

Second Three Day Paddle Trip

August 21, 22 & 23, 2015

By Bruce Julian

About two months ago, I was asked to do another overnight paddle to False Cape State Park, paddling on Back Bay. I had finished one such trip on the first weekend of June, and that was all I had planned to do for this year. After 3 or 4 people started asking me why not have another one this year? We put an additional trip out in the Activity Schedule, and within one week; we had 17 people that wanted to fight the wind and waves of Back Bay's waters, and fight we did! We would not have our cook on this trip, because he was on vacation and wasn't sure when he would return. So, I took on the task of figuring out how much 17 people would eat in 3 days, and what to buy that everyone would eat. It's not easy, with 2 breakfasts, 2 lunches that we would eat while out paddling, and two evening meals. Me, not being a cook took the simple way out, and had hot dogs and cheese burgers for the evening meals and bagels, cinnamon buns and fruit for breakfast, with ham, turkey, cheese and peanut butter & jelly sandwiches for lunch (not altogether of course). This worked out pretty well for everyone, mainly for me, because everyone was used to having steak & baked chicken and pancakes, eggs and bacon, but everyone said that the food was good, and we had plenty to go around; so nobody went hungry.

I told everyone to meet at 2:00 P.M. on Friday, but on Wednesday the forecast for Friday was Rain and Thunder Storms around 3:00 PM. I called everyone to see if they could meet at 11:00 A.M. and we would try and beat the rain. Well, we did because there was no rain or thunder storms for the 3 days that we spent paddling the waters of Back Bay. Wind, now that was another story, it started blowing right before we got to Little Island City Park on Friday, and was still blowing on Sunday as we pulled our boats out of the water. I won't say who by name, but we had 5 different kayaks turn over because of the wind. This was my fourth trip and we have never had any boats turn over, but on Friday two went over and on Sunday three went over along with one broken Paddle, and it was a high dollar paddle.

On the way down on Friday, the wind was behind us as we paddled out from the Put-in. I wanted to go down the Westside of Long Islands, and this plan started out well, until about half-way across Shipp's Bay, when the winds picked up a few knots with 3 or 4 foot waves. We all made it safely to the lagoon, with calmer waters, but this is where we had our first 2 boats go over. When paddling in Back Bay, if you turn over your boat, the best thing to do is stand up because most of the water that we paddle in is only between 1 to 4 feet deep. Nobody was hurt, except for their pride, and we righted their boats and pumped out the water, and were off again. We had a park truck take all our food and gear down for us so we had very little in our boats to get wet.

Reaching Barbour Hill, in False Cape State Park, we pulled our boats up onto the sandy beach and had our lunch. Some had trouble, getting out of their kayaks with the wind, but others enjoyed the roughness of the bay, and had a great time playing in it. We stayed at this location almost an hour, and then got back into our boats; we then headed for Wash Woods and the Environmental Education Center, where we would be staying for two nights. Dottie, who had agreed to ride in the truck with our food and gear, and help the park person to unload everything, was super. She not only unloaded, she put everything in the refrigerator, put cold bottles of water and drinks in coolers and iced them down and made two dishes of brownies to eat Friday and Saturday. This is not an easy task because the kitchen is on the second floor and this is where the food and drink for 17 people needed to be stored. She was out in the yard as we approached the EEC Building from the north, and we were all glad to be there after a 10 mile plus paddle. Around 6:30 P.M. we had our hot dogs, and after cleaning up, 14 of the group went for a hike out to the beach, and they didn't get back until about 9:30 P.M. After all of the fun that we had on this beautiful day, we turned in and slept very well.

Up at 6:00 A.M., the next morning, we had our breakfast and talked about the weather and the strong winds that were forecast for the day. After long discussions, some decided to hang around the EEC Building and forgo the 14 mile paddle that I had planned for the group. Out of the 17 we only had 7 hardy kayakers to take up the challenge of the 15 to 20 M.P.H. winds and paddle with me to Carova. Leaving the sheltered water behind the Boathouse, we started across the Bay heading southwest. It was a long quarter of a mile with the north wind blowing from our right side, but we all made it within 20 minutes to calmer waters on Deal Creek. Protected by Big Bald Island and Horse Island, we had an easier paddle for almost 2 miles. As we crossed the State Line, Deal Creek opened up to a very large body of water and we had the north winds against us once again. Here at Mann's Island, we had our first out of boat break and we talked about what we should do, go back or go on, everyone said go on. From here the Creek got smaller and the wind didn't blow as hard and it wasn't long before we reached Knott's Island Bay. As we broke out into the Bay we saw five Wild Ponies eating the Marsh Grass, and we paddled over to them and took pictures. Paddling about 1 mile further we reached the first of many canals going up into Carova and to the Fire Station. We left our kayaks here and headed down Ocean Pearl Rd. to Ernie Bowden's house where we decided to have our lunch out on his deck. We found Ernie out in his garden tending his tomato plants, not a hard job for most people but Ernie is 90 years old and he worried about them dying because of the lack of rain. We all climbed his steps to the deck as he sat down in his chairlift and road up. He had told me earlier that the chairlift had been donated to him from a group there in Carova along with a basket that is electric and can bring his heavy loads up and down. This makes life a lot easier for him. After an hour of eating and listening to him, we decided it was time to leave and head to the Fire House for, you guess it, ice cream. No one was interested in walking to the beach so with the ice cream eaten at

the station; and we then headed back to our boats, thinking of the 7 mile paddle back against the strong north wind as we paddled out into the bay.

The trip back was full of surprises, yes the wind was still blowing, but that's not one of the surprises. We headed up the canals, south, then west, then north, and finely west again. Now we were back in Knott's Island Bay and turned north with about 15 M.P.H. winds in our faces. The first surprise, was that the ponies that we had seen on the trip down, were out in the Bay walking around and some of us got up close to take more pictures. After about 30 minutes we were back in the small creeks and sheltered from that endless wind, that never seemed to stop blowing. As we reached the State Line and Deal Creek, two of us were out front when we saw something big and black crossing the creek. We started paddling faster trying to see what it was. At first we thought it could be a Black Bear heading back towards the Great Dismal Swamp, but it turned out to be a 250 to 275 pound boar hog. With feet as small as a pigs are, I would have never believed that he could swim as fast as he did. We were able to reach him just about 10 second before he jumped into the tall grasses on Horse Island, with no time for any pictures. The rest of the group then paddled up to us within a few minutes, and we told them of the big hog that we had seen swimming over 100 yards across the creek, and then disappearing into the grasses. We were only about two miles from the EEC Building, and knowing that we had to cross over the open water in the bay with about 20 M.P.H. winds; no one was looking forward to it. With the EEC Building in sight we paddled into the wind and were there in a matter of minutes. We all rested and told the ones that had stayed back of all that had happened to us on this great paddle, and they too told us of their day. The nine who had stayed back, said that they did go on a short paddle along the bay staying close to the Marsh, down to Big Bald Island and up a short creek and then paddled back. They also went on a hike to the Church and Graveyard Site and some even hiked out to the beach and looked for shells. Around 6:00 P.M. we started cooking our hamburger and cheese burgers on the grill outside, and boy they were good after a long day of paddling. We all turned in early, hoping the next morning that the wind would not be quite as strong as it had been for the last two days.

The last morning came, and the wind was down just a little, but still blowing from the north. After our breakfast, we started cleaning the building and packing our gear to be ready for the park truck to take our gear out along with Dottie and her Kayak. We paddled along the shoreline all the way to Barbour Hill where we stopped for a break and some ate their lunch while others held back so that we could go to Pungo Pizza & Ice Cream Parlor for ours. The paddle was slow, but we all stayed together and finished the trip as we had started two days earlier. The wind had blown the water out, and for the second time we had to walk our boats in for the last 100 feet. Dottie was waiting at the parking lot with cold drinks and watermelon and everyone enjoyed that greatly. Everyone had lots of fun on another great paddle. Eight decided to head to the Pizza Parlor after everyone loaded their boats, and we all said goodbye to one another. Thanks to all that made this trip memorable in one way or another. Thanks to Margaret, Jane, Gayle, Melissa, Christine M., Christine W., Faye and for Dottie for her extra work that helped us all. I can't leave out the guys: Thanks to Mark, Richard, Aubrey, Buck, Bruce D., John, and to Frank and Bob for cooking the hotdogs and hamburgers on the grill.