

Trip Report

By Damon Maguire

In September, five Explore North Coast members embarked on trip to God's Pocket Provincial Marine Park off the northeastern tip of Vancouver Island in British Columbia. The intriguingly named park at the northern end of Queen Charlotte Strait consists of small, forested islands surrounded by gin-clear water that teems with marine flora and fauna. The park contains a seabird breeding colony and bald eagle habitat.

Michael Morris planned the trip but was unable to go due to his work schedule. That left Larry Buwalda, John Day, Bruce Hales, Damon Maguire (your scribe) and Mike Zeppego to carry on in his stead (there was some suspicion that once Michael saw the crusty mariners who would be his paddling companions, he volunteered for more shifts).

The group, in two vehicles, met up in Port Hardy on Sept.



Balaklava Is. lighthouse. Photo by Karen, asst. lightkeeper.

18. After we gleaned information from a local outfitter, we departed at mid-afternoon in light rain on glass-calm water. Any qualms caused by the gloomy weather dissipated within the first hours as we encountered several bald eagles and then a small pod of orca. We heard the resonant blows of the orca before we saw them, and were surprised to spot the lingering mist of their exhalations a mile away.

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Calendar

- Sunday, Feb. 4 - Sunrise at Hookton Slough, 6:45 a.m.
- Tuesday, Feb. 6 - Board Meeting, 5:30 p.m.
- Monday, Feb. 12 - Membership Meeting, 6 p.m.
- Sunday, Feb. 18 - Wilson Creek, 8 a.m.
- Saturday, March 3 - Dyer-ville Bridge to Scotia, 8 a.m.
- Monday, March 12 - Membership Meeting, 6 p.m.
- Sunday, March 18 - Samoa Beach to Breakfast, 8 a.m.

On-going

- Thursday - Humboats Social Paddle, 6 p.m. Call first - (707) 443-5157

For more information about calendar events, visit explorenorthcoast.net.

Submissions for future newsletters can be sent to:

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We paddled in their general direction (trying not to violate any marine mammal regulations) and one whale veered off to check us out. It surfaced close enough to clearly see the white swash on its black flank and water rising on its fin as it dove. Later, as we landed at our campsite on Vancouver Island, a humpback blew nearby as a black bear and her cub scanned a creek for salmon. The place felt like an episode of Wild Kingdom.

True to Pacific Northwest weather patterns, the second day was drippy and overcast, but the water again calm as we paddled north along the island. And, once again, wildlife was abundant. There were bald eagles, harlequin ducks, phalaropes, loons, kingfishers and other bird life, as well as diverse marine life in the clear, cold water. Transfixed by an amazing array of sea stars, starfish, anemones and underwater formations, we must have been a sight: five kayakers, going nowhere, peering into the water like egrets looking for fish to spear. Scuba divers flock to the pristine waters of God' Pocket and Jacques Cousteau considered the area some of the best diving in the world.

The crossing from Vancouver Island to God's Pocket via Goletas Channel was an easy half-hour paddle. Current was not an issue on the trip. Three to four knots was the maximum tidal flow and there were no tidal races or rips. We landed at Nolan Point on Balaklava Island, a low finger of rock backed by dark forest. We spread damp



John Day and orca. Photo by Bruce Hales

tents and gear on the grass and bushes to take advantage of weak sunlight. The campsite was nicely appointed with driftwood benches and a table made from a shipping pallet. There was even split and stacked firewood, which Bruce was able to coax into a cozy fire in spite of the damp. We were the only campers and didn't see any other kayakers during the trip.

After dinner it started to rain, so we retreated to our tents and bed. The rain lasted all night and all fared well, except for Mike, who had to get up in the middle of the night to throw a tarp over his leaking tent. The campsite was carpeted with soft, spongy, lichen-like grass that not only was soft to sleep on, but also drained well.

The next two days were sunnier as we circumnavigated Balaklava and neighboring Hurst Island. On shore, deer ate the ribbon-like kelp that collected there. Bald eagles became like sparrows, hardly worth a second glance. We stopped to explore other campsites, but none was as appealing as Nolan Point. On

Balaklava we received a tour of the lighthouse from Karen, the young assistant light keeper and her dog, Pepper. The milk-white beacon and its red-roofed outbuildings clung to a rocky point above Queen Charlotte Strait with the British Columbia mainland visible in the distance. Although beautiful, the location was exposed to the elements. Karen said 90 mile-per-hour winds once forced her to crawl to the radio shack to air her daily weather report.

Bruce (another victim of a relentless work schedule) and I left after three days, while John, Larry and Mike stayed to explore adjacent Nigei Island. As the two of us made the crossing to Vancouver Island, we were enveloped in a fog bank of diffuse silvery light that caused a fogbow, or white rainbow, a phenomenon created when water droplets are too small to act as prisms as in a typical rainbow. While we paused to enjoy the ephemeral light, a school of dolphins burst from the sea, blowing and leaping, giving us a perfect conclusion to a great trip.

In the event of a capsize...



Photos by Georgianna La Peer

Rescue and recovery skills are essential for the kayaker. Take classes, and make time to practice. You may save a life.



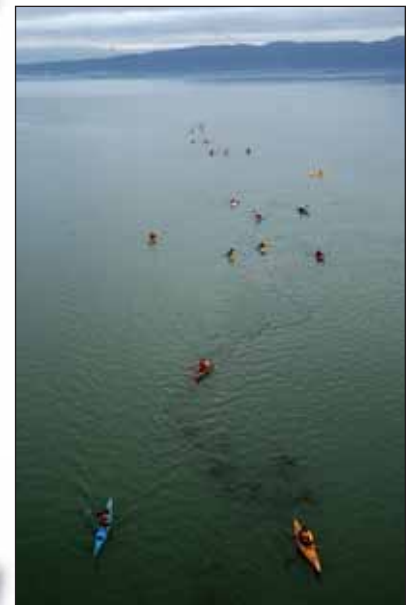
This sequence of pictures shows an assisted rescue with the swimmer re-entering the boat from between the two kayaks, with the rescuer stabilizing both boats. The technique involves floating on your back, and entering feet first. The trick is to keep your eyes on the sky. There are many different ways to get back in your boat. Try them all, and with practice you'll find the one that works best for you.



Roll Class...



On Saturday, Nov. 11, 2006 Explore North Coast held its roll class at the Arcata Community Pool. The class was taught by ACA certified instructors, as well as Explore North Coast members. The class consisted of people working on all levels of their rolls, from beginning to off-side. Clockwise from top right: Michael Morris, Georgianna La Peer, Marcella Humphrey, Marcia Tauber, Tracy Smith, Greg Bundros and Larry Buwalda. *Photos by Helen Wilson.*



On Sunday, Dec. 31, 2006, Explore North Coast members rode a nine foot tidal run-off from the Arcata Marsh to the Samoa boat ramp, a total of eight miles. *Photo by Mark Lufkin.*

John Dayism



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An Eskimo Roll may not be as physically enriching as an IRA roll-over, but it is much more meaningful and moving to the heart”

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