smelling salts (ammonium carbonate) before a lift? Apparently a drug that has been used by athletes since Roman times doesn't count as "performance enhancing". Some members of the group elected to return before the "airfield attack" event and I joined them. The performance enhanc-

ing effect of all these smells was quite useful as the trip back was a bit of a grind into a rising south-westerly breeze. About a third of the way back we were treated to the explosions and smoke cloud of the airfield attack pyrotechnics, but alas we were too far away to benefit from the no-doubt invigorating vapours generated by this spectacle. We reached the beach in the late afternoon as the last of the warmth of the day receded.

Some journeys are memorable because they expose the traveller to extraordinary sights or strange events, some because they require feats of endurance. Proust's point in the opening quotation (if I may be permitted a late entry to the All-England Summarise Proust Competition) is that what we remember about life is not events or objects but sensations. This was an extraordinary trip because it exposed me to kayaking as a sensory experience: smells and sights and sounds that will remain in my memory. You may think drawing a connection between kayaking and Proust is far-fetched, but it's a little-known fact that Proust didn't die of pneumonia in Paris but, seeking sea air for his health, gave up writing and went off to La Rochelle to start a sailing and kayaking business – just google Proust Sailing and see if I'm wrong.



## PADDLING IN SOUTH AMERICA by Richard Rawling

By virtue of an extended break from the mad house of management consulting for a living, my wife Helen and I were able to spend 3.5 months travelling around South America in the second half of 2012. We left hot on the heels of me completing a solo 400 km paddle from Lucinda to Cooktown in Far North Queensland (write up coming).

The main kayaking activity in South America was planned to be a 4-day, 70 km trip down the remote Shirapuno River in Ecuador. But I took the opportunity to suss out the sea kayaking scene more generally, as one does! In short, the sea kayaking opportunities and potential in South America are enormous. Equally, it is a part of the world that we had never been to before and so it was a bit of a travel blind spot. Having been there and sampled what it has to offer, it ranks for me as one of the most spectacular, intriguing and satisfying travel destinations on offer.

Our trip started in Chile (Santiago) and then we headed off on a big loop. First was Argentina (Buenos Aires, Tigre and Iguazu) then Uruguay (Colonia and Montevideo), Brazil (Sao Paulo, Rio De Janeiro, Brasilia, Manaus), Columbia (Cartagena, Popayan), Ecuador (Quito, Cuenca, Galapagos Islands and El Oriente), Peru (Nasca, Arequipa, Cusco/MachuPichu, Puno), Bolivia (La Paz, Sucre, Potosi, Uyuni and the southern deserts), Chile (San Pedro de Atacama), Argentina (Sal-

ta, El Cafayate, Cordoba, Mendoza, Ushuaia, El Calafate, Bariloche) and Chile again (Tierra Del Fuego and Cape Horn, Punta Arenas, Torres Del Paine, Puerto Varas, Chiloe and back to Santiago). So we saw a lot and did a lot, but it was the potential for sea kayaking that kept catching my attention. Indeed, in Chile we often saw sea kayaking being featured as a must do adventure activity.

The 70 km paddle we did on the Shirapuno River in Ecuador was a private trip that we organised from here. We found that it was too hard to organise bespoke trips once we were there given lead times required, but it is possible. We took some basic kayaking gear with us (paddling clothing, hats, etc.), but were reliant on our guides supplying the rest. We used an American Company called Adventure Life, but they outsourced it all to a company called Ecuador Adventures based in Quito. They run group and bespoke guided trips to the eastern rivers and the Galapagos Islands (where we also went on a non kayak based cruise for 9 days). I reckon you could get far better prices dealing with this company direct, than through an intermediary.

The style of our river trip was as a supported paddle, but with all of the gear travelling with us on a raft as we went down the river. We were in a plastic double, and we had a professional guide (Tomas) as well as a local Indian guide (Mima), each in singles. We had opted for the double because Helen was nervous about paddling a single in a location like this (where, as it turned out, decent paddle stroke skills were paramount in fast flowing water). We were all supported by another guide (Arturo) who 'paddled' an aluminum decked, twin float NRS river raft. Because we were going into Huaorani peoples' land we had to have the local guide, no choice. But Mima's paddle skills were stellar as she had basically grown up on paddle craft



on the local rivers (and boats a lot less stable than the kayaks we are used to)!

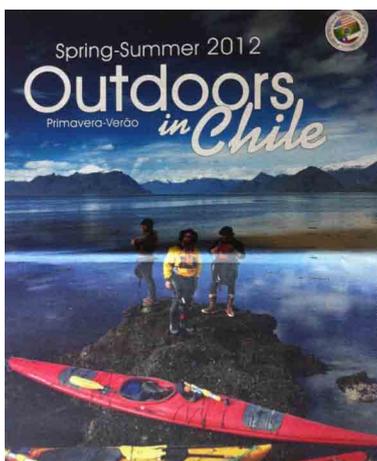
To get to the start line, we caught a flight from Quito to Coca, which is a sizeable river town in El Oriente. This area is the Ecuadorian network of rivers that ultimately feeds the Amazon basin. We met our guides and then drove ~100 km into the jungle to the put in point. This area is near the border with Colombia and has been subject to some strife, so the rangers there are very particular about paperwork being correct. Because the flight was late, we opted to transport all the gear down river by boat to a local village and then make an early start the next day. I am very glad we all had plastic boats because they took a real beating being packed into the steel river boat (designed to ride



over and cut through tree snags). After an interesting night camped at the village spent swapping stories with the women (all the men were out hunting), and the obliga-



tory dance and blowpipe tomfoolery the following morning, we got into the boats. River kayaking like



this involves constant scrambling up and down muddy riverbanks, often carrying gear and supplies. The paddling was relatively easy and fun as we glided along the increasingly remote sections of the river. You did need good paddle strokes because the boat was *sans* rudder. It was flowing quickly, at least 5 knots so you had to keep an eye out for snags and obstacles.

Arturo reveled in guiding the big raft, which was a very efficient way to transport the bulk gear. We were surprised though at the volume of gear they took. This was not light



camping from the boats, as the guys had full-blown kitchen tents, big stoves and gas cylinders, large eskies of food and gear bags. There was not a lightweight bit of gear in sight! We felt a bit like royalty as the guys lugged all this gear around.

We camped in the jungle on night two, which meant doing battle with bitey ants every time a toilet break beckoned!



Day 2 had seen us belting down the river again, but this time we had quite a few heavy rain and windstorms to contend with. Indeed you really had to wear a cag at times to prevent wind-chill. The roar from the jungle as the windstorms approached was deafening, as were the growls of howler monkeys, which you can hear from 10

km away. We saw lots of animals including capivara – world’s largest rodent, birds, monkeys, etc.

On Day 3 we set out in drizzle and occasional heavy, warm rain. After paddling in this stuff for some hours, Arturo suggested we take a short cut. This was a much narrower arm of the river and had the potential to save us an hour or so. But as is typical with short cuts, we paid the price! As we rounded the first bend we all slammed into a huge logjam. The pressure of the water meant that the guys had to exit their boats and manhandle the raft over the logs. Mima and I found a way through, only to have it all happen again and again. I really had to stay with Helen in the double, as having a novice paddler trying to contend with rapid flowing water amongst snags was not a prospect she or I relished. This was classic swift water territory where careful ferry gliding and stroke work was required to avoid capsize. If I had exited the double then we could have had an all-in scenario and in that water it could have been disastrous. We all reflected later that if you had beginner kayakers in that section of the river then you would potentially have a real challenge on your hands.

On night three we stayed at an atmospheric jungle lodge. By now we were at least 100 km into virgin jungle so we were getting the genuine jungle experience we craved. We did a bit more kayaking around here, but spent time doing river trips, fishing and jungle walks. Some of the plant life was stunning, including one of the biggest trees I have ever seen. I caught some piranha, but Tomas hooked onto what we think was a monster catfish that he fought



for 30 minutes before it broke off. After a day of R&R we loaded the

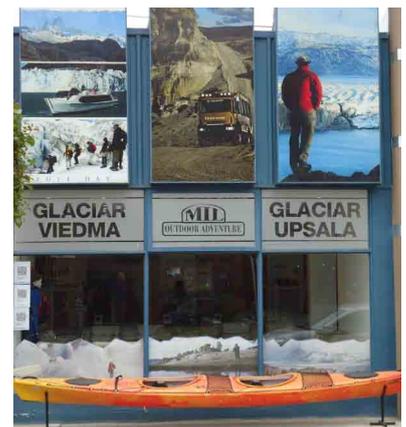
river boat up for the long ride back to our kayak put in point, all of us agreeing that it been a great trip. Indeed the genuine camaraderie that had evolved is very evident as we were packing up the gear for the trip back to Quito.



### The sea kayaking scene more generally...

Sea kayaking in South America falls in to three broad categories, rivers and lakes (very big ones!), coastal (blue water) and sheltered coastal (archipelagos). It is like Australia, with conditions ranging from the tropical north to the tempestuous south, most notably Patagonia. Ocean paddling often involves surf entry and exits and contending with open, very exposed coastline. Further south you get very large swells, especially on the Pacific coast and this often combines with vicious wind shears caused by cold water currents and hot land conditions.

It is unlike Australia in terms of the scale of the river and lake systems, with the potential for paddling amongst glacial ice flows down south. It is also unlike Australia, in that security of gear is problematic. We found that you cannot put stuff down and trust that no one will take it. There is a lot of petty crime in South America and novice travel-



lers can find this confronting.

The river systems in Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Brazil that ultimately form the Amazon River offer amazing kayaking potential. But it is often in the form of long distance paddling and unless you head into more pristine areas and smaller rivers it can be dull. Almost invariably you would need to use local guides to do this. We took a three day guided river boat trip from Manaus in Brazil and where we went offered great paddling potential, if you could get hold of suitable boats and a guide. Big river estuaries like the Plata in Argentina also offer interesting trips through estuarine islands and the like (e.g. around Tigre).

Coastal paddling is a lot like Australia, often with surf entry and exits being required on the East and West coasts. The coastlines of Colombia, Ecuador and Northern Peru are relatively undeveloped and in places quite hard to get to. Southern Peru and Chile right down to Patagonia are better options, but the seas become progressively rougher as you head south. To the north, the Colombian coastline is lovely, and this continues east but countries like Venezuela are problematic from a security point



of view. Places like Belize have established kayaking operators, but areas like the Guyana's are not to be recommended due to crime rates. I think that the eastern coast of Brazil would also be in this category, but south and west of Rio is stunning and places like Paraty offer great possibilities from what I saw. The Uruguayan coast is wild in the north, but in the south you have the silliness of Punte Del Este to contend with. This is also true across the Plata Delta in Argentina. From what we saw though, the

most exciting area is Patagonia, which actually spans both Argentina and Chile. Chile controls most of the interesting real estate, including most of Tierra Del Fuego. Interestingly, in Ushuaia (Argentina, and where the Antarctic cruises leave from), in a museum I spied a Nordkapp that appears to have been used in the first Argentinean expedition around Cape Horn (Frank Goodman, a Brit was the first to round the Cape in a kayak in 1977).



Cape Horn is an awe-inspiring place, especially when you consider the thousands (>10,000) of sailors who have lost their lives trying to round it, let alone the challenge it represents for kayakers (and several have done it). Getting the paperwork sorted down here is problematic though, and any attempt to cross marine borders between Argentina and Chile would be fraught. The two countries do not much like each other. We did a four day cruise to Cape Horn and the scenery there was just stunning, and from what I saw paddling in areas like the Beagle and Magellan Straits, as well as places like the Murray Channel and the coastline of Tierra Del Fuego would be sublime. It can be VERY windy, wet and cold down in that part of the world, so that has to be factored in.

I spoke with some local kayakers and it seems that there are at least 100 active paddlers regularly launching out from Ushuaia, so that is encouraging. I was using my SPOT tracker for fun (to send locations while we were travel-



ling back home), but it does not work as far south as Cape Horn (Isla Hornos). I was spitting chips that I could get not my souvenir SPOT message from 56 degrees south! Further north in Chile (on the western coast of the continent) you have the massive Pacific swells thundering in. This makes paddling really challenging, but the Chilean Lakes District and the archipelagos around Chiloe (e.g. around Ancud and Castro) are fabulous locations for extended kayak trips and I stumbled across several outfitters who had decent boats and gear for hire, plus local kayak guides. Overall, I would have to rate Patagonia (both Chile and Argentina) as the most spectacular place for adventure and outdoors tourism that I have ever visited. If you love outdoor pursuits including kayaking, mountaineering, trekking, horse riding, etc. then make a



beeline for this area. That said, we were hugely impressed with South America more generally. If you are going to travel there independently like we did for a prolonged period, then I suggest that you factor the following into your planning:

- Learn Spanish, or at least have a really good grasp of it
- Pack clothing and gear that enables you to handle the tropical north and the icy south, unless you are just going to one area
- Take personal security seriously and be hugely vigilant
- Ditch day packs and all signs of being a tourist; dress down, be confident
- Organise set piece events from here (e.g. The Inca Trek), but do the rest over there, it is much cheaper and more fun
- Travel with an iPad or similar, Wi-Fi is free and ubiquitous
- Be a traveller, not a tourist; be endlessly curious and get off the beaten track!





For the past few years I have been using what we call The VSKC Thong Fishing Line with excellent results as the attached photo shows---22 kg of Australian Salmon in 50 minutes about 2 km off Canadian Bay.

Light, compact, and inexpensive, it can easily be carried on your fore-deck when paddling at any time. Because of the rubber thong, you can always place the hook in to it when paddling, so there is minimal danger of hooking yourself

I always have it on the deck, and if I see the birds working, I deploy it and just keep paddling around the school of fish. Sometimes I have

had the experience of dolphins, gannets and penguins joining in as well .One great thing about the lure is that the salmon love it, but I have never caught a bird.

The thong is attached to the deck elastics by a short cord, and is then placed under a deck elastic. When a fish is hooked there is the great sound of the thong snapping out of the elastics .It is then anchored by the short cord.

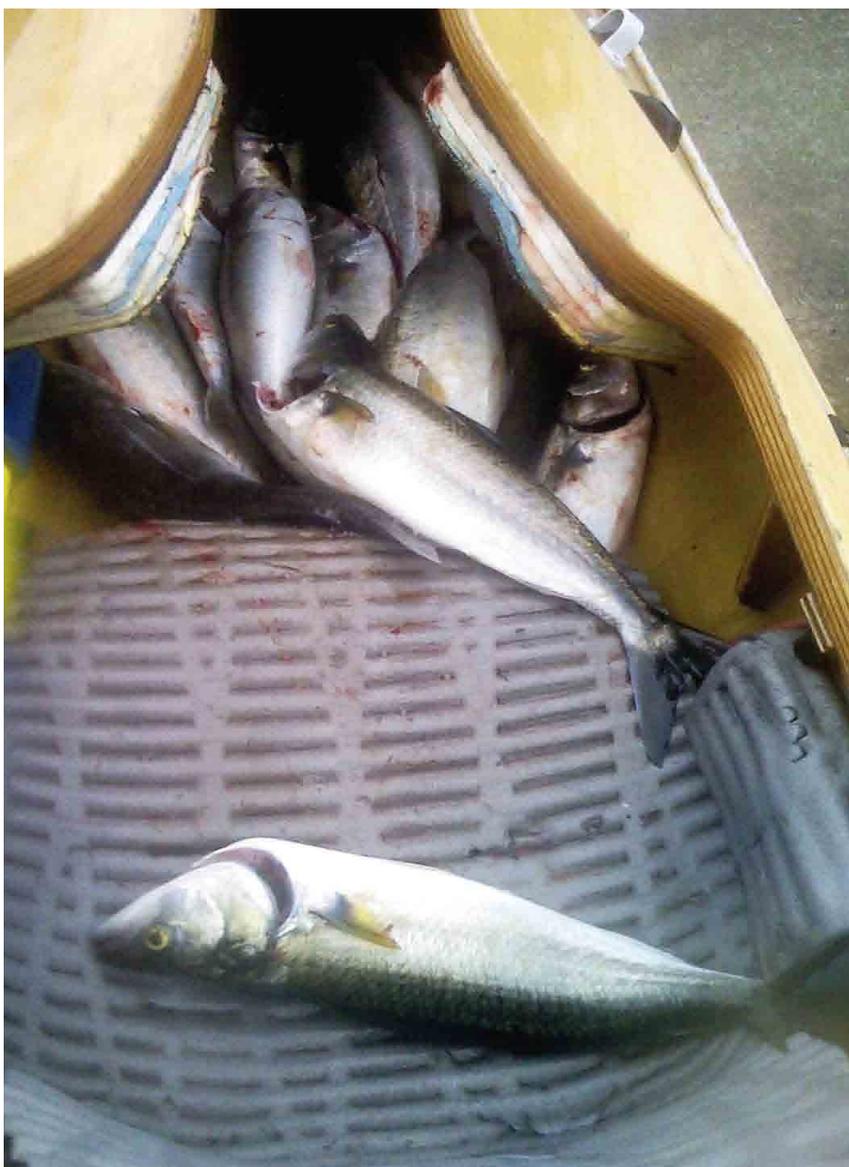
I have my paddle on a leash, and usually let it go. The great secret of using light venetian blind cord is that it is easy to grip in your hand and will not tangle. I just pull in the line with both hands and throw the

line to the other side of the kayak, from where I am bringing in the fish.

As soon as I have the fish on the spray deck, I instantly kill and bleed it by sticking a thumb in the gills and snapping the head. This is humane, and also greatly improves the taste of the fish.

This method of killing also stops the fish from flapping, so I just hold the head and give the fish a quick wash to get rid of most of the blood and then pull back the spray deck and drop the fish between my knees. I have discovered that there is room for me and twenty two , one kilo gram salmon in my cockpit





## MATERIALS

- One rubber thong
- Light venetian blind cord—about 15—20 metres
- Heavy nylon leader about 2 m
- Swivels (2)
- Lure----This is the secret weapon--Keep it a VSKC secret ! ----

Take a McDonalds straw—Cut it in half and insert it in to a piece of clear poly tubing. Thread the line through it and tie a single hook on the end. I think the photo makes it clear.

The Macca straw lure stays close to the surface and creates bubbles which the fish seem to love, birds do not seem to be fooled by it which is good.

I am always amused, when I come back to shore with a stack of salmon,---caught with gear that costs next to nothing, when the power boats with megabucks worth of gear, often come home empty handed.

I hope that more VSKC members will give it a try----Sometimes we just trail a line on a routine paddle and catch a feed without even trying

## THE IMPORTANCE OF FETCH by Terry Barry

A term you will often hear in the sea kayak world is Fetch.

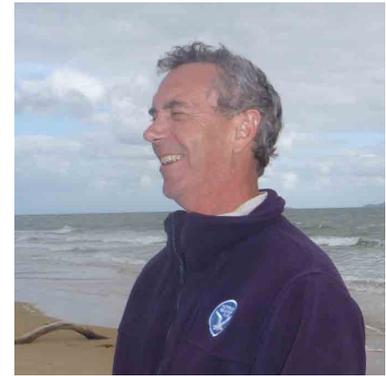
What is it and why is it so important?

When you are new to sea kayaking this term might seem a bit alien. Put simply, Fetch is the 'The distance over water that wind travels before reaching your position'.

Waves are created by fetch, the larger the fetch, the bigger the waves. When Fetch is minimal, the wave height should be minimal also.

For example-

If you are in the northern part of Port Phillip Bay- say Sandringham, and a southerly wind is blowing there will be quite a long fetch. As

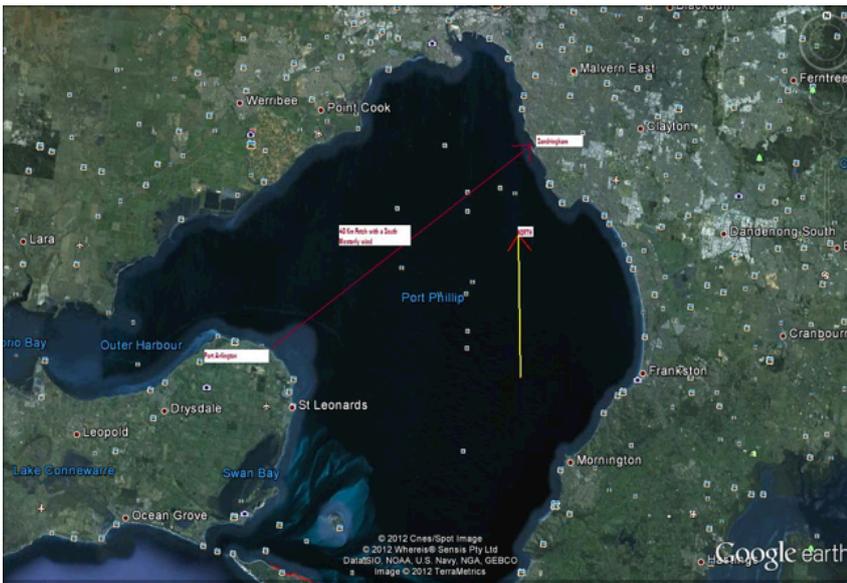


the wind will be travelling over the water from the Heads to Sandringham. So you can expect an onshore wind and the resulting waves it creates will be crashing on the shore.

Conversely if on the same day you were on the beach at Portarlington the southerly wind would be offshore and there would be no Fetch and as a result the shoreline would be smooth water.

This has serious implications for planning a safe sea kayak adventure.

On the one hand the water at



Sandringham will be rough but the wind is onshore. Therefore if you come to grief you will be blown towards the beach. However, if you are at Portarlington and venture a little way offshore and come to grief you will be blown to Sandringham!

So, although the water may look safer at Portarlington you may in fact be safer in rougher water at Sandringham!

You can also often get a nice safe paddle on a lee shoreline so long as you don't go too far offshore. For example, we often paddle from Canadian Bay to Mornington with strong southeasterly winds as the land shelters the shoreline.

H'mm sounds simple. But that's not always the case. What about rock/cliff shorelines? You don't want to end up being blown into them, so maybe an offshore wind is better.

The strength of the wind, depth of the water and distance of the fetch all have an influence on the conditions for paddling.

Shallow bodies of water such as Port Phillip and Westernport Bay become choppy with less wind than the open ocean. However shallow waters also flatten off more quickly.

By far the greatest influence is the strength of the wind.

The photograph to the left is a picture of Mornington on a day of up to 100 km/h WNW winds. Fetch distance is around 40 kilometers. Wave size is up to 2 meters.

Understanding fetch and its effects will greatly help you in deciding where and when it is safe to paddle.

A windy day doesn't necessarily mean your planned paddle isn't possible. It all depends on wind strength and direction, fetch and the area you will be in.





As a quick warm up to Winky's weekend, three of us (Julian Smith, Bill Zomber and me) made a quick trip from Mallacoota to Nadgee River mouth and return. We saw some of the best of the Howe-Nadgee Wilderness coast and enjoyed some very bumpy swell.

Once at the superb sprawling Boydtown campground, we settled down to an excellent couple of days of leisurely paddling in the Bay and feasting on land. Winky's Weekends have a well deserved reputation for fine camp oven catering and this was no exception.

The weekend's activities were like a very relaxed version of an AGM or forum and with a complement of paddlers from Victoria, NSW and the ACT. One of the best parts was the opportunity to try out a number of interesting boats in the local surf – Mick MacRobb's folding boat was particularly interesting. Cruises to near the woodchip wharf and a grand historic house, and via rock gardens and bush-lined cliffs to Eden harbour (for fish and chips) were also highlights. Neil and Raia showed great dedication to complete the land and sea navigation exercise which yielded them an excellent trophy, to be up for grabs at further Winky's Weekends.

On the final day, we passed up the chance to go out to the open coast with cyclone swells being forecast. However, we did get the tail end of the cyclone Oswald and were nearly flooded out of the campsite. Luckily, Dave had his marquee set up for the weekend and we were able to shelter there, swapping even more kayaking stories and con-



suming the leftovers of the previous nights Winky feast and more damper and cakes.

I can recommend these weekends to everyone and thank those who

made it so easy: Dave Winkworth (for his organisation and generosity) and Bill Zomber (for his long distance driving with the kayak trailer).



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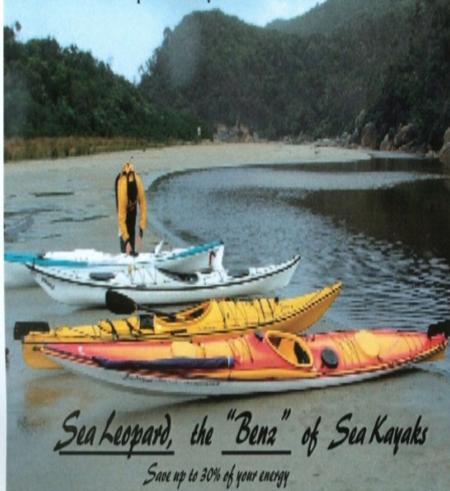
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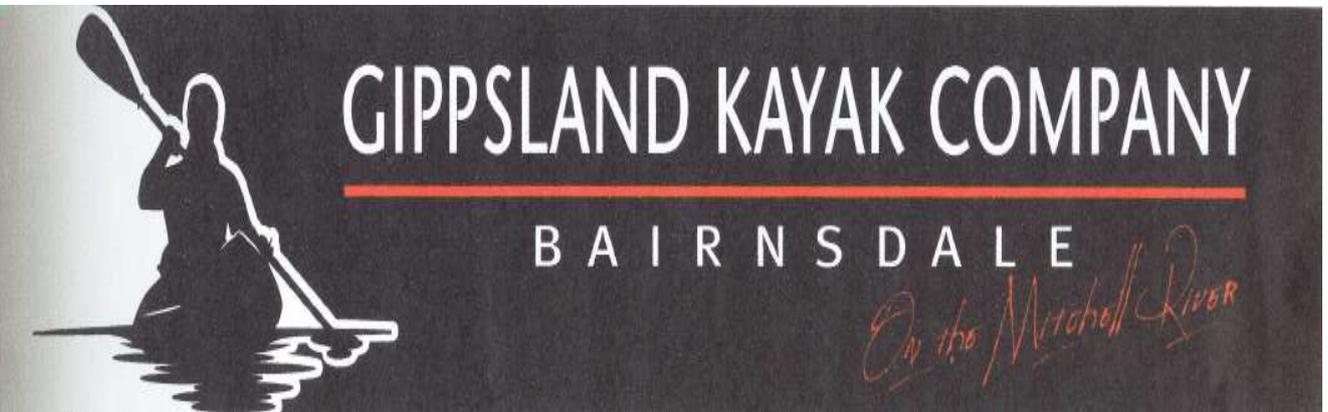
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