

Three Day Paddle

August, 15 - 17, 2014

By Bruce Julian

I set this paddle up way back in April and as the summer started the plan's progress each month. By July we had 16 people that wanted to paddle, a cook to prepare our 6 meals, the route we would take each day and the building we all would enjoy each night. As August came we lost 8 of our people for different reasons but Bob and Bob and Bob came on board and Bob # 1 brought 3 others with him. By the second week of August, we had 14 people signed up and each had paid their share of the total bill. We were now on our way for a great trip through Back Bay from Little Island City Park down to False Cape State Park.

Finely the day came that we would all meet at 3:00 P.M. at Little Island City Park. One by one we drove into the park and tried to find a parking space as close to the put-in as we could. Everyone brought kayaks except Richard, he had his canoe. The water was across the street about 200 feet away, and 5 or 6 people brought their wheels to roll the boats this distance to the water. By 3:40 P.M., we all had our boats in the water and I took the first picture of the group. As we sat in the boats, I gave a talk about which way we would paddle and where we would take breaks on the way down. Then, we started our 10 mile trip with the first of many strokes, out of the little pond into the larger waters of Back Bay. All day the winds had been blowing from the south at about 3 or 4 miles an hour, but as we headed out into open waters, the winds changed. As we reached the south end of Long Island (our first stop), the wind was blowing from the east at about 10 miles an hour. On Back Bay, with the depth of the water anywhere from 4 feet to 7 feet, any winds over six miles an hour can make it choppy and more difficult to paddle. After our first break, we headed east into the wind, and as we reached the tree line; the bay flattened out and paddling was easier for all.

After making one other stop at Barbour Hill for bathroom breaks, we paddled the rest of the way reaching Wash Woods about sundown. Everyone helped to get all the boats out of the water, and after cleaning up, we had our first meal. Dennis had driven our gear and food in, and had a spaghetti dinner waiting for us to enjoy. After dinner we moved our gear to the bunks where we would sleep for the next two nights. Around 9:00 P.M. some of us went for a hike to see the many stars that shine over False Cape every night, and to watch the moon come up at 10:08. It was only a half moon, but it was bright orange and stood out very clear in the blackness of the dark ocean. We also saw 4 shooting stars heading down towards the eastern sky. With the tide being out, we could walk out towards the ocean, looking south to see the light of the Corolla lighthouse. Heading back to the center, and after hiking the one mile, we found everyone else had turned in for the night. The first day of our trip was coming to an end; as I turn out the lights.

The next morning after a big breakfast we cleaned up the kitchen and all but two of us loaded our boats with water and food for a 13 mile paddle (round trip) down into North Carolina. The goal was to find the remains of an old Life Saving Station and to see if we could find some of the wild ponies there in Corova. Both missions were accomplished. Bob B. with his three explorers headed inland, and found the old building, and Bruce and his renegades paddled on to a community park. As we paddled up the canal toward the park, 7 ponies who were feeding along side of the water, decided to have a drink and walked out into the canal next to us. We got some great pictures and were able to see them up close, almost too close at one time. You could tell they had done this before, because with no hesitation, the Mare stepped off the bank into the water and walked down the canal drinking water as the others followed. After about 100 feet, they stepped up and out of the water, and into someone's backyard and began eating the grasses. The stallion came into the water last and following the herd, he finely stepped onto the shore, laid down in the dry dirt, and began rolling over and over; drying himself off as he put on quite a show.

We paddled to the park and had our lunch, which were sandwiches that we had prepared that morning. They tasted great after 4 hours on the water. Now it was time to head back, and as always when paddling; the wind was in our faces once again. This wind helped to keep us cool from the hot August sun that was shining down. The trip back took only 3 hours, even though we did stop for a short break, at the same island; as we did on the way down.

Arriving back at the center around 5:30 P.M., everyone put away their gear and some took showers. By 6:30 P.M., Dennis served Parmesan Crusted Chicken, and we sat down and enjoyed a very good meal. Around 8:00 P.M., a few of us hiked through the park, out to the beach, watching for falling stars and anything else that might be showing up in the sky. On the way back, we checked out the Platform on the Maritime Trail, and saw a small light out over the ocean, making irregular movements about 300 feet off the ocean water, thinking it must be the Navy doing some training or one of those UFO'S back in town. As we looked further south out across the ocean, we saw another large square light that I have never seen in my 22 years at the park, another UFO I guess ! Back at the center around 11:30 P.M., we all turned in for the night, hoping that the UFO'S would stay out in the ocean and leave us alone.

On Sunday morning, Dennis served us another great breakfast, along with all the fixings for sandwiches to take with us on our trip out. We cleaned up the kitchen, putting away all the dishes, and straightening up the center, before we began loading bags up on the truck. Taking a few more pictures and talking about our two days of paddling, and saying how much fun we had, it was time to begin our paddle out.

We had west winds blowing around 10 to 12 miles an hour; so we decided to stay close to the shoreline and started back around 9:30 A.M.. Heading north toward Barbour Hill, where we stopped for a short time, and that all important bathroom break, while the wind had slowed a little. Leaving here, we paddled into the Refuge's waters, and here we saw 2 Bald Eagles and an Osprey, and something that looked like a River Otter. Around noon, we paddled up to the refuge where their office is located, and ate those sandwiches that we had made that morning.

Now our trip was almost coming to an end, with only 2 miles left, and we started out once again. I took the lead on this last leg of the trip, to find the small ditch that would lead us to the take-out. We all made it back together and everyone helped get all of the boats to the trucks and securely tied down for the trip home. We said our good-byes, and we talked of the good time that we had with each other for the last 3 days. We did have sunshine most of the time, and just a few times with strong winds, but other than that; we had good weather. I

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