

Sea Trek

Edition # 97

Inside:

**The Paradise of
Flinders Island**

**Around Wilson's Prom.
A story of skill and
accomplishment**

**What Gear
Night Lights: Why you need
them in winter**



Executive committee

PRESIDENT

Kate Alberico
president@vskc.org.au

VICE-PRESIDENT

Peter Newman
vice.president@vskc.org.au

TREASURER

Susan Mountford
treasurer@vskc.org.au

SECRETARY

Rob Kenyon
secretary@vskc.org.au

Non-executive committee

TRAINING COORDINATOR

Ron Morris
training@vskc.org.au

MEMBERSHIP OFFICER

Sue Collins
membership@vskc.org.au

COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER

Kathryn Botherway
communications@vskc.org.au

EDITOR

Glenn Wilkins
publications@vskc.org.au

TRIP OFFICER

Denis Clare
trips@vskc.org.au

FRONT COVER PHOTOGRAPHY

Peter Sharp

BACK COVER PHOTOGRAPHY

Ben Flora

CONTRIBUTORS

Sue Collins, Glenn Wilkins, Jen Jackson,
Denis Clare

INQUIRIES AND FEEDBACK

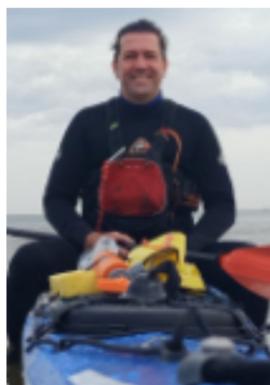
publications@vskc.org.au
PO Box 161
Black Rock 3193
Australia

JOIN US ON

www.vskc.org.au

COPYRIGHT

Copyright © 2022 Victorian Sea Kayaking
Club. All Rights Reserved.



SEATREK EDITOR GLENN WILKINS

Welcome to the new edition of Seatrek and a new editor. My hope is to make this magazine more relevant to you with tips, gear, stories and happenings around the club. As this is your magazine, your contributions are very important and I want to hear from you. Your trips, stories and your ideas. Things that others will be interested in and may learn something from. Please send your contributions to publications@vskc.org.au.

This edition we explore a recent expedition to Flinders Island where Keith and myself spent 2 weeks paddling around this island paradise. Without exception, this trip creates a buzz, an excitement of what could be. Your mind gets drawn to the stories of previous endeavours and the cautious tales others might tell.

Sue gives us a wonderful insight into circumnavigating Wilson's Promontory, breaking down the days with the adventures she had. These type of trips do take some skills in kayaking and we hear from Denis about what an assessment weekend holds and the tremendous benefits that come with doing them.

With the days getting shorter, we explore kayak lighting which is a must for any Kayak trip in the dark. There are what will become regular features of Who am I, Places we have been and Photos around the club.

I hope you enjoy this edition of Seatrek and I hope to see you on the water.

Glenn Wilkins



VICTORIAN SEA KAYAK CLUB

Contents

FEATURE ARTICLES

Crossing Bass Strait - Except we didn't! 06

The tales of Keith and Glenn's journey around Flinders Island and the beauty they encountered.

Maiden Voyage 16

Circumnavigating Wilson's Prom.

Assessment Weekend 22

An interesting report is on the Intro to Sea skill and Sea Skill Assessment Weekend.

Altona Salt Mine 24

Melbourne history that you can paddle to.

EDITORIAL FEATURES

The places we've been 04

Trips from members

WHAT'S HAPPENING AROUND THE CLUB

All the news you need from around the club. 14

WHO AM I?

Steve Collins 21

Learn more about the dairy farmer, trip leader and just a great bloke.

GEAR

And then there was light 21

We look at why you need a light in winter.

HEY, THAT'S ME!

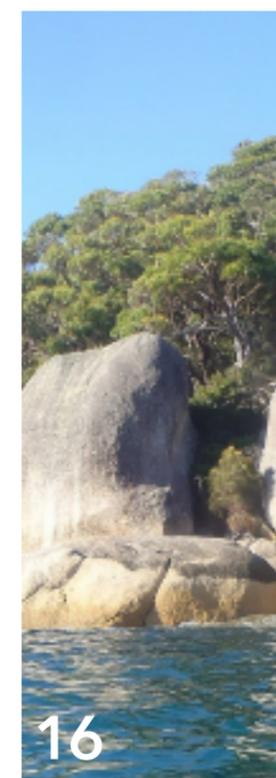
Photos from around the club. 27



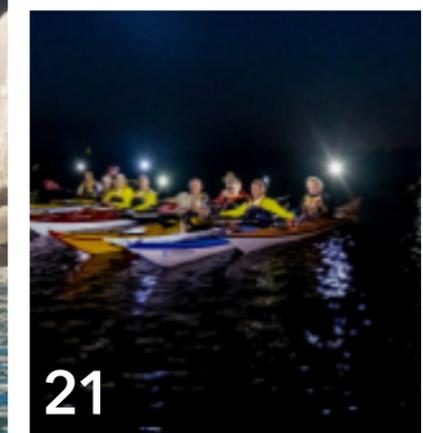
24



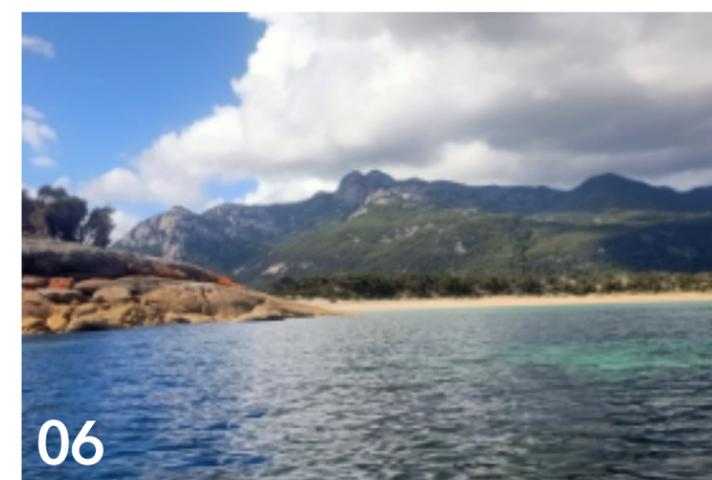
04



16



21



06



VICTORIAN SEA KAYAK CLUB

The Places we have been

Have you been on a trip you would like to tell everyone about? Share your story to publishing@vskcorg.au



No dolphins, no problem

Story: Jen Jackson Photography: Brenton Barnard

Inspired by perfect autumn weather and the possibility of dolphins, 9 happy Victorian Sea Kayak Club (VSKC) members set out from Sorrento last weekend to the old Quarantine Station. Abilities ranged from newbies like me through to VSKC legends, and craft ranged from my short but sprightly Australis Gecko through to the kinds of boats that newbies dream about. Like all VSKC paddles, there was plenty to keep everyone entertained.

The tide was the star of the show. Having only paddled in the calm northern parts of the Bay, I was stunned at the force of the tidal current near Port Philip Heads. One paddler's GPS said we were flying along at 9km/hr at one point, which only slowed to 6km/hr when we stopped paddling! Trip leader Glenn kept a close eye on the group, to prevent any accidental side-trips to Tasmania.

The tide meant we made extremely good time down to Quarantine Station, so we decided as a group to continue a little longer to the pristine beaches further south. The area is rich in nature and history, and our solid pace meant we had plenty of time to enjoy the beach, and visit the interesting Quarantine Station site on the way back. Sticking close to the shoreline and slack water made the return trip easy, and gave us a good look at the beautiful cliffs and clear water along the way.



Glenn managed to fit in some useful edging lessons for us newbies, in between adjusting our trip plan, and ensuring that our bursts of enthusiasm for faster

paddling didn't result in anyone getting left behind. Overall it was a great example of how you don't always get what you're expecting on a paddle (the dolphins never arrived!), but you always get something worthwhile.

Intro to Sea Skills Camping Weekend

By Denis Clare

On the 12th of March, four sea skills basic paddlers set out from Port Welshpool for a two-night trip, lead by Terry Barry and staying at Pt Lighthouse, near Swashway Jetty.

Preparation and Organisation

There are no shops, water or toilets on this trip. The Trangia stove was far more effective than the Jet Boil in windy conditions. The Helinox chair with a ground mat beat every chair with bare legs. I thought it would be difficult to misplace something in a kayak with only three compartments, but I seemed to be continually going through all compartments, sometimes more than once to find something. Having unlabelled dry bags all the same colour and size was not an organisational advantage. Double bagging equipment with thin garbage bags worked well to keep tent and sleeping bag dry and contained the inevitable sand that invaded everything. It's worth considering, that your loaded kayak is going to be upside down more than once on this trip.

Teamwork

Camping with a sea kayak which is loaded with food, camping equipment and 12 litres of water is now an

immovable land object for one person. On both nights the tide was low when we camped, and the kayak carry was 100 metres on the first night and closer to 400 metres on the second night. A fully loaded kayak is a four person carry. Sea kayaking safely is a team sport, getting a capsized team member out of the water quickly and most efficiently, is practiced over the 3 days using various buddy rescue techniques.

Paddling and Navigation Skills Development

Paddling and rescue skills were practiced, expect to get wet, remain damp, and get wet again. This weekend is not about staying dry, it's about practicing skills. This trip is the perfect place to practice your wave bracing skills as we paddled for 1-2 km side-on, to small breaking waves. Practicing all the paddling skills and rescue skills you need to gain for your Intro to Sea Skills certificate. In the evenings we learnt the basics of sea kayak navigation from Terry, which greatly assisted the completing of the ISS navigation quiz. I would highly recommend this weekend as Terry is a highly experienced instructor who knows the Wilson's Promontory area, and provides an experience that will fine tune your Intro to Sea Skills paddling and rescue skills. All of this learning, while you enjoy the company of team members in the beautiful Snake Island area.



Crossing Bass Strait Except we didn't!

Story and Photography: Glenn Wilkins



Committing to a big paddle.

It was an exciting moment for me to commit to paddle across Bass Strait from Victoria to Tasmania. I had been invited by Keith and Helmut to join the team. I was keen and knew there would be a large commitment to training and preparation for this adventure.

We trained... A lot! Training for this will be in another article as there's a lot to talk about.

We had deemed late Feb to be the perfect timing to leave from Victoria. Unfortunately, La Nina just made for winds continually blowing easterly, which changed our original plans. We waited for nearly two weeks, still training and crossing fingers. Eventually, Keith and I along with the SA team ended up discussing an alternative plan crossing South to North, hoping the wind would continue in our favour. So we headed off on the Spirit of Tasmania for our big adventure.



Crossing Banks Strait

Once we arrive in Tasmania, we made our way across to Little Musselroe Bay, north east Tasmania. With a favourable forecast to cross, what can be a pretty treacherous bit of water of Banks Strait. We set off with the a swell of around 2.5 metres and breaking waves on top. No real problems there, keep your eye out. Once we reached the bottom of Clark Island we turned and rode the tide and the swell around to Preservation Island.

We stopped on beautiful Preservation Island at an idealic beach, we could of been in the Whitsunday's. After and bite to eat we hoisted our sail's testing them for the first time on this trip and sailing up the northern leg of the island. The Dagger showed that it sails well very close to the wind.

Hear the Lightning.... and Thunder....

Our next stop was Thunder and Lightening Bay on Cape Baron Island. This place was spectacular and a must see on any Kayaking trip. No lights, no man made sounds, well except for tales of the days deeds. We found a little cove in the bay where a stream filtered out with large

rocks and very warm water. Beautifully warm for a swim which Keith and I did.

There's nothing like Trousers Point

Next day we planned to head towards Trousers Point with a stop at Cape Baron settlement. We headed to the local store for an awesome cheese and ham toasty and met some of the local elders who were happy to discuss the local history of the island. It was then off to Trousers Point approximately 20km away. No sail today with the wind in our faces, but what a reward to be had as we came into a little beach beside the main beach, with crystal clear water seeing down to 3 metres . The beach is framed by granite boulders, shrubs and of course Mt Strezleci in the background looking like chroma key in a movie. We rewarded ourselves with delicious swim when we hit the beach. That's right, no wetsuit, just bathers and we went in... Tasmania and summer... Wow!

Schnitty , chips and a beer, here we come!

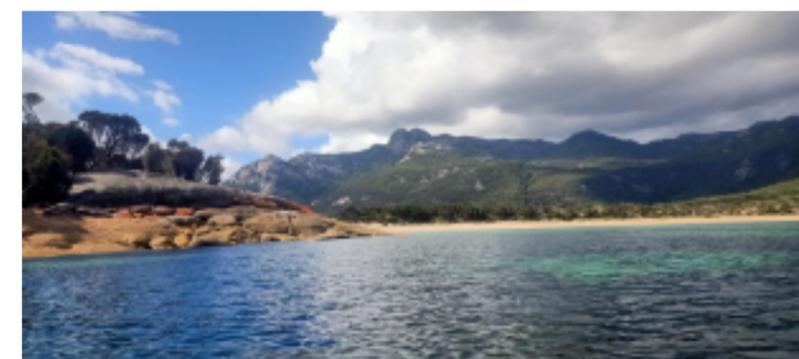
We left the beautiful camp at Trousers point and headed towards Whitemark. Now as a general rule, we kayakers don't have to worry too much about water depth

Camping on the beach is an experience which is one of life's highlights in my opinion. In the Furneaux Group of islands, you can pretty much pull up on any beach and camp. This happened to us on a number of occasions and sitting with Keith under the stars on our camp chairs, with waves lapping a short distance away, were moments that are hard to forget.

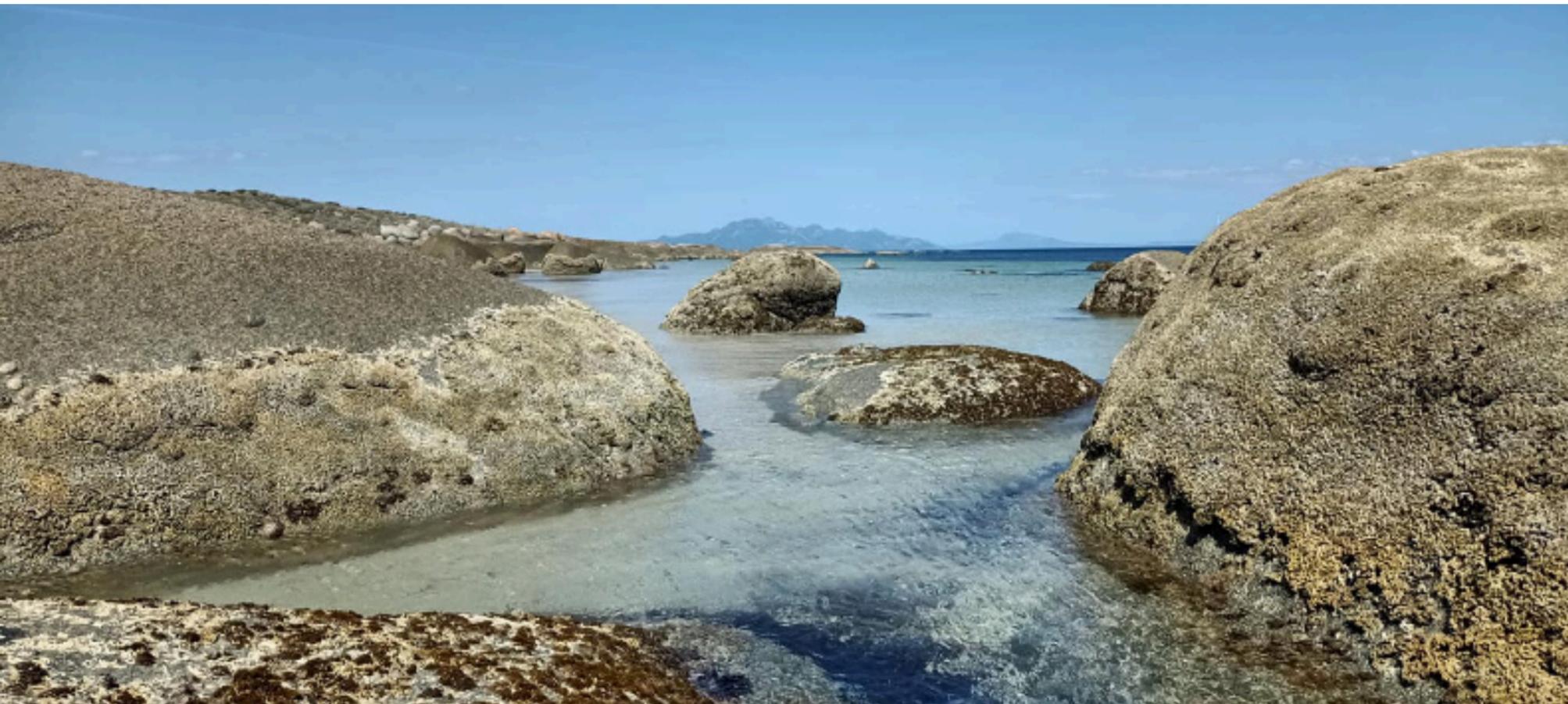
but in this instance, we were worried that we'd run out of water and have to walk. There is a shallow area between Flinders and Big Green Island and it's ready to catch out the unaware. After some time and a detour out to sea we made it in to Whitemark. It's a lovely foreshore with green grass and a pretty little beach to greet you. Whitemark is a welcome stop for some pub grub, to restock and some amenities. Be aware, as we found out, the little IGA market shuts at 12.00pm Sat. and does open for the rest of weekend. This led Keith and I to take an Uber to Lady Baron for additional supplies from the shop there.

So much beauty in one place

We spent a day and and half in Whitemark and decided to move on to Emita. Like Trousers Point, this place is off tap with beautiful scenery everywhere. Allports Beach and Emita Beach are fantastic spots to visit. The rocks tumble out from the beach in giant formations as the waves gently lap the undersides. Sand cascades down from the cliffs to form idealic beaches with Alports beach sand, so



Drinking water is always a concern when you're on a Kayak expedition and as kayak can only carry so much. Often you would plan how much water based on where you were going in the next day or two. There are actually quite a few places that had water with Whitemark having treated tap water. We always treated tank water to make sure we didn't get a bug.



soft, that you sink to your groin. We couldn't of been luckier here. We wanted to visit the museum at Emita and quickly changed into our dry gear and made our way to the museum. We got there 20mins before closing and to our surprise, there was a food van with a fantastic menu. We had a walk through the museum and then had a delicious dinner. It was nearly sunset and we headed back to the beach and decided to head back to allports beach where there was an apparent campground. We couldn't find the campground, which on our way back we found, so we set up right on the beach. Awesome!

Man the sails men, lets fill yee sails and fly!

Sailing is great fun! I hadn't done much of it before the trip, However, we did do rolling with a sail and had a few sailing trips for practice. It's a terrific way with lighten the load but.... Things happen fast and this includes mistakes. We always kept an eye on each other particularly when sailing. There is also a democracy in sailing as a group. It took me a while to learn this. Some boats and kayakers handle it better than others and in

general everyone agrees they're going to sail on a leg based on wind direction and strength. At one point I did get this wrong and left the group scrambling to catch me which was a mistake I learnt from.

So we were now on our way to Roydon Island thumping along in a 20kn wind with sails up. Ah....the joy and exhilaration of smashing through the chop at speed. It took us no time at all to cross the 18km and land on Roydon Beach. The wind on Roydon was savage but the hut is set back and out of the wind. We set up and then settled in to island life.

I made a circumnavigation of the island on foot which turned out to be a rock strewn land with a towering mountain of rock in the middle that gives scale to the all features on the island. This island is hard to get around, but well worth the effort to see the little scenic places around every corner. The southern end is strewn with rubbish bought on with the big southerly swell.

The second day was filled with some fishing, swimming with stingrays and reading. At night we sat down to discuss Crossing Bass Strait.



After all the training and the hard effort you have put in you really want to complete the goal to cross Bass Strait. The sea is a fickle mistress and does not give her secrets away in advance. This is why it's easy to be seduced and find ways you can leave instead of finding reasons you should stay.

Wind is important on a trip like this. Over 10 hours of paddling into a head wind can really hurt, slowing you down and in some cases making a crossing impossible. Wind played an incredibly large part in our trip. We became very proficient in reading wind and tide.

The hard reality ...disappointment

We all wanted to make the crossing but the weather wasn't going to play ball. There was a weather window but we would have to leave early and the front that followed was really really nasty. If the timing was slightly wrong, we were in trouble. Additionally, the days following looked all wrong for weather and could of had us stuck on an island for a week. It was a sombre night with everyone having their own feelings about missing out on the goal.

Wrapping up our trip.

WEATHER - One of the most important words in Kayaking. This is never more important when island kayaking. Weather can change the environment from safe to unthinkable in minutes. We were continually checking the weather on Bass Strait looking for the window where the weather

would be safe to cross. It tends to dominate your thoughts because you're always in a state of readiness.

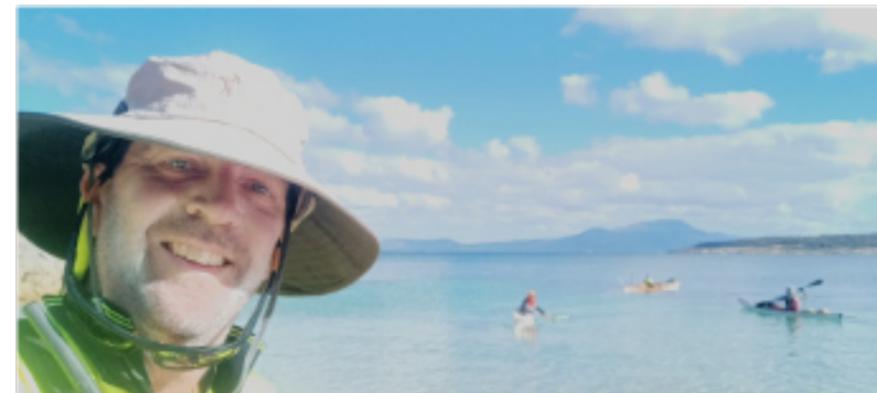
We had it in mind to Cross Bass Strait and it is now unfinished business. The Furneaux Group of islands are remarkable and you can't believe it till you are there just how pristine and beautiful the environment is. Wilson's Prom seems like just an introduction to the the Flinders island area. It's quiet, beautiful and isolated. Beaches seem to be around every bend beckoning you to stop and stay. The water is crystal clear and the snorkelling is next level with so many spots, you'll want to stop around every headland.

This was nearly the end of our journey. We did the reverse of our travel to Roydon and we did end up climbing Mt Strezleci. It's a challenging walk which goes almost straight up in places. Unfortunately, with had cloud

when we got to the top. We had amazing weather recrossing Banks Strait on our return with it being as flat as a lake. We landed at Great Musselroe Bay where the adventure to get home began. This will have to wait for another time.

Go there!

This is a place that will transport you away from your worries and cares and allows you to breath in nature's beauty. Take your bathers and swim, walk and discover and share with friends. It was terrific travelling with Keith, becoming good mates and I'd do it again in a heartbeat.



What's happening around the club

Have you got some news you want to share with our members? Hit us up at publications@vskc.org.au



New Members Paddle

Wow, we have had a great turnout every month since the start of the year with lots of new members joining the club. With the exception of one month where there was a lot of wind, each month has had great weather with great conditions for this paddle.

Thank you to all the leaders who have been helping with SKB Qualifications on these paddles. Paddlers have been pretty happy learning and getting a lot out of these paddles judging by the feedback.

Training Days

With COVID keeping assessments down over a last 2 years, the club is trying to facilitate more training days to help you towards your assessments. There have already been a number and no doubt will be more as the year progresses. If you see them come up, I would suggest signing up. A lot of the basic stuff helps our heaps later on with more complex skills.



Paddle Fest announced

"Yes you heard right"... We might get to have a Paddle Fest again this year. It has been booked for 11-13 November with campsites reserved. This is a wonderful opportunity to meet and catch up with other members and of course go on trips in the ocean and river.

Keep this date free in your diary and watch out for more information coming in the near future.

Rolling is back!

With winter coming on that means indoor rolling is back. This is a great opportunity to learn and practice rolling in controlled conditions with nice warm water. Usually there is someone there who can help you.

Sessions are in different locations and there is a small cost for the night. Check on the website for availability and times.

Paddle Assessment Intake

We all want to go on better trips right? This is what assessment is all about. With training and assessment, your standards will lift and you can take a step up in challenging paddles. The Assessment Intake weekend is a great weekend to find out what grade you should shoot for and what things you might need to improve.

I would encourage everyone to look towards improving your grading. This will allow you to come on trips with more challenging environments

This weekend is fun, very informative and will give you a good indication of what is expected in assessment early next year.

If you want to improve and haven't yet signed up, you can go to the website and find out more there.



Maiden Voyage

Story: Sue Collins | Photography: John Martin



Excited about the prospect of another multiple day kayaking trip. Where one needs to consider the weather, temperature, wind speed and direction, tides, tidal flow, swell and currents. So much to consider, what to pack, clothes, food, drinking water and other supplies. Then how does all this fit into the kayak. For many years I have kayaked from Port Welshpool, down the east coast of Wilsons Promontory, past beaches and rocky outcrops and the vastness of such a beautiful national park. The furthest that I have been in the past is around Rabbit Island to Rabbit Rocks and the Northern end of 5mile beach. Camping at Johnny Souey Cove. I have also paddled east from Tidal River into Fenwick Bight several times. Then in December of last year 3 of us kayaked from Tidal River to Wilsons Promontory Lighthouse.

Of course I wanted to go all the way around, so I jumped at the opportunity when asked.

Plan A - Port Welshpool to Johnny Souey exploring the north east section of Wilsons Promontory.

Plan B - Port Welshpool around the Light House and in to Tidal River.

Plan C - Port Welshpool, towards the lighthouse, depending on the weather report - return to Port Welshpool.

This was a private trip led by Terry Barry. In which Plan A was out of the question the night before. As Parks Victoria were closing the Northern Section of the Prom for a planned Deer



culling operation. Plan B was hatched. With Plan C still in the background right up until the morning of the last day, if the weather was unfavourable, we turn around and go back to Port Welshpool. A strong westerly wind was forecast, to arrive Thursday evening.

Day one - Port Welshpool to Johnny Souey cove

Terry, Sue M, Tony, John, Steve and I left on an outgoing tide from Port Welshpool to Johnny Souey cove. Apparently we were going to be sailing most of the way as a North Easterly wind was forecast. This was not the case. A small amount of sailing did happen but not for long. The sky was blue, water clear and spirits were high. After crossing Singapore deep we landed for a short leg stretch on a beach at Entrance point. Once back in

the kayaks and southward bound, some were lucky enough to see a small gummy shark feeding off of something in the shallows. On our right hand side is Wilsons Promontory National Park, out to our left is a very big expanse of blue water. And on this clear day you could make out the shapes of the Seal Island group. To the south you could see Rabbit Island. After passing beaches, rocky out crops with sea eagles visible. We landed at the Northern end of Light House point for lunch. This was a surf landing and surf exit. Which is always fun, and can be tricky with loaded boats.

We arrived at Johnny Souey around 4pm. The camping area has changed a lot since we were last there approx. 4 years ago. With lots of erosion, tea tree and trees fallen and the river changing its direction to the sea yet again. .

Day 2 Johnny Souey Cove to Refuge Cove

Once again perfect weather conditions. Once leaving Johnny Souey you have Rabbit Island on your left shoulder. We

decided to straight line it from Rabbit Rocks to the point past 5 mile beach. It can be quiet boring sometimes contouring close to a beach that is 5 miles long (unless you want to surf it) but the swell was coming from a south east direction. So we decided to stay out further. Lots of discussions and chatter, with the sighting of a Leather Back turtle. We arrived at Refuge cove before lunch. On entering the cove there were a couple of yachts moored and 6 Jet skis had passed us a short time before. There was no phone reception at this point, so discussion of whether to ring out on the sat phone (carried by Terry) to get an updated weather report. But in the afternoon two club members Glenn and Keith arrived (doing a training trip from Tidal River – Port Welshpool). Who were able to give us an updated weather report.

Day 3 Refuge Cove to Little Waterloo Bay.

Short paddle this morning, contouring the rocks and little bays along the way. Seeking perspective future camping spots? Clear blue skies, clear blue water. More Sea Eagles and seals. With East & West



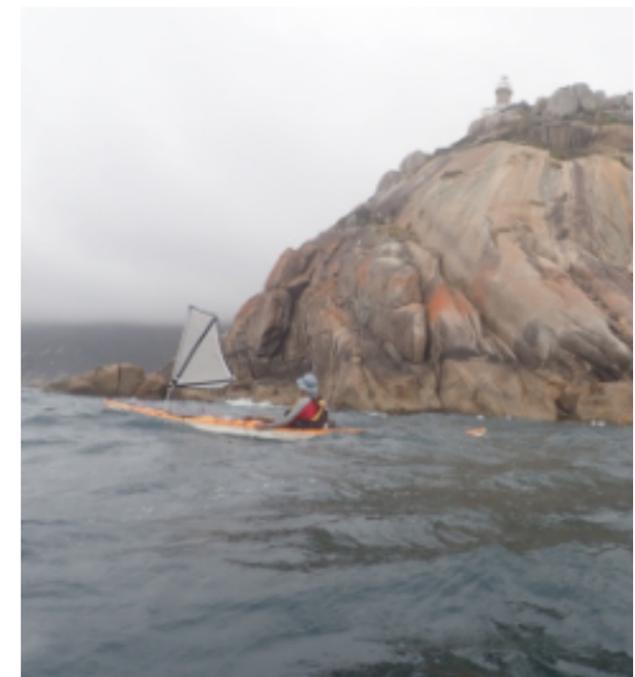
Moncoeur Islands visible to the south and Rodondo Island up in the distance.

My husband has told me that Cape Wellington can be quite lumpy at times, with swell, rebound and current. With all this in mind and keeping alert and trusting my kayak, coming around the Cape was not to bad (some may not think that) but always listening & taking advice from the more experienced kayakers. At Waterloo Bay Terry used the satellite phone to get an updated weather report for tomorrows paddle. Yes Plan B is going to happen.

In the evening 4 other kayakers arrived. 3 women going across Bass Strait had left Tidal River that morning, 1st night camp with us at Little Waterloo Bay then onto Hogan Island the next day.

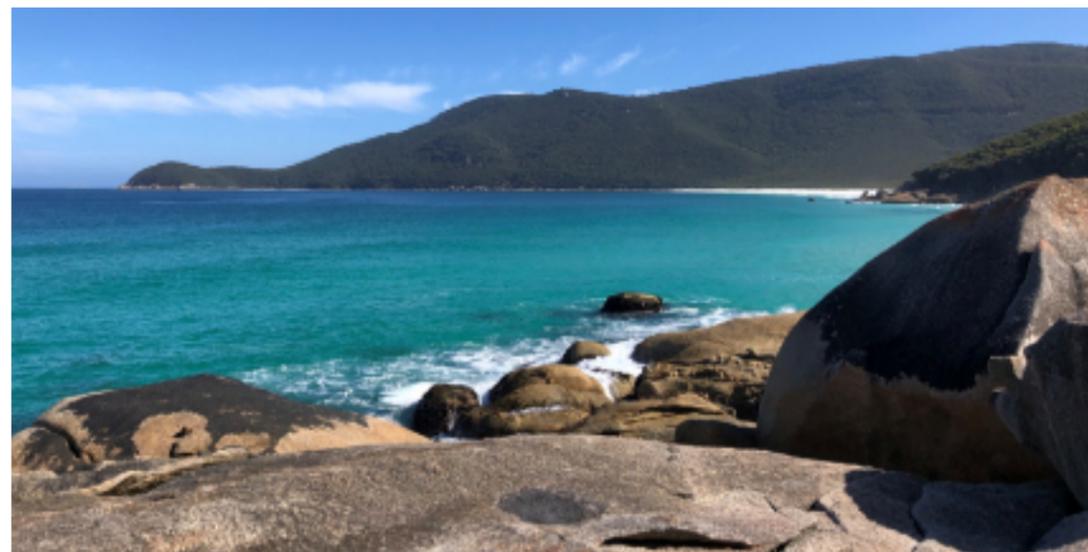
Day 4 Little Waterloo bay - Tidal River

After the best nights sleep and a very quiet camp. Bushwalkers and kayakers only, you could hear a pin drop after 9pm. We were on the water around 8am, as we



wanted to get the most out of an incoming tide and yes we had a tail wind for the first part crossing from Little Water loo bay to Home cove. So sails were up. This part of the Prom is very rugged, with steep rocky out crops, bush and some mature trees.

With the Lighthouse in our sights, I was so excited, it can take forever to paddle that distance, sails up, and around we went.





Out of the six paddlers – 5 had not kayaked in a clockwise direction around the Prom. And 3 of us were on our maiden voyage. The Prom was covered in cloud, quite eerie at times, but beautiful.

We paddled into Fenwick Bight, it was close to high tide, so we were unable to land and stretch our legs as we have done at other times.

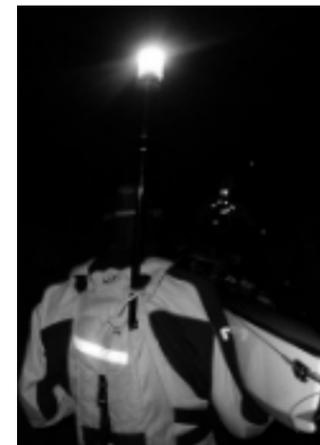
After leaving Fenwick Bight we went around South Point, between Wattle Island and the Prom. Rodondo Island was over our left shoulder, The Ansell Island group to our left. On heading up towards Oberon Point we were hoping for a NE wind to assist us into Tidal



River. Luckily we were assisted by a 6 knots E wind, sails up, spirits lifted and it made the last 4kms quick and easy. Luckily we arrived at Norman Bay just after high tide which enabled us to kayak, or pull our boats up the river, to near the boat ramp. Trip around the Prom done .

This was a fantastic 4 days of kayaking, with great company, scenic camping spots and good paddling in a lovely part of our National Park.

Gear



Lights

With winter coming on, the days get shorter and that means it's dark. But it doesn't have to stop you Kayaking.

What you need is a light!

Now lets get it clear, the light is not for you to see your way, but so you can

be seen by other craft and, if the need arises, rescuers. So, what are the rules:

An electric torch or lighted lantern showing a white light and exhibited in sufficient time to prevent collision

Source Vic. Recreational Boating Safety Handbook

The other thing to consider is whether you have a light on you deck or on you. I like my light on me, then, if I come out, I am easier to see. However, you can always tether yourself to the boat.



Light's can be bought, as pictured here, or home made but must be waterproof and last for the whole paddle.

In winter months, when the days are short, it is worth considering whether you carry a light on all paddles in the kayak incase you get back unexpectedly late. (which has happened to yours truely) If you are travelling at night a head torch is also essential to see the compass, read maps and see the shoreline.

Not everything is lit up by the city lights.



Who am I?



Steve Collins
Sea Leader

ST: *What Qualification do you hold with the VSKC?*

SC: I'm a sea leader.

ST: *What do you like about being a Sea Leader?*

SC: I like taking people on trips and I like introducing people to new areas that they haven't been to. I get a lot of satisfaction seeing people enjoy the trips I run.

ST: *How long have you been in the club?*

SC: I've been in the club about 10 years now.

ST: *What has been your pathway into and through the club?*

SC: I had a Kayak when I was a kid and when I gave up dairy farming I bought a rubbishy plastic boat, I think it was a dagger (Laughter). Then I thought I really do like this so I spent a lot of time online reading stuff from different areas with one website recommending I buy a good boat, a good paddle and join a club.

ST: *What do you like about the club?*

SC: I joined the VSKC and instantly felt like I belonged there and belonged with the people in the club. So It's been fantastic, I've loved every moment of it.

Testing our skills

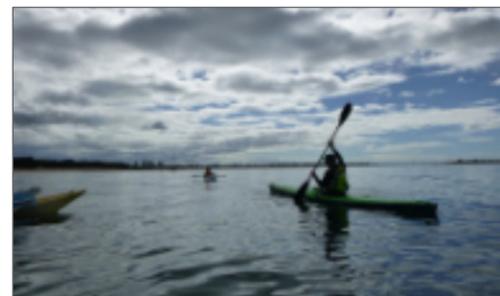
Story: Carmel Fraser Photography: Keith Russell



Intro to Sea Skill & Sea Skills Assessment

I have just achieved my 'Introduction to Sea Skills' Paddle Australia standard. What a wonderful, yet trying experience it has been. The training weekend at Wilsons Prom and Snake Island with Terry Barry offered all the necessary skills to prepare for the assessment. Terry very generously gave of his time and expertise, to push all of us trainees to our limits both in the surf and in calmer waters. We rescued each other, got dumped in the ocean and washed ashore, then quietly sat around the camp after dinner and got further quizzed about navigation markers and other pieces of essential information. At all

times I felt safe and cared for as we forged ahead with practicing our paddle strokes and other necessary skills. At times I felt like we were the naughty school kids, as we tried to do the 'right' thing in front of our ever-vigilant teacher Terry!



If we thought the training weekend was good, we were in for an even bigger surprise when we all arrived at Philip Island a couple of weeks later for our Introduction to Sea Skills Assessment.

Day 1

On Saturday morning we left our campsite at New Haven and took our kayaks down to the water to be checked

for sea worthiness by our very sensible and thorough assessors, Helmut Heinz and Keith Russell. Our trip leader for the day was Ron Morris. Ron gave us the challenge of paddling up to the Island bridge and ferry gliding from pylon to pylon without getting swept away! The day continued on with all skills being assessed and excellent feedback being given after each task had been demonstrated to the assessors.

Day 2

we packed up camp, loaded our kayaks and headed for the surf at Woolami Beach. Now here was a scary challenge! As we stood up above the ocean and peered down at the surf, I thought, 'right here is where I bail out of this course!'.....the surf was pumping, and my heart was pumping harder!!! It looked terrifying and I quietly said to



Helmut, 'I'm not going out in that.' Helmut calmly said, 'you can do this Carmel'. I felt sick at the thought of it and so I dawdled behind the group, resolved to failing the assessment.

Once all our kayaks were on the beach, Ron gave very clear and concise

instructions about what we had to do. Each candidate set off into the surf and gave it their best shot as they struck out into the surf, rode a wave and often capsized. My nerves increased at this point, but fellow trainees were also quietly encouraging of me and so I gave it my best shot! Ron had the brilliant idea of standing out in the surf and telling us to paddle out to him before turning and surfing into shore. It was so reassuring to see him out there with this huge surf

pounding behind him and knowing that was the turning point for our kayaks.

After we all survived the surf, we packed up and joined our wonderfully talented leader and assessors for our results and some very valuable feedback on our performances.

The communication and encouragement that was given by the assessors was outstanding. Rons' leadership was second to none at all times. Instructions were clear and the activities achievable on every occasion.

This was one of the most generous and skilful weekends I've spent with the club. It was such fun and the camaraderie it developed between the participants was unforgettable.

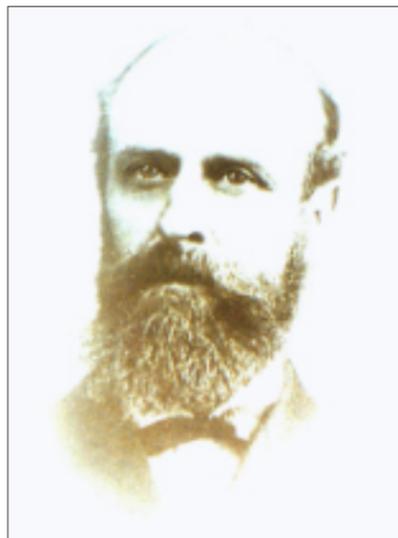
Thank you, Helmut, Keith and Ron, for devoting so much care, concern and time to us all, we are all very grateful to you.





A wetlands wonderland

The Cheethan Wetlands are 420 Hectares of artificial and natural lagoons boarded by Skeleton Creek and Port Phillip bay in Altona. There are picnic areas, bike paths and open play areas. Visiting this area is a joy and is not that far from the city, but it is vibrant and interestingly, steeped in history.



The wetlands take it's name from one of Melbourne's lesser known entrepreneurs.

Richard Cheetham was from England and first attempted to set up salt works on French Island. He failed but was not deterred and in 1888 he began construction of a salt production works at Limeburners Point and

Point Henry in Geelong. In 1894 wealthy business man Mr Cunningham and Cheetham formed a partnership of the Cheetham Salt Pty Ltd Saltworks. Cheetham died not long after and the Cunningham family continued to expand the business.

In 1924 salt production at the Geelong sites fell short of demand. It was then that 1200 acres of land were purchased at Laverton on the shores of Port Phillip Bay. Dozens of houses, a refinery and other buildings were build near the mine to support a large workforce, then In 1926 the first harvest from the Salt was produced here. Cunningham's son continued expanding the business throughout the years then In the 1970's saw the gradual decline of the site until 1996 when the Metropolitan Board of Works purchase the land back.

As part of the mining of salt at the wetlands, they used a horse drawn tramway. You can still see some of the tramway which ran from the present day skeleton Creek Weir to the beachfront. This is where they collected sand for re-flooring the evaporation pans. Eventually Ruston and Hornsby Locomotives replaced the horse drawn trams.



From the 1950's there had been a number of amateur Ornithologist researching at the Laverton Saltworks. Studies of birds and their importance in the area continued.

In 1979 the first Systematic census of shore birds were taken at the saltworks. This started to catch the governments

attention on the importance of habitat for many varieties of bird wildlife. This has eventually lead to the protection to the wetlands under the Ramsar Convention.

Currently, the area is managed by the Department of Sustainability and Environment and Melbourne Water with Parks Victoria managing the area to the north of the wetlands. Even though the Cheetham Wetlands is made up of artificial lagoons, it is know to support over two hundred species of birds which





migrate here from the northern Hemisphere.

As a side note you can also see the extensive sand mine in Geelong. This is also an interesting paddle, paddling around the corner for Point Henry you are hit with a huge area of wetlands which still looks like ponds. Paddle from Eastern beach around Point Henry but be aware, this is only a high tide paddle.

There are still reminders of the past everywhere you look in Cheetham Wetlands. For Kayaking, it is a wonderful journey down Skeleton Creek, seeing one of the old pump houses and pipes that once filled the evaporation ponds is a step back to a bygone era in Melbourne's history. If you paddle as far as you can up Skeleton Creek, you can get out at the weir

How did they extract salt?

The idea was to pump or flood sea water into shallow ponds which then evaporate leaving salt. This can then be harvested for production.

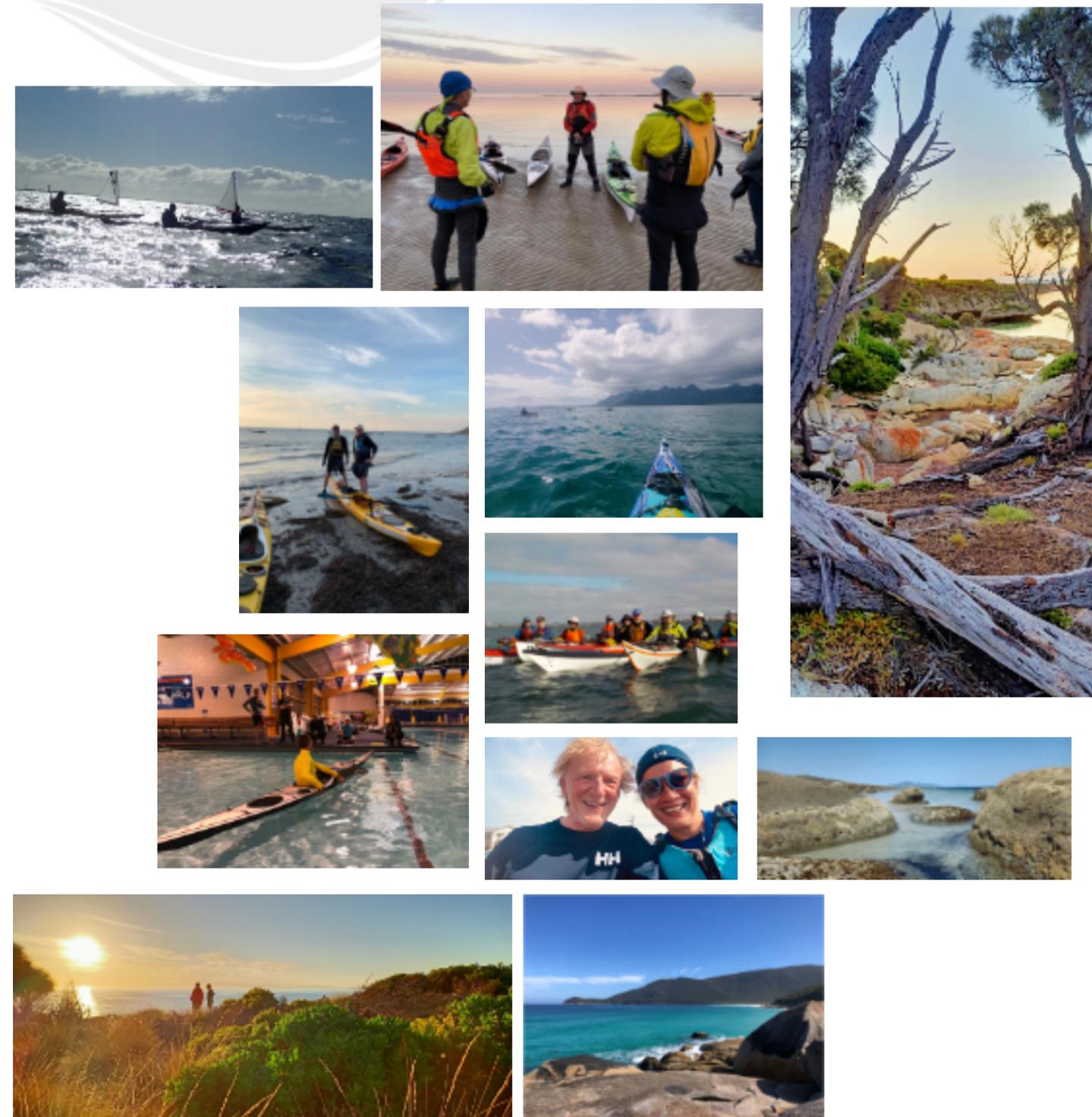
Did you know salt was also harvested in the sunset NP near Mildura?

and have a look over the wetlands and see quite clearly, the evaporation ponds all around. Best done at high tide.

Source: Worth it salt - Gary Vines and Brett Lane

Have you taken a photo that you would like to submit for potential publishing? Send to: publications@vskc.org.au

Hey, that's me!



Edition Top Three

Each Edition we will award the top three photos with the top three photos of the year awarded in the December addition of the magazine.

1



2



3



VSKC

Victorian Sea Kayak Club

