

Eddy Out



Chota Canoe Club, Knoxville TN. Established 1969

Mission Statement: Promote community paddle sport activities, safety awareness and techniques while being actively environmentally responsible.

November 2013

Club Meeting Scheduled for Thursday Nov. 14.

Conservation Donations to be decided and Officer Elections for 2014

Please plan to attend the November meeting to help decide important issues for the club. The meeting is at Dead End BBQ at 6:30 pm Thursday Nov.14. All current club members will be asked to selected their choices for the conservation donations for 2013. At the October meeting we selected 5 organizations to be considered.

1. American Whitewater
2. Little River Watershed Association
3. Ft. Loudon Lake Association
4. Legacy Parks
5. Tennessee Citizens for Wilderness Planning

We will pick the 3 organizations that receive the most votes.

Club officer elections will also be held. Several people have volunteered to help fill positions for next year but there are still several positions unfilled.

The following club members have stepped up to volunteer for board positions:

President.....Bob Eckhardt

Vice-President.....Jim Martin

Member at Large.....Doug Johnstone

White Water Trip Chair.....Pete Feist
Touring Trip Chair.....Deb McCarter
Newsletter Editor.....Richard Redano
Treasurer.....Trey Coleman

The following positions still need volunteers:

Secretary

Conservation Coordinator

Safety Chairperson

Webmaster

Any club member wanting to serve on the board for any position please attend the meeting and submit your name to be considered.

E-mailed votes will be considered for the conservation donation decision. You must have paid your 2013 club dues for your vote to be considered. Please submit your list of 3 choices to: David Frey at: frey01@knology.net

Touring Trip Report: The Eastern Shore of Virginia



Four Chota Club members enjoy their moment in the salt marsh near Willis Wharf, Virginia. From foreground, right to left, are photo-taker Sharon Cogburn, John Turner, Dave Cole, and trip leader Jack Webb.

BY DAVE COLE

On Saturday, September 28, four Chota Canoe Club paddlers headed north for a week-long exploration of the area known as the "Eastern Shore of Virginia." The trip was led by **Jack Webb** of Athens, Tennessee, who has family ties in the Eastern Shore area. Jack has wanted to paddle in the area since he drove through it some 10-11 years ago.

The return trip with other Chota members didn't disappoint. "There were a multitude of put-ins and a diversity of paddling opportunities, from bayside and fresh water to ocean side, with nature, history and a variety of things to paddle for," Jack said after returning home. Also, it certainly didn't hurt that temperatures ranged from 70 to 85 each day of our stay, with sunny skies, no rain, and very little wind for a whole week.

Jack was joined by **Sharon Cogburn** of Farragut, **John Turner** of Tellico Village, and **Dave Cole** of Barbourville, Kentucky. All are fairly experienced touring paddlers, with John being even more experienced on whitewater. John paddled a Perception Eclipse, while Sharon paddled a Valley Sea Kayaks' Avocet and Jack and Dave each paddled a P&H HV (High Volume) Cetus which they had purchased at the East Coast Kayak Festival in Charleston in early 2012.

All seemed to be equally impressed with the Eastern Shore experience. John compared it to "going to Canada" and enjoyed the sunrises and sunsets from our cottage's deck. Dave tuned into nature, especially in the salt marshes outside Willis Wharf where flock after flock of geese and terns flew by. Sharon relished it all, including the wonderful fresh seafood at the Island Inn Restaurant on Wachapreague. She also put together a fantastic breakfast using Dave's seafood leftovers from Steamers on Chincoteague and a dozen eggs with cheese, red peppers and green onions. Sharon even had crab cakes for breakfast on several occasions.

For those not familiar with the area: The Eastern Shore of Virginia is a 70-mile long region that is part of the Delmarva Peninsula and is separated from the rest of Virginia by the Chesapeake Bay. The land is very flat, ranging from sea level to 50 feet above sea level. The Atlantic Ocean and Chesapeake Bay are never far away. The peninsula ranges from 10 up to 25 miles wide, including the marshes and barrier islands. The Eastern Shore region is predominately rural with numerous fields of cotton, soybean and sweet potato crops, as well as large-scale chicken farms.

Jack chose as our base of operations a three-bedroom waterfront cottage located about 6-7 miles from Onancock (pronounced "oh-NAN-cock"). Onancock is situated about midpoint in the peninsula, making each day's driving time to paddling destinations no more than an hour or so. Being off season, we got an excellent rental rate of about \$960 for a week's stay. Divided by four, that's not bad. John chipped in on gas for Dave's car, while Sharon shared gas costs for Jack's car. While researching places to stay in the Onancock area, Jack located 11-12 potential places.



Jack looks content in his P&H Cetus floating in front of the Onancock Wharf.



Jack and John portage from the Marsh to Chesapeake Bay.

Onancock is worth a trip in itself. The town has been labeled the “coolest small town in America” by Budget Travel Magazine. Onancock was established in 1680 and was once a bustling seaport. Today, it has a designation as a national historic district, with numerous buildings dating from the 1800's and early 1900's. There's also a wharf from which the ferry departs to famous Tangier Island, as well as providing access for kayakers to Onancock Creek, which stretches five miles from the town to Chesapeake Bay. This was one of our outings, which is included in the summaries below.

Paddling Days Summaries

After arriving during the evening of Saturday, September 28, and enjoying a good night's sleep, snores and all, we began our first paddling day on **Sunday, Sept. 29**. We filled up with breakfast in downtown Onancock at Janet's, where John was rebuffed, good-naturedly I believe, by the owner from New York when he asked for biscuits and gravy. Instead, most of us had the “2-2-2” special, involving eggs, waffles and sausage. All full, we drove 45 miles to the Pocomoke State Forest and put in the Pocomoke River at the Byrd Landing in Snow Hill, Maryland. The first excitement we experienced was being questioned by the police who were looking for a missing man. We would see another group of police searching by boat several times during the outing. Sights included numerous large cypress trees, bald eagles and herons. We took a break after winding through a narrow portion of a creek and then headed back, travelling altogether 10.7 miles. We then drove 30 miles or so to the town of Chincoteague where we did a little scouting before settling down for a seafood dinner and brew at the Chincoteague Inn restaurant. One interesting attraction on the trip to Chincoteague is passing NASA's famous Wallops Flight Facility where there have been over 16,000 launches from the rocket testing range since its founding in 1945.

On our second paddling day, **Monday, Sept. 30**, we ate breakfast at what would become a group favorite, the “Sage” restaurant, where the “2-2-2” cost \$2.99 and was not far from

the Wal-Mart on VA 13, the main thoroughfare up the peninsula. We then paddled from the Onancock wharf to Chesapeake Bay, by way of both the creek and marshes, where we saw herons and egrets. The overall trip out and back was 10.5 miles and involved one portage across a muddy beach, one exciting paddle around a point in the bay, and a general feeling of being lost for 10-15 minutes in the marsh on the way home. This was despite Jack's having a map and new GPS which he eventually got the hang of. Dave had a back-up GPS while John had a marine radio to keep us out of trouble. Back on dry land, we dragged combs across our heads, changed shirts, etc., and dined at Mallard's, which is located in the old store building adjacent to the wharf. A highlight for me was the appetizer of mussels dipped in garlic butter.

On Tuesday, Oct. 1, we started our day again at the Sage restaurant before driving some 65 miles or so to Kiptopeke State Park located in the southern tip of the peninsula. The main attraction was getting to paddle around the nine concrete cargo ships built and used during World War II. After the war, the ships were sunk a few hundred yards off shore to create a wave barrier that made it possible for a ferry to operate. The ferry took passengers to and from Norfolk, Va., all the way across the bay. Paddling around these ships was an eerie experience at times, with the concrete hulks dotted with hundreds of pelicans, pigeons and gulls perched on the sides and structures on the ships. We kept the required 50 feet distance from the ships as we paddled 2.15 miles around the harbor. You can read all about the ships online. Two were sunk for a similar reason off the coast of Normandy. By the way, we had also planned to visit and paddle in the nearby Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuge, but the federal refuge was closed due to the financial impasse in Washington, DC. The refuge is an important avian migration area for songbirds, raptors and the Monarch Butterflies. After our paddle at Kiptopeke, we enjoyed lunch at a quaint diner on VA 13 called "Sting Rays." Then it was our luck to discover the put-in at Willis Wharf about three hours before sunset. This was a wonderful out and back 3.9-mile paddle in a beautiful marsh. With about one hour left before sunset, we brought our four kayaks together and toasted with brew the beauty of nature, comradeship, and just being alive in the moment. We made it back to the wharf amidst a fantastic sunset. Unfortunately, this was the one time we got caught by the insects which drove all of us to hurry and load the boats and slam the car doors shut. Willis Wharf, by the way, is a secluded seaside village which, we later learned, is an aquaculture center that annually raises millions of clams and oysters. We ended our very full day with dinner at the marina in Wachapreague, the Island House – enjoying fresh seafood platters with clams, oysters, flounder and scallops!

On Wednesday, Oct. 2, we all were a little slow to rise and opted for breakfast at home – toasted and buttered sour dough bread, cheese, apples and lots of good hot coffee. Then we were off to Chincoteague Island again, but this time to paddle. The federal put-in was closed so we purchased parking passes at \$5 per car from the Town of Chincoteague. Arriving at Fir Landing, one of three or four owned by the town, we found no parking, but Sharon and Jack negotiated parking on private land. At the last moment, however, returning fishermen freed up one parking spot for Dave's Trailbrazer, while Jack parked his vehicle as permitted on the private property. Finally, we got our boats into the water and paddled along the shore headed for Assateague Island, which was about 3.35 miles away. Along the way we passed a contingent of kayaking anglers who hadn't had much luck. Soon afterwards, we took a chance and landed on the marshy but reasonably solid-looking shore. We were lucky. The ground was solid enough and the hoof prints reflected lots of pony activity. We swished our way up a small embankment and found ourselves on a raised gravel road that passed by a very large field. We immediately saw three to four small herds of ponies, 4-5 to a herd, the nearest a couple of hundred yards away. We then walked on the road heading in the direction of the Atlantic Ocean, getting close enough to hear the breakers but still a good distance away. Dave was having issues with his feet, having created blisters on both feet due to the coarse leather-like material of his sandals. This decided it and the group headed back, but not before seeing two lone ponies at about 75 yards distance. They disappeared into the woods as we tried to creep closer. Getting back into our boats, we headed back towards Chincoteague. Our return included passing through oyster/clam beds where we saw three fishermen in high boots apparently in the middle of harvesting. We also saw two large boats filled with tourists that had come to see the sights. Returning to our landing, we loaded up and headed towards a diner called "Steamers." Having about 30-40 minutes before the restaurant opened, we landed at a place called "Woody's Eatery," where we enjoyed several appetizers, a game of corn hole won by Sharon, and drinks purchased at a store across the street, which was fine with the eatery's owners. Then we dined at Steamers, where Dave's steam pot meal of corn on the cob, red potatoes and a medley of seafood led to the wonderful breakfast on the following morning.

On Thursday, Oct. 3, our final day of paddling, we headed north towards Wachapreague and fortuitously landed at a put-in called Folley Creek. Our goal for the day was to reach the Atlantic Ocean which was in doubt a couple of times during the 8.74-mile round trip that wound through the salt marshes of Cedar Island. The problem was the low tide, which had us paddling in maybe a foot of water for what seemed like a mile. We started experiencing these issues as we passed an old scenic Coast Guard station, including buildings and a tower.

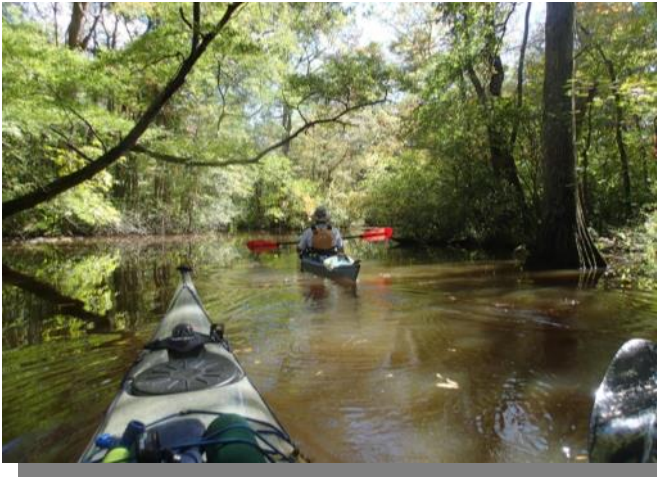
The sign read "No trespassing" and we obeyed it. We could hear the breakers, though, but the water kept getting shallower. Were we headed toward a dead end? There was barely room in which to turn our boats around and we all dreaded getting out into the muck. One volunteer, however, said she would try to climb a small bank and get a visual. She (Sharon) sank halfway to her knees and had to retrieve her sandals by hand. Two less brave souls battled around the corner to see if things looked better, and lo and behold, they could see the ocean a couple of hundred yards away. We left our kayaks and made our way to a fantastic shoreline filled with mounds of shells and even one tree that contained a dozen or so conch shells, to which we added our own. We toasted the experience with wine, we walked on the beach, and some of us fell asleep, waiting for the tide to change and give us enough water to return home. After a couple of hours, we decided to chance it and paddled easily through sections that about stopped us earlier. The Chota Club foursome ended their final day of padding back at the Island House Restaurant in Wachapreague.

The next morning, Friday, Oct. 4, we left the cottage around 8 a.m. and had our final inexpensive breakfast at the Sage. We then began the 600-plus-mile journey back to Knoxville, but this time via a different route. We had driven from Knoxville via I-81, turning off onto I-64 towards Richmond, Va. Things were fine until we got around Norfolk and hit a traffic jam. A detour ran us around for an extra 30-45 minutes before we got onto the amazing 17.6-mile Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel. Once on the Eastern Shore, we had around 73 miles to go to reach Onancock. The whole trip took about 11 hours. On our return trip, we opted to get on VA 460 in Norfolk and follow it west to Roanoke, where John Turner was raised. John had urged this repeatedly during the entire trip to the Eastern Shore, saying he had used VA 460 often while attending Old Dominion University in Norfolk. Needless to say, he was well pleased at our smooth driving return trip to Roanoke, as if to say, "What did I tell you?" We made such good time that John led us downtown to the locally famous Roanoke Weiner Stand. What a pretty downtown! The hotdogs were good, too. After dropping off John at his brother's house, we got back onto I-81 and headed to Knoxville. The return trip took approximately 10 hours, which is comparable in time traveled on the trips to Florida that Jim Martin and Gary Kilpatrick do, and not much more than the club's frequent trips to Cumberland Island in southern Georgia.

Jack Webb for his part was greatly impressed with the kayak tripping potential of the Eastern Shore of Virginia. He's already thinking about a return trip in the future. "There's so much paddling to do, including quite a few established blueways along the shore. On a return trip we could go farther north into Maryland. There's the Janes Island State Park, Smith Island and Tilghman Island on the bay side and all the barrier islands on the ocean side that we barely touched, where you can camp." These islands stretch nearly 60 miles along the Virginia and Maryland shores and include the pristine 37-mile long Assateague

Island National Seashore, which has been designated as a World Biosphere Reserve by the United Nations. This area alone would justify an extended visit.

For more information, you can contact any of the Chota members who participated on the Eastern Shore of Virginia trip via email. Jack Webb – jcwebb41@yahoo.com; Sharon Coghurn – onehappidog@aol.com; John Turner – turnerjw58@live.com; or Dave Cole – david.coleky@gmail.com.



Jack leads the way during a side trip in the Nature Conservancy's Nassawango Creek Preserve in the Pocomoke State Forest in Maryland.



John paddles around one of the nine World War II concrete ships sunk in the harbor of the Kiptopeke State Park.



During the group's search for a navigable waterway to the ocean, Sharon was briefly stuck in the muck of the marsh on Cedar Island.



Jack, Dave and Sharon toast their arrival on a remote beach on Cedar Island fronting the Atlantic Ocean. John was the picture-taker.