

Some Short Winter Trip Reports

Sassafras River/Duffy's Creek/Hen Creek, January 8—Three Pirates of the North braved the 70 degree temps! and 40 degree water and explored the upper Sassafras, Duffy's Creek and Hen Creek. It was a phenomenal day for wildlife—we saw at least 5 mature bald eagles soaring and sitting in trees, immature and mature red-tailed hawks floating on the breeze, loads of deer, jumpin' catfish, a kingfisher, Great Blue Herons, assorted Turkey vultures and wood ducks. The little creeks kept us sheltered from the wind that picked up as the day wore on, creating small whitecaps on the river. We checked out the currently unoccupied Blue Heron rookery across the river from Fox Hole Landing, where we put in. We estimated there were at least 50+ nests visible in the trees. I definitely would like to go back when it is occupied. Hen creek was an unexpected pleasure—I'd forgotten about the 6 ft high x 20 ft long beaver dam that blocks the upper end of the creek. More bald eagles and deer here. We got surfed a little on the ride back to the put-in. I had a few minutes of feeling a little hot in my dry suit with "thick skin" IR tops and bottoms underneath, and wool socks—usually in a sunny spot on the sheltered creeks but once out in the wind, and in the chop, and at the rest stop I was happy to be wearing it. I had a near encounter with some of the wildlife on the drive home. Three deer decided to trot across the road right in front of me—luckily my brakes work great as well as the brakes of the woman behind me. I'm used to seeing deer up in the woods of Pennsylvucky but wasn't prepared for them in daylight out in the middle of open land in Maryland. Thanks to Kim Palmer and Bob Shakeshaft for the company.

Wendy Baker Davis

Global Warming on the Pax, January 6 and February 5—I'm fond of paddling the Patuxent around Bowie (well, all of it, really, but this is about the Bowie piece). I sometimes call this "mudholing," because after working around the strainers I usually look like I've been wallowing in a mud hole. So I was looking forward to paddling here when the normally muddy banks would be frozen. I think I was a day too early. The banks were firm but not yet solidly frozen. But it was a nice day to paddle, with sunshine, blue sky, and an air temp in the thirties. The Bowie Gauge showed a flow of 250cfs, around 5.3 on the gauge. At this level, the bridge under Route 50 showed about 20 inches of the foundation.

I paddled up to the double-log blockage just upstream from Route 50. Somebody has been cutting on the river-left side of the trees. I seem to remember both the trees spanning from bank to bank, but only the upstream tree currently blocks the whole river. The thick end of downstream tree now seems to be resting somewhere underwater, so it only blocks the river-left. Heading upriver, you can float over the sunken side of the downstream trunk, work your boat between the logs towards the river-left bank, and if I was in a short boat or there was a few inches more water, I think I could have gotten around the upstream tree. I ended up getting out on the log and pulling across.



Jim Dwyer and Queen Anne's Bridge photo by Chip Walsh

The next riverwide blockage is only another hundred yards or so upstream. A little less water and I could have limboed under. There is a third blockage just downstream from where the river splits around an island. I pulled over on river-left, but on the way back found I could float around far to river right. I paused by one significant, but not total, blockage and trimmed branches on river-right to enhance a small opening there. There was a fourth blockage just downstream from where the river splits into several channels that on the upstream trip run off to the left. This was a garden variety step-on-the-logs and pull across.

I'd been out about two hours by the time I crossed the fourth blockage and got to the braided channels. Though I thought I recognized one of the channels, I also thought when Jim and I were here a month ago we had, on the way up, stuck to the channels on our far right. The rightmost channel here failed me. and I needed to double back. I was out of time, so once I got turned around I continued back downstream to the take out.

My back had been bothering me for the last few weeks, so I've been off the water since mid-January. It felt so good to dig the paddle into the water and feel the glide of the boat. While perhaps a bit windy, it was a beautiful day to be on the river. Noise from nearby, busy highways, aside, I'm always impressed by the wild character of the river in this stretch. Having been out of action for a few weeks, my outing reminded me of how lucky I am to get so much pleasure from this relatively simple pastime. Pictures at <http://home.comcast.net/~chipCanoe/Jan07/Govs-Bridge-Rd-Jan6-2007.htm> and http://home.comcast.net/~chip2006/PaxGB/Patux_at_Governors_Bridge_020307.html

Chip Walsh

Baltimore Harbor and a New Dry Suit, February 4—Todd Angerhofer and I paddled Baltimore's Inner Harbor today. This was my first attempt at cold water paddling. About two weeks ago I received a new Kokatat GMER dry suit. I was somewhat nervous since I have never paddled in cold water before and despite the fact that I had the dry suit, it has also been four months since I have been in the water with my boat. The air temperature was around 30 degrees, the water temperature around 33. We met at

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burped by Cyndi (not his mother). She continued, discussing weather and marine radios, navigation aides, tow ropes, GPS systems, emergency equipment, lights and flares. The group stared amazed as she and Kingsley emptied bag after bag of clothing and gear, stacking it on two tables. By the time Cyndi brought out an emergency bag with a space blanket, waterproof matches, fog horn and power bar, they looked positively green. We told them this was a good reason why we like going on CPA trips: someone has prepared the trip and brought all the right gear.

After a lunch of chicken fajitas and chocolate chip cookies, Dave Biss and Marshall Woodruff told the new yakers where to go—paddling. Working from a Chesapeake Bay and Susquehanna River map provided to every participant, they described the range of paddling locations and conditions in the area, and recalled some of their favorite paddles. Marshall waxed eloquent about clouds of tundra swans massed around Eastern Neck NWR, his favorite venue.



Cyndi Janetzko, Dave Biss, and Kingsley Chan photo by Greg Welker



Marshall Woodruff and Dave Biss Tell Paddlers Where to Go photo by Greg Welker

The group was enthusiastic, full of questions and very complimentary about the CPA and its mission to promote safe, fun paddling in the region. Many took pictures and several suggested the class be videotaped for future use. We didn't paddle due to the solid state of the West River, but we did eat. All in all, a good day. Special thanks to our presenters, to co-organizer and site manager Brian Blankinship, to Gina Cicotello for handling registration, to Jenny Plummer-Welker for handling publicity, to Ralph Heimlich, Dave Biss and Cyndi Janetzko for putting the packets together, and all those who helped make it a success.

For a participant's view of SK101, see John Pescatore's blog at http://security.typepad.com/internet_security_be_care/2007/02/a_lot_of_money_.html

CPA also received kudos from REI's Board and VP for Public Affairs. REI, EMS and Springriver helped us publicize SK101.

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Ft. Armistad Park around 10:00 AM, but due to the small craft advisory that was posted for the Bay, we chose to switch put-ins and drove the the Canton Water Park off Boston Street.

We put in and headed towards the Light Street Pavilion. The winds, despite the small craft advisory, were not too bad. There was some ice build up in several of the marinas but none on the open water of the Harbor. We headed into Fells Point, at the docks at Broadway, where a few people were walking around. We headed back out to the Harbor and continued our paddling towards the pavillions. While we were next to the pier where the U.S.S. Constellation is moored, Todd overheard a young woman speaking Russian. Todd responded back in Russian and had a pleasant conversation with this woman and her grandfather totally in Russian. It seems that the Grandfather is visiting the U.S. from Moscow. This guy comes halfway around the world and there is this guy in a kayak speaking Russian to him. Small world. From the pavillions, we paddled over towards the Maryland Science Center. Then headed over towards Tide Point (so named because that is where they used to make Tide detergent).



Todd Angerhofer on Baltimore Harbor photo by Ed Hershon

From there we headed back to the Canton Water Park and took out. We paddled 5.71 miles in 2 hours. The link to my pictures is <http://www.fotomat.com/home/EDHERSHON/GW6YJBGFFG5S.EZP>