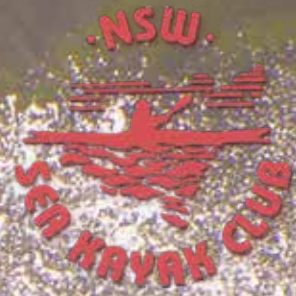


THE MAGAZINE OF THE NSW SEA KAYAK CLUB  
ISSUE 104 | MARCH 2017

# Salt



## Coast Boast

a new  
competition  
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Narrabeen



**Solo or Group - what is your paddle style? | Shorebirds and Waders of NSW | Strength Training | The NSW Islands Challenge is underway | South Coast NSW | Raja Ampat**





Above: Caoimhin Ardren exiting from High Tide Pool at Seal Rocks at low tide (Image - Adrian Clayton). Front cover: Nick Blacklock getting distracted on the last day of the trip from Batemans Bay to Eden (Image - Caoimhin Ardren)

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**NSW Sea Kayak Club Inc.**  
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The NSWSKC is a voluntary organisation run by members who give their time freely to the club. Membership is offered yearly. Please see the website for details and application. [www.nswseakayaker.asn.au](http://www.nswseakayaker.asn.au)

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**IMPORTANT:** Please review the Paddler Safety, Required Equipment, Grading System and Club Calendar sections of the club website.



## From the President's Deck

MEGAN PRYKE

It has been a scorcher of a summer. I am pleased that the club has had twenty new members join up. I know that our Vice President Tony Murphy has welcomed you all. It's tricky to name everyone, you know who you are. Please enjoy your first edition of Salt.

The club calendar has been very healthy and the registration page a lot prettier.

I am sorry but most likely I won't be able to attend Rock 'n' Roll. It is a club event that gets better each year you go, as you know more and more people you share an interest with. To the point that there's just not enough time to catch up everyone you would like to.

I have perhaps been a bit slow at formulating a vision for our club to share with members. The club is already there in so many ways. What I sought to achieve when joining the club was to get out on the ocean, have safe adventures with great friends and this has been achieved. My vision for the club is to have trip leaders feel they can lead club trips no differently to how they would conduct private trips, except for a few bits of necessary administration. It does take more than just good intentions to be a leader, thus we need to ensure that the training, mentoring or support of our leaders is available to those who are truly passionate about sea kayaking.

The club website has great functionality. I have found that I can register my interest for trips from my

smart phone! I have poked around the back end and found it to work better than I felt was rumoured. For a club our size it really assists to achieve effective and efficient, paperless administration and record keeping.

This is the sixth year that Stephan has been in the internet coordinator role. Unfortunately, per the club's constitution this means that Stephan is due to step down. Due to the importance of this role and the need for a good handover we are calling for expressions of interest in the internet coordinators role. The club's website backbone is Joomla 2, though the long-term goal is to move to Joomla 3. The system is a series of plugins and is designed so you do not need to be an IT programmer.

Our Facebook page is up thanks to Karen Darby, and already has a significant following. It is a chance to check out what is going on and share club experiences. The site is publically viewable. Facebook has a lot of functionality that can be turned on or off or changed. We may broaden its scope once we understand it more and the level of demand from members.

I hope to see you all out on the big blue, even if it is grey.

## From the Editor's Desk

RUBY ARDREN

This issue of Salt Magazine feels a little like a photo album! Thanks to all those who contributed unsolicited articles (such a pleasure to receive!) and responded to my call for contributions. I'm indebted to the NZ Sea Canoeist Magazine for inspiring and assisting with the Solo vs Group article, and I thank all those members who provided their commentary on the subject. One of our newer members, Caroline Marschner, has contributed a great

article on shorebirds, a theme she intends to build on in future issues. Cath Nolan thankfully continues to find parts of the body to talk about, so our health will not be neglected! And make sure you check out our new 'Coast Boast' competition courtesy of Adrian Clayton.

It's time to clean out the Salt storage cupboards, so bring along your spare change to Rock 'n' Roll to get your copies of spare back issues. They're selling for \$5 each



(half the cost of production), so it's a very good offer. Unfortunately, the most recent two issues (including this one) will not be available for sale, as we maintain some stock to give to new members.



# Solo or Group?

A collection of views on the virtues of paddling together or alone

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COMPILED BY RUBY ARDREN

INSPIRED BY AN ARTICLE IN THE NZ SEA CANOEIST MAGAZINE

I think everything happens in time.  
There's a time for everything.  
There's a time to be in a group,  
and there's a time to be solo.

Lauryn Hill (Singer)

Above: Solo UK (Image-Stuart Trueman)

## Adrian Clayton

I reckon I've been sea kayaking now for nearly 20 years. It took me more than five years before I was prepared to take on what I considered a challenging solo paddling "expedition" and that was from Sydney to Forster (nearly 300kms). Subsequent solo multi-day trips have been along the NSW coast and the eastern coast of Tasmania.

The longest time I've been on my own on a trip is six days – a mere trifle compared to the solo expeditions of others. Accompanied expeditions have been greater times and distances – Elizabeth Beach to Brisbane (700kms over 19 days) being the longest.

### *Paddling with others*

Paddling with others where skills, experience and trip objectives (destination or journey focussed) are reasonably well matched increases the safety factor delivered through the collective wisdom of the group and strength in numbers. It opens up opportunities to take on bolder challenges to test your skills (in rock gardens, gauntlets and caves, surf, etc.). It's a comforting thought that there's likely to be someone nearby ready to extract you from a dicky situation should you stuff up. Also, beach launchings into pesky shore breaks are so much easier if someone steadies your bow while you wait to make your dash.

Paddling in groups also lessens significantly the physical effort required to move a fully-laden kayak after landing or when preparing to launch. In some respects, camping options determined by the nature of the shoreline are broader. For example, landing a heavy kayak on rocky shorelines (e.g. Bushrangers Bay in the Illawarra or Boulder Beach on the far south coast) followed by a lengthy portage rules out such options for all but the most resolute of solo paddlers.

A major upside of paddling in groups is the opportunity to learn from

others. This takes in other skills beyond those of kayaking. Over the years I've had many "ah ha – that's how it's done (or that's a better way of doing it)" moments observing my paddling companions – both on and off the water. Some of these lessons have come from the most unexpected sources.

Paddling expeditions with others provide the opportunity to avoid duplication of some essential items such as cooking equipment, tarps, repair kits, etc. thus freeing up space and lightening the load. Gear failures become less of an issue. Expedition logistics, such as car sharing, shuffles, are simpler.

Group trips generally provide a great sense of camaraderie. Sitting around a fire cooking a meal reviewing the day's events, discussing the next and swapping war stories contributes a lot to the enjoyment of a group paddle.

### *Paddling alone*

In many ways paddling alone removes some of the stresses of paddling with others. It provides greater flexibility – you have no one else you need to consider with the plans you make and the way your trip unfolds.

Paddling alone you can choose your own pace. This takes away the anxiety of trying to stay in touch with faster paddlers and avoids the frustration of regularly stopping to wait for slower paddlers (admittedly this is less of an issue for me these days). The solo paddler never suffers the ignominy of being the last to be ready to get on the water after breaking camp. Any stuff ups during the trip are not exposed to others and thus derision is avoided (the convention of "what happens on trips stays on trips" is rarely observed).

Despite being more circumspect in respect of the risks taken, completing a solo expedition can be great for the ego (however, falling short of completing an expedition can have the opposite affect).

And talking of egos, I've been on group multi-day expeditions where personality clashes have detracted from the enjoyment (never my fault of course!). Competing for the best tent site, having your sleep disrupted by a snoring or farting companion – these are some of the issues the solo paddler avoids.

Despite my advancing years I still think I've got a couple of solo expeditions ahead of me but my preference nowadays is to paddle with others. Being invited to do so might be a problem.



## Barry Marshall

There are no doubts that both solo and group paddling has some advantages over the other. What I like about solo paddling is the utter freedom to do as you please. The pace that you go has no constraints - no need for the consideration of any other member of the group. You can stop whenever, go whenever and wherever, push hard or just relax without having to be in sync with anyone. Simple things like waking up when it suits, making decisions on approaches to the day's paddle and being drawn into your surroundings without the distraction of company. As a person who loves company most of the time it is a good discipline to go without company occasionally. I love it that I don't have to convince anyone of the virtues of sailing and can unfurl my sail whenever I please. My brother, with whom I've often paddled, maintains a stubborn refusal to use a sail and consequently (due to the need to remain in contact) commits the group to a sail-less journey.

Group paddling on the other hand has the advantage of knowing that if you ever find yourself in difficulty, you have some backup. 'Rafting up' is a definite advantage. I doubt that I would have had to spend a night camped on Curtis Island in Bass Strait if I'd been able to discuss navigational options with someone. Someone else would have brought



a map! In group paddling there is a combination of strengths and weaknesses in the group - my weakness is technology but, having grown up on the ocean, I like to think that I can have a reassuring influence on someone less comfortable on the ocean. Better decisions are usually made after discussion and a consensus having been reached.

The problem with group paddling is that more things can go wrong. The group is only as strong and as fast as its weakest member. Paddling to someone else's cadence can be tedious and tiring. Paddling with people of a similar ability on long trips is very important. The make up of the group must be very carefully considered as, if and when the going gets rough, some paddlers begin to lose their form and ability as their confidence wanes. A lot of paddlers are fine when everything is going their way but fall apart when pushing into head winds and rough seas. Somewhere between Hogan and Deal Islands when enveloped in a sea fog on a paddle across Bass Strait, a paddler in our group began to panic when his GPS unit lost power. It was a trying time for the rest of the group who were pretty relaxed as we had another GPS unit and compasses. This member ended up pulling out on Finders Island which, although unfortunate, made for a more relaxed atmosphere for the remainder of the journey. It is advisable to really get to know all members of a proposed long paddle.

I love getting to know people and hearing their stories when camped in remote locations with the luxury of an abundance of time – something which is sadly lacking most of the time in the 'real world'. Unfortunately I seem to strain my vocal chords when communicating for long periods out at sea. My brother is



*Many enjoy the social aspects of group trips  
Above: Wallis Lakes (Image-Ruby Ardren)*

hard of hearing so I have to raise my voice and repeat myself - a problem that doesn't occur when paddling solo (I admit to singing and talking to myself!).

The paddle itself dictates whether I would seek companions or otherwise. I feel comfortable paddling solo anywhere on the east coast but have decided that if I attempt a paddle on the west coast of Tasmania then I would seek company — being laid up for days due to bad weather alone doesn't appeal and having input into decision making and backup on that stretch of coastline does.



### Harry Havu

Some of the most enduring paddling memories I have, relate to experiences shared with others. The differences in reactions of the many seem to magnify and expand the experience of the individual. The bouncing of thoughts and ideas off your companions during a long crossing, the sharing of the sense of discovery and achievement with others as you land after a day's paddle; there are many reasons

why paddling with others is so enriching. Not only do you get to enjoy the journey; you also get to know your companions and make lasting friendships. The retelling and sharing of these memories around a campsite weaves them into a lasting fabric, later to be recalled and marvelled at over years to come.

Why would anyone wish to paddle alone?

The further a paddle is going to go, the smaller I like the group to be. Further - as in further away from the familiar and comfortable. Smaller - as in the footprint set by attitude and ability in some undefined, unfixed measure, as much as the actual numbers of souls involved. In that single word 'attitude' I've wrapped the multitude of things that make sharing a paddling journey with others enjoyable. I value flexibility and sense of shared responsibility highly. As difficulties or changes-of-plan arise, I like to be surrounded by those who will focus on solutions and looking after each other. While ability will certainly be a 'go' or 'no-go' gauge for some trips, I find it's the attitude that makes a trip great every time.

Taking this to a logical conclusion, is the longest trip then the one to do solo? I greatly enjoy the utterly simplified and focussed existence while paddling alone. The connection to the sea and the wind, the sky and the clouds, it all becomes more intense but at the same time more natural; I breathe it in, I become part of it. The mind travels, the senses sharpen.

Some paddles are meant to be done solo. Others would feel empty without companions. I get my fill of both.



### Justine Curgenvan

I really enjoyed paddling around Vancouver Island by myself although as a general rule I prefer good company. I guess the last two big trips I did before Vancouver island were with people who were slower than me - I had to look after Sarah Outen in the Aleutian islands and she was slower so I had to adjust my pace which I found hard for 67 on-water days. Then I joined Sandy Robson in Indonesia for six weeks. It was a privilege to be able to join her but again she was slower than me, and we very much did things her way. That was always the deal before I joined her, but I found myself really looking forward to going solo so that I could do exactly what I wanted, when I wanted, at the pace that I wanted!

I loved the first two weeks solo on Vancouver Island for this reason. I had a good mix of days by myself, and days when I met people and stayed with people. The sense of achievement is better on your own. The experience is heightened in some way - I spend more time taking in my environment and feel more in tune with it. I was aware of every bird sound when on the land, every non-regular noise alerted me to possible bears and on the water I enjoyed the broad scenery and the small details of lichen on rocks. I also found I 'got on with it' more by myself, when I may have moaned

to a partner! I landed at 8pm one evening after a 75km long day. It was dark and raining and I was cold. It was low tide on a long beach with many sharp rocks and I hadn't put my tent up yet. I would definitely have complained to a companion but I just got on with it and it was fine!

By the end of the trip around Vancouver Island, I was open to the idea of company again. I'm a social person over all and I like to share things with friends. It is tricky to find people to go with when you've done a lot of trips in fairly technical waters and you move at a decent pace, and you want someone you get on well with and have compatible goals to - but I think in future I'd rather go a bit slower with someone I like a lot, than go alone and do exactly what I want, when I want - but it will depend. I can see myself doing mostly trips with other people in the future but probably doing the occasional solo adventure if I want to do it and don't have a suitable companion!



### Rae Duffy

There's something very satisfying and liberating about solo paddling. Making all my own decisions as and when I need to, being totally self-sufficient with the freedom to paddle as far, as fast (or slow) as I want and in whatever conditions suit me. A day paddle or many days, there's simplicity, freedom and total immersion in the environment.

Having said that, most of my paddling has been and will continue to be as part of a group. I enjoy the shared experience and my companions always add to the activity in many different and often unexpected ways. They notice things I'd otherwise miss, see the world slightly differently, have knowledge and ideas to contribute and generally it's just more fun.

### Megan Pryke

Solo paddling out at sea is relinquishment of the most important bit of safety kit you have, being capable paddling buddies. Three to sea as a minimum is a good number to aim for, although there is little point in taking an unsuitable paddler out in exposed conditions just to tick off the ideal numbers box.

I always learn more when sea kayaking in a group, and it is better for training. In a group you have someone to chase or someone to beat, someone to get you back in your kayak if it all goes pear-shaped. When it comes to a long slog, paddling in a group is a lot more fun.

As a leader it was, and still is, important for me to know what conditions I am personally prepared to go out in solo before I could really know that I was comfortable leading others out in. Getting out on a few solo sea trips provided factual proof.

My forays into the world of solo paddling have been quite short. Following a solo week-long trip I felt elated and for a longer time than after the completion of Bass Strait. Could I become addicted to solo paddling for the extra high that the solo element gives? I don't think so.

As a teenager I did quite a lot of solo windsurfing. I got bored with my own company and preferred taking out friends on a catamaran to share the thrill of speeding through the water powered by sail. I think that the same thing would happen with sea kayaking. I would love to still visit the same coastline that I have done solo for subsequent trips – sharing the experience is more fun.



### Selim Tezcan

Let me first say that I like paddling with others and sharing the joys of paddling. Having a solo paddle doesn't mean I have a preference for one over the other. A solo paddle at times is part of a balance when I





need some 'me time' and also when a paddle with others is not possible for practical reasons.

Besides, I don't perceive a solo paddle as a paddle alone. I see it as a paddle with my own company. And that's not so bad is it? I mean who else would be a more like-minded paddler to paddle with?

#### *Internal Clock*

How much time does one need to feel one has 'been there and done that paddle'? Our internal clocks are different. When we are in a group paddle, we must compromise. The paddle must start at a certain time and must end at an agreed time.

Some of us may feel they have been 'there' by simply spending a 15-minute lunch break. Others may need an overnighter. For me there is that feeling inside that I know I had sufficient time 'there' regardless of how much time that is. A solo trip allows me that time.

#### *Internalisation*

I remember when my daughter didn't share her Christmas toys with her friend next door on a Christmas day after both received their presents. I was furious. I didn't know back then that kids needed time with their toys to make them 'their own' before they could share them with their friends. I see that in me now. For some trips

I like to be on my own to make that journey 'my own experience'. It is a childlike behaviour. A solo paddle allows me to internalise some trips and destinations.

#### *Sense of Self*

When you are paddling by yourself with no one in sight there is the realisation that you are just a tiny drop in the ocean. Similarly when you are lying in your tent and looking at the stars you just can't help but think how enormously small you are in this universe. And yet in these moments, paradoxical as it may sound, I feel the greatest sense of self.

#### *The Mirror*

In a group with a leader and a plan, a paddle is an enjoyable one. You are in the safety net of experienced paddlers. That allows you to feel safe and hence your experience of the paddle is different to one you have solo. A group paddle is also a very social one. It allows us to get to know each other, share the same experiences and provides us an opportunity to ask the question "do you see what I see?" and confirm this beautiful moment isn't an illusion inside our heads. It however also provides an opportunity to shift responsibility, blame others or justify our behaviour at the face of

difficulties when things go wrong or attribute the successes of a trip to others when the things went right.

On a solo paddle it's just you. Hence you realise Nature is neither nice nor is it bad. It won't accuse you of any failures nor will it take any blame. It won't victimise you nor will it give you a hand. It is neither forgiving nor unforgiving. It doesn't care if you succeed or fail. Nature has no feelings. Everything you feel is because of your own actions. The ocean is the greatest mirror. There I see myself without the ripples made by others.

#### *Sense of Adventure*

In our ever expanding built environments, our lives are becoming increasingly predetermined. We stop at a red light, walk when it is green. We eat at certain times, work at certain places, we have ergonomic chairs, work according to OHS, we have meetings to attend and set goals to achieve. We obey the law and follow etiquette. We have comfortable homes, income insurance, health insurance, Road Side Assistance and we invest into and plan our retirement. Almost everything in our lives are 'shaped' or 'taken care of' including how we feel thanks to Facebook. But for all this comfort and certainty we pay





*Moving boats is much easier with a group, and many prefer to have help around for difficult conditions*

*Left to right: Rock 'n' Roll 2014 (Image-Campbell Tiley); Landing at McBrides Beach near Forster (Image-Ruby Ardren)*

a high price. Life by its nature is unknown. When life is known, life is 'lived'. And then, 'now' becomes past, path becomes walked, life becomes dead. On the contrary we feel 'alive' when we experience something new, something different, something spontaneous and unknown, something outside those pre-packaged experiences. Unlike the roads in our built environments or the paths created by others on the land, a path on the ocean is never the same again. For all the knowledge and the forecast, a paddle on the ocean is a commitment to the unknown.

I must be cautious here not to sound like I promote irresponsible paddling, but the underlying risk in a solo paddle brings that sense of adventure, which makes me feel alive. I don't mean to undermine these elements in a group paddle either, they still exist when we commit to a paddle together but a solo paddle at times allows me to have a micro adventure that with others is not always possible.



## Shaan Gresser

I feel lucky that in general I have a foot in each camp – happy paddling solo and happy with good company. This means that I have the flexibility to paddle no matter the scenario. I regularly head out through Sydney Heads on my own – mostly because I am taking advantage of small time gaps dictated by the variability in the nature of my work and it's simply not being practical to find someone at late notice. I would happily share these paddles if someone wanted to join in but I am also very happy to just get out there and soak up an hour or more on the water.

I'm guessing it's the multi-day solo trips that intrigue many people and after I crossed Eastern Bass Strait solo it was one of the most frequent questions I got asked – why solo? I agree that it may not be for everyone, particularly if you don't feel confident in your ability and skill but I tell you what – planning a moderately serious trip on your own will sharpen all your skills! You can't rely on that person in front to navigate for you, or someone else to make a decision about the weather forecast, fix your rudder or indeed rescue you should things not go well. For this reason, accomplishing something like the Bass Strait crossing solo had a special sense of

achievement for me that was very different from a group paddle. I also had a real sense of adventure that I hadn't fully felt when on group trips. I think simply being on your own in the middle of the ocean or remote coastline brings an intensity that wouldn't otherwise develop in the presence of a companion/s.

There were certainly moments that I would have loved to share along the way. I do remember feeling that strongly when I was camped in Winter Cove on Deal Island – it was such a beautiful cove and I was in the mood to share it. On the other hand, had I not paddled there on my own I may not have had the opportunity to stay and experience it for the few nights that I did. I made the decision to stay, in spite of a decent weather window predicted for the day following my arrival that may have compelled others to not linger and push on the next day. This highlights another aspect of solo paddling – you can go at your pace, make decisions that suit how you're feeling from day to day. You're not constrained by other people's time commitments or other constraints. Ultimately it's what's important to you for that trip – if company is the key then you will happily wear any compromises to the trip plan triggered by others. The other angle to solo paddling is the potential

adventures that you may have in meeting people on your journey – I had a wonderful experience on Flinders Island meeting and staying with local people in a way that would not have been the same had I not been paddling on my own.

It's also a question of scale – compared to paddling around the continent solo (aka solo artist ST) I feel several weeks solo is just a dip in the ocean so to speak!

There are certain trips that I would not want to do solo – I paddled South West Tasmania last year with four other companions and I felt very strongly at the time that I was happy not to be paddling that stretch of coast solo – both from the perspective that I felt intimidated by the place and for the simple fact that I was really enjoying sharing

the infinite beauty of that area with my friends. But critical to the joy of this trip was the compatibility of the group – the harmony in the group during the trip (apart from the occasional loud snoring!) was wonderful and I think can make or break a group paddling experience.

Ultimately I enjoy sharing my paddling experiences with friends - It's a fundamental joy of being human to connect and share with others and especially within beautiful isolated places. But there is something special about enjoying your own company - particularly in the wilderness. So if you haven't tried it give it a go - you might surprise yourself!



## Stuart Trueman

Getting to the beach to start a trip is an underestimated achievement. There are plenty of known and unknown problems lying in wait to trip up expeditioners. With every extra paddler on the trip these problems are multiplied.

Many paddlers have the best intentions to participate but can't get to the start line as 'Real Life' gets in the way. Having someone pull out, close to the time of departure can mean the end of the trip.

If you plan a solo trip you have more chance of getting to the start.

However when the paddling starts the reasoning for and against solo paddling is harder to justify.

- There is plenty that can go wrong





for the solo paddler; however the larger the group the greater the chance of problems.

- Some problems can be quickly solved by the solo paddler, some are easier addressed by a group.
- It's great to share a spectacular campsite with others; it can be difficult to manage the various attitudes to hardship.
- The solo paddler has the satisfaction of knowing the trips success was due to their decisions alone; the group benefits from the experience of many.
- A group paddler can have their apprehension halved and courage increased, allowing them to paddle in a more relaxed state of mind. A solo paddler has to remain more alert and aware of what's going on, knowing they can ill afford things to go wrong. The most enjoyable trips I have done

have been group trips; most of my greatest challenges have been done solo.

It is not hard to understand why group trips would be more enjoyable, but tackling challenges alone is harder to reason.

Solo paddling allows the freedom to immerse yourself into the environment without distraction. To be in complete control of your destiny for a few days, allowing your immediate future to be ruled by the weather and tides can be liberating.

The freedom is still there for a group trip but there has to be compromise for the group. I don't have a problem with this; I just like the first option sometimes.

I enjoy both solo and group Paddling. Solo paddling is easier to make happen, group paddling happens to be easier.



Thanks to Paul Caffyn and the NZ Sea Canoeist magazine for allowing us to use their idea, and for getting Justine Curgenvén's permission to use her piece.

*Nothing evokes solitude more than this image of Rae Duffy leaving King Island to cross the Bass Strait to Victoria. It sits in stark contrast to this image at Yellow Rock in 2014, with a group on a Rock 'n' Roll day trip (Image left: Kathleen Hunter, King Island Courier; right: Campbell Tiley).*



# Do you know who you are paddling with?

## Shorebirds and Waders of NSW

CAROLINE MARSCHNER

One of the many reasons why sea kayaking can be exciting is the likelihood of spotting marine wildlife. The biodiversity of Australian coastal waters is unique, especially shorebirds and waders, and they often do not get the attention they deserve.



Shorebirds and waders live on coastal shores, including beaches, rocks, mudflats, and tidal wetlands. They are generally equipped with long elegant legs to wade in shallow waters, but can't swim. Many of them have a long wing-span and are migratory birds. Similar to kayakers these birds use favourable winds and navigate skilfully; they endure unbearable winds when flying, can fly non-stop for days faster than 60 km/hour; but unlike kayakers can lose up to 40 per cent of their bodyweight in the process.

Compared to other inland birds, shorebirds are relatively sensitive to disturbances. Firstly as migratory birds their journeys are extremely costly energetically. Secondly many species only have access to feeding grounds during low tides and huge numbers and different species congregate at this time. Disturbances during feeding consequently reduce energy intake.

Ecosystem changes reducing the diversity and occurrence of invertebrates and crustaceans severely impact the survival of shorebirds. Serious decline in fish populations and ingestion of plastic flotsam are further reasons for the decline. Like everywhere else in the world common threats of ground breeding birds are rats and feral cats that attack eggs and chicks. Loss of coastal landscapes due to development is unfortunately very common in Australia and puts increased pressure on remaining intact habitats, with most exceeding their carrying capacities.

Kayakers are certainly less disturbing for shorebirds, however there are little things we can do to help them. By keeping a distance to individual and aggregations of birds we can help to keep their energy expenditures low. As soon as you see them unsettled it is time to back up. If you can choose your landing

site, do so where no birds are resting or feeding at the time. Did you discover a nest that seemed unprotected from human activities? Mark it clearly with little rocks and sticks. We all have the responsibility to protect our fauna, please tell the youngsters and even adults next to you if they have missed a few things here.

Education is the key to increased awareness towards our living environment. The internet is an inexhaustible resource to read about our shorebirds in general, but often also about our local bird occurrences.

Why don't you take the chance on your next paddle to look out for our most common shorebirds! In this article you can find the most common groups of saltwater shorebirds illustrated. Happy bird-watching!

### Resources

<https://www.ehp.qld.gov.au/wildlife/threatened-species/shorebirds/index.html>  
<http://www.birdsinbackyards.net/birds/featured/Shore-birds-and-waders>  
<http://birdlife.org.au/projects/shorebirds-2020/educational-material>  
[http://www.ospreyhouse.asn.au/downloads/australian%20shorebirds\\_id\\_sheet.PDF](http://www.ospreyhouse.asn.au/downloads/australian%20shorebirds_id_sheet.PDF)

### Photo references

1. BIRDS IN BACKYARDS (<http://www.birdsinbackyards.net>)
2. ARKIVE ([www.arkive.org](http://www.arkive.org))



 **Cormorants/Darter**

Cormorants and Darters are non-migratory birds and mostly live sedentary lives in colonies around the shore, on trees, islets or cliffs. The Cormorant feeds mostly on fish, crustaceans and some aquatic insects. It has special nictitating membranes that cover the eyes underwater when diving for fish. Their feathers are not waterproof, that's why you can see them perching with their wings outstretched.



Little Black Cormorant



Little Pied Cormorant



Large Pied Cormorant



Great Cormorant



Australasian Darter

 **Gulls**

Paddlers will know the silver gull particularly well, not only due to their omnipresence but also due to their attacking and harassing behaviour when paddling close to their nests. Gulls are ground-nesting carnivores, living on molluscs, fish, worms, echinoderms, arthropods (sometimes including swarming termites), reptiles, amphibians, birds, small mammals, and berries. Gulls have unhinging jaws to consume larger prey. They are mostly sedentary, but the young disperse locally.



Silver Gull



Pacific Gull



Kelp Gull

 **Heron/Egrets**

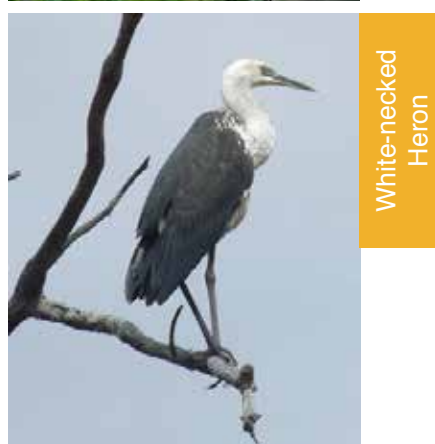
Heron and Egrets are not distinct families, but differ to storks, ibises, spoonbills and cranes. They are easily distinguishable by their neck retracted during flight. Herons are an extremely diverse family of birds and their taxonomy is less clear. Sometimes they are categorized as day-herons and night-herons. Night-herons are the smaller relatives with short legs and short bodies and are not active during the day. Day-herons and egrets are mostly seen during the day, standing motionless in shallow waters and waiting for prey.



White-faced Heron



Intermediate Egret



White-necked Heron



### Shearwaters/ Petrels

Members of the family “Procellariidae”, which includes shearwaters, petrels and prions, are commonly seen offshore when sea-kayaking. They share the order of “tube-noses” with the Albatross. They are pelagic birds, living constantly off-shore, and come on land only for breeding. They can swim well and often form rafts on the water’s surface. Like other seabirds, nesting time is elongated, incubation taking up to 50 days and fledging another 70 days. They use either burrows or crevices in rocks for nesting and guard the sites at night in order to avoid predators.



Sooty Shearwater



Wedge-tailed Shearwater



Gould's Petrel



### Albatross

Among the nine Albatross species existing in Australia, the Wandering Albatross is the largest with a 3.5 metre wingspan. Being quite a heavy bird, Albatross are still highly efficient in the air by using “dynamic soaring” ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dynamic\\_soaring](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dynamic_soaring)) and “slope soaring” ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ridge\\_lift](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ridge_lift)). Breeding is a serious effort for these birds, as a breeding season can take over a year for a single egg in the nest. They also start breeding at a delayed age at 10 years in some species (much time to practice dancing rituals) but fortunately they can reach ages of up to 50 years.



Black-browed Albatross



Wandering Albatross



### Spoonbills

There are only two Spoonbill species in Australia, which can be easily distinguished. The Royal Spoonbill has a black beak and black face, and the Yellow Billed Spoonbill is yellow (the name says it all). Both can be found in saltwater wetlands, intertidal mud flats and wet grasslands. The spatulate bill has vibration detectors on the inside, so the bird can feel the prey in murky water and can feed by day or night.



Yellow Billed Spoonbill



Black-faced Spoonbill



### Oystercatchers

Oystercatchers prefer mudflats, sandbanks and sandy ocean beaches to feed on molluscs, crabs and other crustaceans, marine worms, starfish, sea urchins, and small fish. The current Pied Oystercatcher population may be as low as 10,000 individuals therefore is listed as an Endangered Species on the New South Wales Threatened Species Conservation Act, 1995 (TSC Act). The Sooty Oystercatcher is also vulnerable.



Sooty Oystercatcher



Pied Oystercatcher





Plovers

Up to 60 species of Plovers exist and a large share of these are seen in Australia. This family also includes Dotterels. Plovers are migratory birds and like others fly up to the arctic Northern Hemisphere for breeding in the northern summer. There are some exceptions such as the Hooded Plover being a residential bird found around Jervis Bay. Plovers forage mostly on beaches with washed up seaweed and tidal mud flats.



Double-banded Plover



Grey Plover



Pacific Golden Plover



Masked Plover



Hooded Plover



Terns

Terns are usually found near the coast, on coastal and interior beaches and sheltered estuaries. They almost exclusively live on fish. Some species are sedentary others migratory. In one instance a Common Tern has been found on a beach near Fremantle, Western Australia in 1956. It was banded as a nestling in Sweden, and within 6 months it flew 20,900km around the Cape of Good Hope to Australia. The Caspian Tern is the largest tern in Australia.



Common Tern



Great Crested Tern



Caspian Tern



Common Greenshank



Sandpipers

Sandpipers are by far the most diverse group of all. It can be difficult to identify some of these birds for non-experienced bird-watchers. The Eastern Curlew is one of the most popular, and has a very specific appearance with its long curved bill. Unfortunately the Eastern Curlew has a sad story to tell, as the population has declined by 80 per cent over the last 30 years and is now critically endangered. These birds migrate between Australia/New Zealand and Eastern Russia/North Asia twice a year.

The group of Sandpipers includes Stilts, Gotwits, Curlews, Snipes, and Stints. They can be found on mudflats of estuaries, lagoons, mangroves, as well as beaches, rocks and in floodwaters. Most of them are migratory birds, breeding in North Asia or even Alaska.



Common Sandpiper



Far Eastern Curlew



Curlew Sandpiper



Charts, maps, Latitude, Longitude, magnetic variation, magnetic deviation, bearings, transits... sometimes it all becomes too much, even for those that are very active paddlers. Many of these navigational terms and tools are left well alone until required for Sea Skills assessment or when planning a multi-day expedition paddle. Suddenly there is a cry "Oh dear... I wish I had practiced this stuff a bit more, I can never remember if I add or subtract the magnetic variation..."

With this in mind, a training day that combined navigation exercises with some surf practice was put on the club calendar in November. A week before the event, all five participants were provided with a copy of the relevant chart and six navigational questions. Horror of horrors... a club trip with homework!

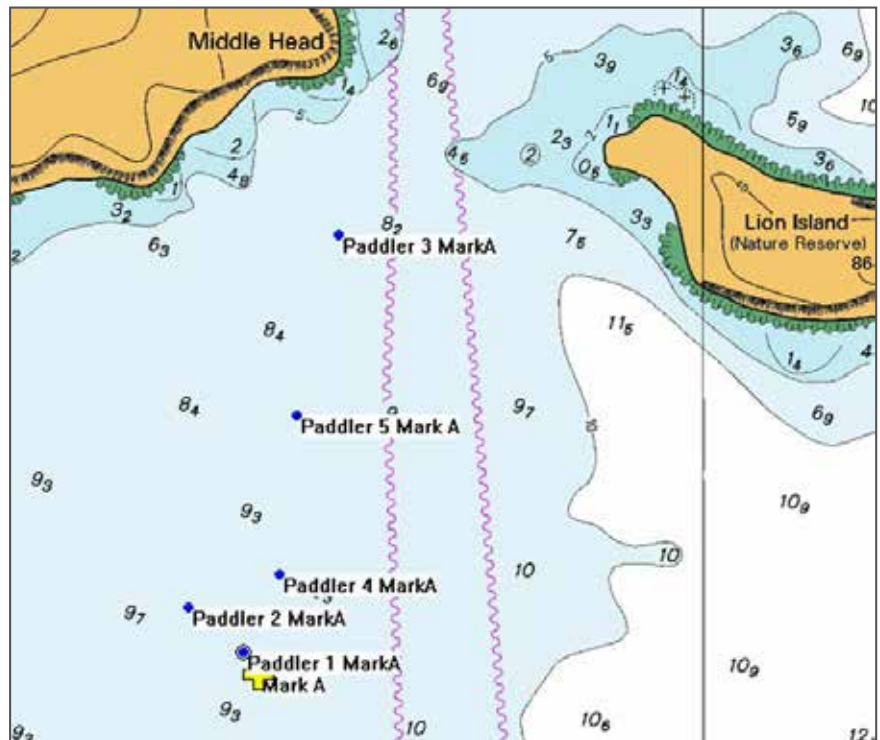
Once everyone found their way to the launch beach (some found this a challenge in itself) and after an on-land navigation review session, the group headed out into the depths of Broken Bay to find Marks A, B and C. Each participant used their own methods to determine when they were at each location, upon which Adrian would record this with his GPS for later verification.

So how did the participants perform?

# Surf and Turf

An exercise in finding where you want to be

CAOIMHIN ARDREN



Mark A (Yellow Cross) – showing blue dots for each paddlers estimate

Mark A was located in the middle of the channel into the Hawkesbury River.

The three closest to the Mark all first did a "big picture" sanity check. From looking at the chart, they knew they needed to be "sort of in the middle of the channel". So they paddled into the approximate position before commencing with aligning transits and bearings. This is a good practice to adopt.

Quite a few of the paddlers planned to use a transit off Box Head and the east side of Lion Island. Unfortunately, most paddlers then mistook the headland just west of Maitland Bay (Gerrin Point) for Box Head. Paddler 1 made the same mistake, but realised the error and did another transit.

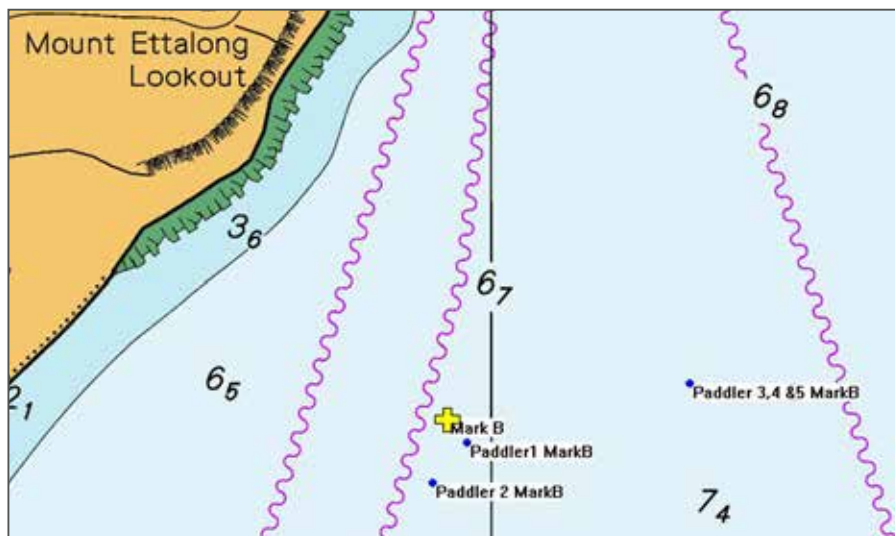
Paddler 2 had this to say:

*"In practice, I think that Gerrin Point was more obvious than Box Head on the water. I also mistook Umina / Ettalong Point for Green Point, and hence heading too far west with the transit. Note to self - if you are going to pass a point that you will later use as a transit, take a good look at it and remember what it looks like!"*

Closest to the pin, Mark A:

- Paddler 1 – 45m
- Paddler 2 – 170m
- Paddler 4 – 180m
- Paddler 5 – 452m
- Paddler 3 – 787m.





Mark B (Yellow Cross) – showing blue dots for each paddlers estimate

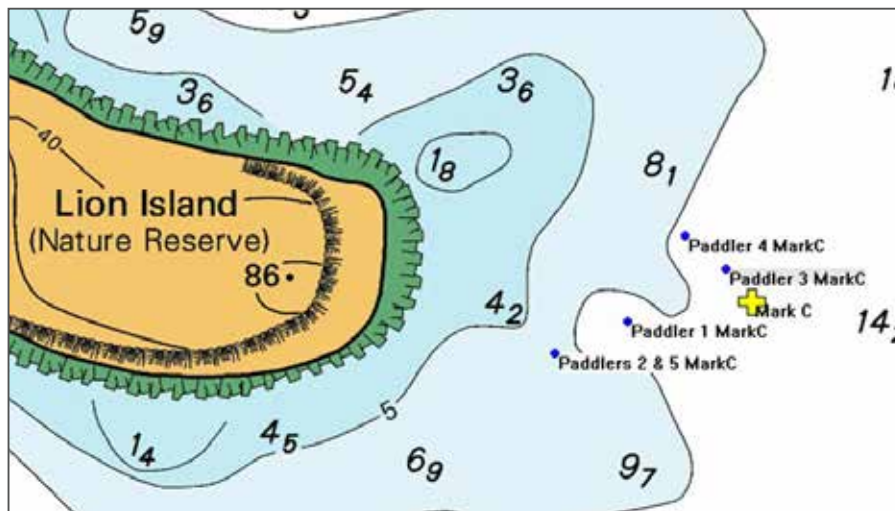
Mark B was located South east of Mount Ettalong head at the southern end of Umina beach  
 Paddling to Mark B was the first point we reached after leaving the beach. Three of the five paddlers

were still trying to get their heads around the method they had planned to use to identify the location and resulted in all electing for a location, well away from the Mark.

Again, the practice of using the “big picture” first to gauge your approximate location proved to be very useful. In addition, if at first you do not recognise the features you were expecting to see, don’t throw away your carefully calculated plan and simply start making guesses to suit what you see.

Paddler 1 had this to say: “I didn’t agree with some other paddlers who had stopped off the point, instead of paddling around to inside the curve of the headland. I then looked for the tank. It was making me nervous that it took so long to see the tank, but I kept going and eventually it appeared”.

- Closest to the pin, Mark B:
- Paddler 1 – 33m,
  - Paddler 2 – 71m
  - Paddler 3, 4 and 5 – 263m.



Mark C (Yellow Cross) – showing blue dots for each paddlers estimate

Mark C was located 450m due east of the high point of Lion Island  
 For Mark C a position was selected that did not allow for the use of easy transits, instead the paddlers had to rely on compass back bearings. You need a minimum of three bearings to accurately locate a position.  
 This was no easy task as many club members will know that the east

side of Lion Island is often subject to in coming swell and rebound.  
 All the paddlers quickly encountered difficulties taking multiple bearings from their kayaks in bouncy water. Because you and your kayak are getting moved around by the wave action, you have to be quick and accurate. This is not a time to start trying to add/subtract magnetic

variation – you should have worked out your back-bearings in Magnetic before you left the shore.

Paddler 2 observed: “Back bearings with hand held bush walking compass. Would have been better with a sighting compass – it is on the Christmas list now.”

Paddler 1 had this to say: “I had two bearings, one at 45 degrees and Lion Island directly west, and tried to guess my position from those. I was far less confident using bearings than transits, and I think this showed in my results”.

- Closest to the pin, Mark C:
- Paddler 3 – 39m,
  - Paddler 4 – 92m
  - Paddler 1 – 126m
  - Paddlers 2 and 5 – 201m

The intent for the day was not to embarrass anybody, but rather to give paddlers chance to put into practice the tools and techniques of navigation.

Considering the size of the ocean and the nature of the paddling we do – achieving results of under 50m is really impressive. It is very seldom that we would ever need to be more accurate than within 100m -200m of a location.

The feedback from the paddlers was very positive with Paddler 4 stating: *“The training has motivated me to do more self-study on navigation. Hopefully after reading*

*some books and doing more practice on the water, by the time you run your next course I will get closer to the marks.”*

While paddler 5 had this to say: *“I wasn’t joking when I said I was below novice. The training gave me an insight into navigation and I have to admit I had never given it much thought. My failure was generally because I wasn’t prepared properly in many ways. Most fundamentally I need glasses to read now and failed to bring them on the trip.”*

If all the discussion of transits, bearing etc. leaves you a bit confused, make sure you sign

up for Adrian Clayton’s annual navigation weekend.

Attendees: Darren Friend, Richard Hackett, Ruby Ardren, Derek Le Dain, Tom Cox. Instructors, Adrian Clayton and Caoimhin Ardren.



## Tight Arse Corner

MATT BEZZINA

If you’re sick of getting scuff marks on your shiny hull due to those ageing rubber kayak cradles on your roof racks you can hold off buying new ones by adding this nifty little fix.

Put socks on your cradles!

Any old socks will do however in keeping with the fashion conscious nature of sea kayakers I suggest you use the socklet type for a more streamlined look - Don’t worry they will still look like socks which should ensure that only sea kayakers use

*Left: Nick Blacklock admires the solution*

this great new invention, leaving surfski paddlers to prop up the roof rack industry rather than us – suckers.

Apart from making an anti-fashion statement, socks are remarkably cheap, and you seem to always be able to get a two for one deal. But if you’re really tight like me you could scour sports ovals early in the morning for possible freebies.

Here’s to a scuff free hull – and squeezing an extra decade or two out of your existing cradles!





# The Coast Boast

The Coast Boast is a competition being run over four consecutive issues of Salt. It's a great opportunity for you to test your knowledge of the NSW coast, your observation skills and, maybe, your memory.

The objective of the competition is for you to identify as many locations as you can of the six pictures appearing in each of the next four issues of Salt, describing where each was taken. In all cases the pictures will have been taken at a NSW location at which the Club has conducted a trip, training activity, Rock 'n' Roll event or Navigation Challenge over the last five years.

The member who correctly identifies the most locations over the four issues is the winner and, apart from boasting rights, will be the recipient of a gift voucher to the value of \$400 kindly donated by ProKayaks at Narrabeen.

The caption to the picture to the right shows an example of the type of answer we are seeking. Alternatively, answers expressed in latitude and longitude, rounded off to the nearest minutes, are acceptable. Accuracy is encouraged.

The first six pictures of the competition appear on the next page. Online versions allowing larger format viewing (thus revealing greater detail) can be accessed through "The Coast Boast" link appearing in the navigation bar on the left-hand side of the home page of the Club's web site.

To help get things going we have provided a written clue (perhaps a little cryptic) in this issue for each picture. Don't expect this to be a regular feature as the competition progresses.



(Clue) Many NSWSK clubbies will have the chance to see this spot soon.

Location: Corrigans Beach, Batehaven looking out to Snapper Island and beyond towards North Head, Batemans Bay (alternatively 35°44'S, 150°12'E)

Include the location number alongside each of your answers and email them to the competition coordinator (thecoastboast@nswseakayaker.asn.au) no later than the copy deadline of the following issue of Salt (see club updates on email and Facebook). Locations will be revealed and results published in the following issue of Salt with scores accumulating from issue to issue. The winner of the competition will be announced at Rock 'n' Roll 2018. A sudden death tie breaker will be used in the event of more than one member achieving the highest number of correct answers.

Participation in the competition is restricted to members of the NSW Sea Kayak Club. Members of the Club's committee and the competition coordinator are precluded from entering.

Any member appearing in any of the pictures may include the related location as one of his or her answers (a memory challenge).

## Send us your pics

Members are encouraged to submit photographs to thecoastboast@nswseakayaker.asn.au for inclusion in the competition, however, acceptance of such pictures will be restricted to one per issue of Salt per contributor.

Acceptance of any pictures submitted for use in the competition does not preclude the contributor from including the location as one of his/her answers. The same applies to any Club members who appear in any of the pictures.

Any pictures used in the competition have to be taken in an area in which the NSWSKC has conducted an activity such as trips, training activities, Rock 'n' Roll events or Navigation Challenges over the last five years. They should show an identifiable feature (even though one might need to look hard to find it!) such as shorelines, significant rock formations (islands, stacks, hollows, caves, arches), land forms (dominant peaks, unusual contours, ridgelines), buildings, training walls and signage.



Location 1: Edible trees ahead?



Location 2: I see a seal but I don't see a swan! Sounds contradictory to me.

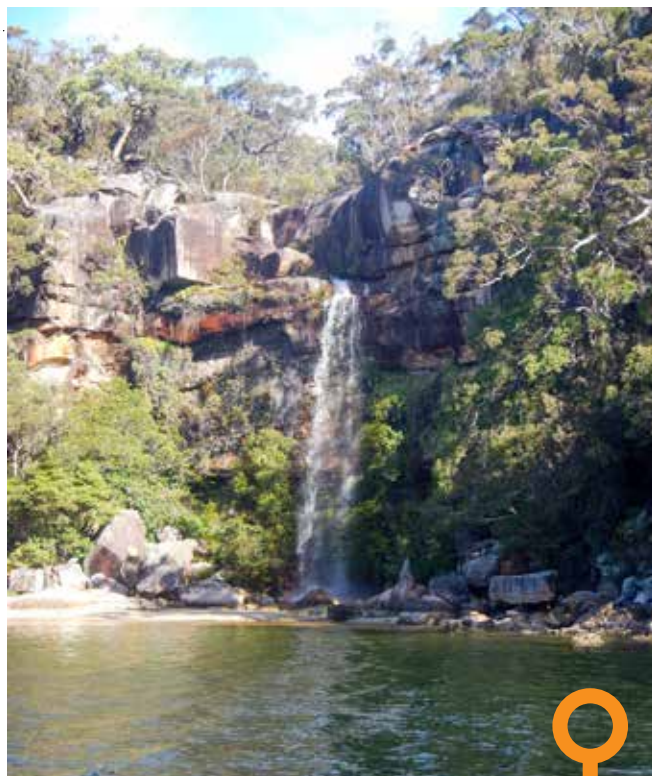


Location 3: Shaan well away from dragon territory but nearby landmarks suggest otherwise.





**11 Narrabeen Street,  
Narrabeen**  
**www.prokayaks.com.au**  
**02 9970 7081**



Location 4: There's a Singapore connection with this place.



Location 5: Something's on the nose around here!



Location 6: A place for newlyweds?

# Strength training for kayaking

CATHY NOLAN, PHYSIOTHERAPIST



Have you ever started out paddling with someone who compares with you in speed and distance, only to see a dramatic improvement in their ability over time, or their ability to generate enough paddle power to catch a wave – leaving you in their wake? I certainly have and as you suspect, it is not the secret ingredient in their wheeties. Other than improving their technique, which is an important component, it is highly likely they have increased muscle strength (and power).

## What is muscle strength and why is it important in paddling?

Adequate muscle strength is important to paddle both efficiently and comfortably and will definitely help protect you from injury. In sports science, muscular strength refers to the amount of force a muscle or muscle group can produce with a single maximal effort.

Muscle strength is measured during muscular contraction, usually with a one-rep maximum (1-RM). During a 1-RM, an exerciser performs one repetition of a single exercise to see how much weight he or she can lift. Muscle strength training increases the size of your muscle fibres and the ability of nerves to activate or communicate with the muscle fibres. It allows groups of muscles to generate more force and hence power during a paddle stroke.

As you probably know, in simple mechanical systems, the rate of doing work (power) is dependent on both force and velocity.

Power =  $f \cdot v$ .

In paddling terms:

Paddling Power = how hard you pull your paddle through the water (force) x how fast your pull your paddle through the water (velocity)

By increasing either of these variables you can increase your paddling power and therefore your boat speed.\*

\*I know in reality kayaking is not a directly linear activity as we are in a boat on a moving sea and there are also rotational forces to consider but I will leave this discussion to the physicists amongst you, as this is way out of my depth as a physio.

So if you are keen to increase your boat speed you can:

- increase your velocity (or stroke rate)
- increase your force which we know is related to muscular strength (and good technique)
- do a combination of both.

Perhaps more importantly and particularly from my perspective as a physio, muscle strength training helps improve core strength, bone strength and joint stability which all allows for a better distribution of load. This makes the paddler more resilient to injury and more efficient in their paddling technique. Often paddling injuries are related to muscle strength imbalances where one group of muscles are overloaded and just don't have enough force to do what we are trying to get them to do. This is largely preventable through muscle strength and flexibility training (See

SALT 101 for flexibility training) and as always I can't overemphasise good paddle technique and the concept of the paddler's box.

## How to improve muscle strength?

The best way to build muscle strength is resistance training. Resistance training builds not only the size of your muscle fibres (hypertrophy); it also improves the ability of your nerves to communicate with the muscles, what we often refer to in physiotherapy as motor control. Improved motor control allows your muscles to perform movements with increased speed and accuracy and also allows you to perform more coordinated movements like forward stroke with more force.

## What is Resistance Training?

Resistance training is any exercise that causes the muscles to contract against an external resistance with the expectation of increases in strength, tone, mass, and/or endurance. The external resistance can be dumbbells, rubber exercise tubing, your own body weight, bricks, bottles of water, or any other object that causes the muscles to contract.

## What are good resistance training exercises for paddlers?

Paddling as you know is a whole body exercise, however there are some key muscles groups that you can focus on in resistance training to help give you more power and contribute to injury



prevention. These include the core muscles (abdominals, lower back and obliques), the pulling muscles (latissimus dorsi, rhomboids, rear deltoids) and the shoulder blade stabilisers (serratus anterior, trapezius muscles).

If you are after an all-round off-the-water exercise that works on all these muscles group (and your

legs) and have access to a gym, a rowing machine is a fantastic work-out. It also helps gives you an aerobic workout and builds endurance. Recently I have been using a rowing machine two times per week for 5-10 minutes at a time with a noticeable improvement in my paddling power. This exercise has helped with initiating the push off phase of my foot on the kayak

footplate, which initiates the hip lift and torso rotation required in forward stroke. It also dynamically works the pulling muscles, shoulder stabilisers and core muscles.

If you don't have access to a rowing machine or gym, here are some great exercises to build up muscle strength in these major muscle groups at home.

### L raise (Core and Pulling Muscles)

Lie face down with your arms in an "L" position so that the upper arms are in line with your shoulders and your elbows are bent at 90 degrees and facing forwards.

Keep your head aligned with your spine. Imagine you are reading a book on the ground.

Your hands should be facing palms down with your fingers extended.

Now tighten your abdominal muscles to stabilise your trunk and slowly raise both arms off the floor no higher than six inches and hold for the required time, then slowly lower your arms down to the floor.

Repeat 10 times. Build up to two sets over 3-4 weeks.

Throughout the exercise, keep your arms at 90 degrees through your elbows in the "L" position and ensure your trunk and legs are aligned.

Perform this exercise in a slow controlled manner and do not jerk the body into the up-position when raising the arms.



### Scapula protraction/retraction (Scapula stabilisers)

Lie on your back and flatten your shoulder blades against the floor.

Hold a weight in your hand.

Whilst keeping your shoulder blades still, slowly lift your arm up, leading the movement with your thumb.

Keep your elbow straight and point your arm straight up towards the ceiling.

Lift your shoulder off the floor by reaching your hand up towards the ceiling.

Hold this position before returning your shoulder blade to the floor.

The movement should come only from your shoulder blade so do not allow your body to rotate.

Repeat 10 times each arm, two sets.



### Side planks (Obliques, scapula stabilisers)

Lie on your side your knees bent. Prop yourself up on your elbow. Your elbow should be directly under your shoulder, your trunk long with your hip joint and shoulder joint in line.

Draw in your side trunk muscles, then slowly lift your hips off the mat until you have a straight line from your knees to the top of your head.

Hold this position for five seconds then slowly lower your hips back to the floor.

Repeat 5 times each side. Build up to 10 each side with five-second holds.



### How often should you do resistance training?

Twice per week is enough to build muscular strength. You will begin to notice a difference to your power in 2-3 weeks and this will continue to build over the next 5-6 weeks. At this stage you are likely to feel as though you could either do more repetitions, more weight or a combination of both. The rule of thumb is: to increase power,

increase your weight first and drop your reps until your muscles become accustomed to the new weight, then increase your reps.

As always, if you have any pre-existing back or shoulder conditions then seek advice from your health professional before commencing any new exercise program.

One final point, increasing muscular strength without good paddling technique is not going to help your

paddling speed very much. In fact you are more likely to injure from overloading your muscles in undesirable positions. So my tip is focus on good technique first, then build up your strength to do those extra kilometres or develop a powerful stroke to get some extra speed when you need it to catch a wave etc.

I hope this information helps and as always happy paddling!

## Saltiest submission **WINNER**



# EXPEDITION KAYAKS.com

The winner of Saltiest Submission for Issue 103, Dee Ratcliffe, has elected to view the full range of goods available from Expedition Kayaks at Rock 'n' Roll in Batemans Bay before selecting her prize. We'll include a photo of Dee showing off her prize in the next issue of Salt. Dee wrote an article celebrating Sandy Robson's arrival in Australia. Sandy will be speaking at Rock 'n' Roll.

Make sure you check out the Expedition Kayaks stall at Rock 'n' Roll this year.

EXPEDITION KAYAKS

Drop in anytime from 0830 to 1800 Monday to Fridays.

3/185 Port Hacking Road, Miranda, NSW 2228  
Phone (612) 9559 8688 or mob 0417 924 478





# Kayak snorkelling

RUBY ARDREN, IMAGES - THE ARDRENS

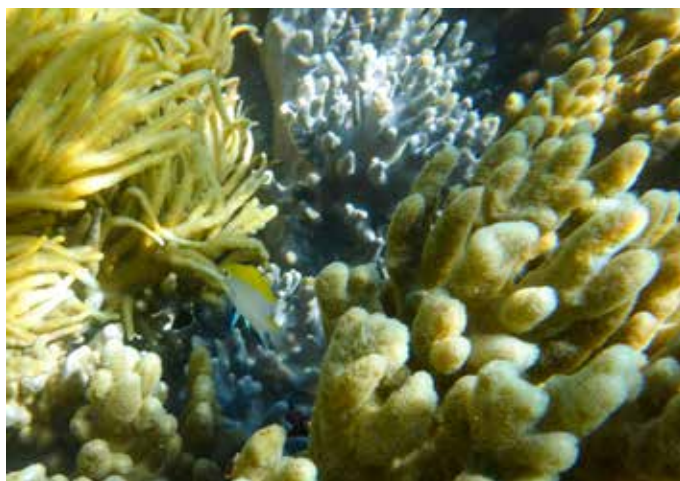
I had never thought about how one might snorkel from a kayak until we went to the Whitsundays in 2015. It's not always possible to land your kayak on a shoreline and leave it there while you snorkel over the reef. Often there is no accessible shoreline where the best snorkelling is; or the coral is too shallow and you might risk damaging it, your boat or yourself trying to take it to shore; or the reef might be located some distance off shore. The methods we tried out including paddle-float snorkelling and drift line snorkelling.



Paddle float snorkelling involves attaching a paddle float to your paddle and then tipping the boat towards it, using the paddle with its float to balance. You then dip your head into the water to view the reef. When you want to return to the surface you use the paddle float, your knee and a hip flick to right yourself. I wasn't keen on this method, as it wasn't a very comfortable position for my shoulder.



The alternative is to attach a line to the front of your kayak, head upstream of the current, jump out of your kayak and attach the line to yourself, snorkelling and viewing the reef as you drift with the current. You then re-enter your kayak on your own, or use the assistance of your paddling companion/s. I preferred to attach the line to my ankle so my hands were free for photography. A longer line is easier, as we found the kayak ran into a bit.





# NSW Island Challenge

## Five Islands, Wollongong

NICK GILL, IMAGES BY NICK BLACKLOCK



On a mid-week morning in November a group gathered at Wollongong Harbour for the first of the club's NSW island circumnavigations. It's about a 20km round paddle from the harbour and, like most paddles, depending on conditions, it can either be a relaxing half-day outing or a rather thrilling paddle with gauntlets, deep water rebound and exciting surf over a rocky bottom. Having smashed a boat on one of the islands some years back (NSW Sea Kayaker No. 81), I knew firsthand the potential excitement. This day however, looked suitable for the grade two outing I had listed, with good winds, not a lot of swell and plenty of sunshine. The islands themselves are located from half to three and half kilometres off the central Wollongong coast, and lie roughly between Wollongong Harbour and Port Kembla. There are five islands; the more northerly Flinders Islet (aka "Toothbrush" Island, named for its appearance from a distance) and Bass Islet, and the three clustered off Red Point to the south, Big Island, Martin Islet, and Rocky Islet. Big Island contains evidence of Aboriginal occupation and was used for grazing in the nineteenth century. Today the five islands are a Nature Reserve, providing homes and breeding sites to various seabirds as well as sometimes hosting seals. In recent years, there has been a concerted weed management (read removing enormous quantities of Kikuyu grass) program on Big Island in an effort to rehabilitate the island's native plant communities and restore habitat.

Plan A was to start from Wollongong Harbour (Plan B was a shorter paddle out of Port Kembla) and so six of us – myself, Nick Blacklock, Geoffrey Dauncey, Caroline Marschner, Dirk Schneider, and Kevin Kelly – met at the harbour boat ramp. The group motored along well in the good conditions and we reached the first island, Flinders, in good time. Flinders was the site of a 2009 yachting accident when the 80-foot maxi yacht Shockwave hit the island and the skipper and navigator perished. Flinders

*Above: Wollongong's Steelworks*



also has a rather good gauntlet for kayakers, which runs more or less north-south. In the right conditions it can be entered via a narrow rocky notch from the little bay on the eastern side of the island. Nick went to check it out but the tide was wrong and he had to content himself with heading into the gauntlet from the somewhat less challenging northern end. Having watched this bobbing safely off the rocks, the rest of us, with Nick in tow, headed ESE out to Bass Islet, the easternmost island. Bass is pretty much due east of the entrance to Port Kembla, so once we got around Bass and headed south toward Martin Islet, we were treated to an ocean view of the industrial landscape of Wollongong – the steelworks, port infrastructure, grain silos, the coal loader and so on. It's a view with its own aesthetic and it doesn't always evoke negative responses from paddlers, even as the juxtaposition of heavy industry with the islands as Nature Reserve and the activity of sea kayaking always seems a little incongruous.

I always enjoy coming up to and around the southernmost islands. The water is deep close in and even on relatively calm days the water always seem to be moving. One can paddle close in, enjoying this and keeping one eye on the waves, or cruise around wider, still getting a bit of movement and taking in the rocky shorelines and breaking waves. It's a good spot and we were

doubly rewarded by the presence of seals on the eastern shore of Martin Islet – their usual location if they are around.

The gap between the mainland and Rocky Islet/Big Island can be a great spot to surf sea kayaks but it can also be a bit challenging. It has a largely rocky bottom, shelves quickly in some spots and waves can steepen and break unexpectedly. So it was for us, even on a day with very moderate swell. We had to ease our way though and dodge a couple of steeper waves. Even then, I decided we wouldn't land in the usual spot on the beach at Red Point (Fishermans Beach). The beach seemed quite exposed to the wave direction that day and I was unsure of how the group would go. Instead we headed up to the next beach, known locally as M and M's for a break. There was still a small surf running and we had some who never done a surf landing. Nonetheless, everyone did a great job getting in to land (and

getting out) – making it one of the highlights of the day, especially for those who hadn't done any kind of beach landing before. After that we just had the paddle back to Flagstaff Point and around to the harbour where several got into a bit of rolling practice. I left them to pack up and headed over to land at North Beach where I had launched and left my kayak trolley after walking from my place nearby – a little experiment in running a club trip and leaving the car at home. The others soon joined me at the North Beach Kiosk for a coffee and some log book entries. So ended the first island circumnavigation on an enjoyable day without dramas, with great weather and conditions, with seals and industrial scenery, and where some paddlers extended their sea experience and successfully did their first beach landing.

*Below: Geoffrey Dauncey at Big Island; The Five Islands on the Horizon*





# NSW Island Challenge

## Montague Island

GERARD RUMMERY, IMAGES BY JOSH ANDREWS



*Above: Gerard shows the way to Montague Island. Below: The kayaks lined up ready for the crossing to Montague Island. Opposite: Gerard sizing up the lighthouse.*







On Saturday 3 December, Josh Andrews, Steve Hitchcock, Greg Prutej and I met on a beach at Mystery Bay on the NSW South Coast for a circumnavigation of Montague Island. This is part of the club's NSW Island Challenge for 2016.

For me personally, this was a long-standing bucket list item. Having spent much of my formative years in Tuross Head, Montague Island has been one of the fixtures of my life. Seemingly close enough to touch or impossibly distant depending on the weather, with its reliable light arcing across so many night skies of my childhood, youth and adulthood, it has always represented permanency and timelessness, in contrast to my own short life measured in human years.

I always thought I would get out there one day under my own steam. In fact that was one of the reasons I bought a sea kayak, and after a couple of solo open water paddles where I realised how much I didn't know, I joined NSWSKC.

When the long anticipated opportunity arose to paddle out there, I eagerly applied and was stoked when Josh gave me the nod. Although paddling in open water is definitely where it's at for me, I am still fairly new to it and I really appreciate it when more

experienced paddlers are prepared to have me in the group.

I was watching the weather all week, with Saturday originally forecast for strong winds and over 2m swell. Happily, the prediction for both dropped through the week and on the day the weather was ideal! Light wind, less than 1.5m of swell and a very civilised maximum of 25 degrees.

The plan was to paddle across to the south end of the island and if conditions were suitable, to make a circumnavigation with the direction to be chosen once we arrived. Total distance would be about 26km.

I had a wet start launching through the surf when I hit a wave just as it peaked, and as I pitched over the other side I think there was a moment where the nose was in the water, the tail still at the top of the wave, and the bit with me in it wasn't much in the water at all. Whatever the reason, the next thing I knew I had lost my balance and was upside down! Bah! Despite doing some rolling practice with Adrian Clayton in the Sans Souci pool over winter, I didn't have my head together enough to consider a roll in the surf, so I opted for the wet exit. Reflecting later on my state of mind while underwater, the hilarious but useful word 'discombobulated' seemed particularly apt. Not

panicking, not distressed, just unable to process what I needed to do in order to execute a roll.

Popping out next to the kayak, I made myself take a breath and look around. Despite the surf and proximity of some rocks, I decided I had enough space and time to try a cowboy. With my long legs and short cockpit I find it can be tricky, and sure enough the first try ended with me back in the water. The next go I got one leg in and my bum on the seat, and I figured that would serve until I could paddle out to calmer water and get Steve, who had already launched, to stabilise me while I got leg #2 in. Having done that, I pumped most of the water out and recombobulated (see, it's still funny!) myself by the time Greg and Josh joined us. No harm done, just a bit annoyed at myself. Sooo much easier if I could just get my roll sorted. #1 kayak priority this summer.

So off we headed for Montague on a NE track. With the swell coming from ESE I found it awkward until I dropped my rudder, which made life much easier. The Nadgee tracks really well in most conditions so I don't use it much, but at times like this I find it really helps.

We got to Montague after about an hour and a half, with a couple of short rests on the way. Josh had



promised us at least one seal, and sure enough what I initially thought was a dead turtle turned out to be a seal floating along with one flipper in the air and a bunch of seaweed on its belly, drifting halfway between the coast and the island. It was totally unconcerned about us being there – happily drifting along under the big blue sky without a care in the world.

The shearwaters flying by were a treat to watch, skimming over the waves so low that their wing tips almost but not quite brushed the water. From time to time one would peel off from a group and come straight over our bows, just checking us out. Same with a couple of gannets- you could see them change direction to fly straight over the top of us. There is something about watching seabirds in their natural environment – there was never such a match between a creature and the element it inhabits.

Approaching the south end of the island, we made the call to go around anticlockwise, giving a big breaking swell off the south tip a wide berth.

The east side of the island had a heap of rebound off the shore and a couple of times I found myself concentrating hard, with the mantra “two hands for beginners” in my

head. I recalled being out with Tony Murphy in some rebound off North Head outside of Sydney Harbour. As we paddled along, he asked me what my comfort level was from 1-10 (1 being totally bored, 10 being totally overwhelmed). I found the question helpful in focusing me on being present and thinking about what was actually going on, rather than the gut reaction of being fearful in an unfamiliar situation. I used the same question in this situation and again found it helpful. For the record, I said 5. Steve said 3.

A note here: I find myself drawn to being on the ocean and love the way you are immersed in it when in a kayak. I am also a life-long bike rider and I find it immerses me in the environment in the same way as being on my bike. You see and hear so much more, you feel the cold and the heat, you make the effort required to be self-propelled and reap the reward of being self-reliant. As a new environment however, and a very dynamic one at that, I am still learning about being comfortable in challenging conditions. I am learning through experience, and the experience of others in the club, about the difference between fear and actual danger. Getting bounced around by rebound on the ocean side of an island 11km off the coast, with the next stop being Antarctica,

is beyond the comfort zone of most people. In the company of experienced paddlers however, and now with enough experience of my own to understand what is actually happening, it's okay, even exhilarating. Once again I am glad I found this club and met great people who share the sport they love with such generosity.

Of course once we got around the northern tip the conditions eased and we could relax and check out the island properly, taking our time and poking into all the nooks and crannies. We met heaps of the locals hanging out on the rocks, swimming or just lying around in the water like the guy we met on the way over. It was great to see so many seals up close- we estimated about 70 all up. They are inquisitive and fearless and great fun to watch, but man they are stinky when you get downwind! Clear blue water, plenty of wildlife and great weather; this was all the best things about sea kayaking!

Although landing on the island is not permitted, there is a spot where you can get out for a stretch in waist deep water. Taking advantage of that, I found the back of my boat suddenly hung up on a rock as a swell receded and the water dropped quickly. The movement of the water rotated the boat as well,





again with you, foolish boy! I have managed fine with bracing before in practice, but after a long paddle I guess I just wasn't thinking clearly or quickly enough so out I came for the second time that day. Beach 2, Gerard 0.

As I manoeuvred the kayak through the surf it seemed unusually heavy and awkward, and when I got it on the beach I realised why. The adventure with the rock on Montague had actually put a hole in the rear compartment, which was two thirds full of water! Boo!

None of these misadventures could put a dampener on what was overall a great day out. Skills can always be improved and fibreglass can be repaired. In fact it's already back with Mr Geoghegan getting a Kevlar keel strip fitted. There will no doubt be more rocks lurking in Georgie Girl's future).

Overall a fantastic experience with good company, bucket list item checked, lessons learnt. Thanks to Josh for organising and thanks to Steve and Greg for the company!

Gotta get my roll sorted this summer!

*Opposite: Greg in front of the lighthouse.  
Above: Steve checking out local seals.  
Below: A distant Montague Island.*

so there was a lovely grinding noise coming from behind me as I waited, almost high and dry, for the water to come back. With a little assistance from Steve I managed to get free and didn't think about it again until we got back to Mystery Bay.

After completing the circumnavigation we headed back home, with Josh giving us a reciprocal bearing to track to. This was the first time I found my deck compass useful, being bang on target as the horizon revealed the beach we started from.

With a little wind assistance the return trip was quicker than the way out, although I admit I was feeling it by the time we got back to the beach. My paddling muscles were fine, but I think I have to get my seat position organised a bit better, as my core and thighs were aching and I wasn't able to find relief.

Getting onto the beach required timing the surf- watching it for a couple of minutes showed there was a suitable lull between sets so we headed in one by one. As I came in I got picked up by a wave, broached and rolled. Into the water





# Bay of Islands, New Zealand

BART MALECKI





What an amazing couple of weeks spent sea kayaking in New Zealand's north east. It was a real pleasure joining Mark Hutson on his 10 day Bay of Islands Outer Coast trip. Mark has been running NZ Sea Kayaking Adventures out of Paihia for over 25 years and I was really pleased to be invited to come along and join his longest trip of the year.

This is a spectacular area to paddle, with something on offer for everyone. We started at an amazing campsite at Mimiwhangata Bay, south of the Bay of Islands. Based here for the first three days we spent our time kayak surfing crisp, clean waves on deserted beaches, exploring the infinite array of rock gardens in the area and touring around the small islands and bays.

Amongst the day paddles we also took the opportunity for some group training to get ready for the open coastline ahead. This included finding a few steep dumping beaches to practice landing and launching procedures (and a bit of pride bruising at times) as well as rescue drills and stroke technique. This was a great first three days and we were looking forward to continuing the adventure as we headed up the coast.

Over the coming days the group was treated to a very special place, and without doubt a world class paddling destination. We had some pretty experienced paddlers in the group that had paddled in many areas around the globe, but the collective jaw just kept dropping. The coastline is a mixture of rolling green hills and thick forests leading to a labyrinth of jagged rocky outcrops and mazes, mini islands, protected coves and beaches and towering cliff lines and sea caves. At times it felt like we were on the set of Jurassic Park.

I do go on about the rock gardens here, but they are amazing to paddle and I am a certified addict. The sheer abundance of these rock formations over many kilometres of coast is not something I have ever experienced. Around every corner there is a new part of the maze to explore. For those of us looking for some more adrenalin, there is plenty to offer as the swell rolls and breaks into and over the rock formations, through chutes and cracks that create mini canyon like features. Here there is a mixture of sea kayaking and white water paddling skills and it requires careful lines, good judgement and a lot of observation and patience

– ohh and sometimes a bit of bravado. The good news is that, unlike white water, these more advanced obstacles can easily be avoided by those not wishing to push as hard, so the whole group can remain within their own experience level while moving up the coast together.

The days rolled on and we visited some amazing campsites. Some were completely wild shingle beaches. While maybe not as comfy, I loved these campsites most of all. Truly remote and unspoilt, with no access apart from the water. We felt a million miles away. The nightly feast, accompanied by solid doses of wine, great comradery and a chat about the day's paddle was a real highlight of the trip. As was waking up each morning with a million dollar waterfront view!!!

Eventually came the crux of the trip – the rounding of Cape Brett. This is a significant cape and the most exposed area of the trip with few escape opportunities through the day. This is when Mother Nature finally had her way with us. After days of incredible warm sunny weather and light winds, we faced a tougher challenge with a strengthening offshore wind buffeting the group. With a fair bit of







rebound off the cliffs, we rounded the cape and hid inside a narrow passage (about three metres wide) that cuts through the land mass. No landing spots here, but muesli bars and a swim to stretch everyone's legs was available while the kayaks were rafted up together. After the requisite re-entries, we were off again to a lunch spot an hour away. Greeted by a steep, narrow shingle beach, landing required some discipline but all went well and we were joined by a curious Pied Shag that came in for a rest amongst our kayaks. Launching provided some excellent comedy after lunch as a number of the group attempted seal launches down the steep beach, with mixed results. After another few hours of bumpy paddling as the weather built, we were finally spat into the Bay of Islands itself, where a sheltered shingle beach awaited the group. We were tired but very happy to have rounded the cape and successfully dealt with a bit of weather. Now in the last few days of the trip we enjoyed the waters of the Bay of Islands as the weather subsided and made for easy paddling. The rock gardens





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were still there, as were a myriad of islands to explore and gawk at. Civilisation now beckoned with more motor boats and camp site neighbours. After a fantastic final day, we paddled into Paihia with a light tail wind pushing us to the finish where we "decamped".

After a great roast dinner with the group, I was home by the next evening. It felt like I had been magically teleported from a remote wilderness to the real world (perhaps it was the wine talking).

Thanks again to Mark and Connor at New Zealand Sea Kayaking

Adventures, and the entire paddling group for making this such a great trip. It's been my second time paddling this part of New Zealand, and I will definitely be back. The paddling is world class, the landscape is amazing and the water is clear and warm. In short, paddling paradise!!



# Batemans Bay to Eden

NICK BLACKLOCK AND CAOIMHIN ARDREN  
ADDITIONAL IMAGES FROM ADRIAN CLAYTON

Due to annoying things like work, a planned trip to Bass Strait became a “smelling the roses” “look in every cranny” trip down the south coast of NSW.



During the planning phase, the challenge was put up – if it was really about looking into every crevice we could – then why bother with sails. So they were left at home. Further complications were discarded along the way – no definite destination, no car shuffle, no booked in dates... just go with the flow. And if the flow was not in the right direction, sit tight and explore the coast.

Day 1 - 21km

Wind NE 15knts

Swell NE 1-2m

Very hot start. Great rock gardens on southern side of Burrewarra Point, normally bypassed on day trips in the area. Important to never be a gentleman and look out for your mates...they will just bag you out when your kayak gets stuck on some rocks. And when someone challenges you about camping on private land (a nice beach); stand your ground.

Images left to right: Guerilla Bay (AC), campsite at Tomakin (NB)

Batehaven to Tomakin  
via Guerilla Bay



Day 2 - 25km

Wind NE <10knts

Swell NE 1-1.5m

Moruya outlet interesting with strong outflow and breaking waves. Top speed of the trip achieved in the outflowing tide at 16km/h. Mullimburra Point will be the destination of a club trip with plastic boats – some of the best slots and fantastic rock features on the south coast. Be careful where you pitch your tent - the far corner might just smell like the spot everyone else chooses as a piss-stop.

Images left to right: Slot at Mullimburra (AC), stacks (AC)

Tomakin to  
Mullimburra Point -  
Family Beach  
via Moruya Heads





Day 3 - 34km  
 Wind NE <10knts  
 to SE 15knts  
 Swell NE 1m  
 Day 4 - Rest  
 S 20knts +

Hot day, timed Narooma bar perfectly for high tide. Long lunch as we waited for wind to drop. The Irishman was disappointed there was no chip shop at Potato point, but interesting story about how the location got its name at the time of the potato famine (not). Finding your way across the training wall with the flood tide running can lead to some gel coat scratching if you are too eager. When looking for a discrete campsite – always chat up the “locals” under the bridge at Narooma. You might just get something a lot better than you expected.

Images left to right: First two - Mullimburra Point (NB), Nick reclining on rest day (AC)

Mullimburra Point to Narooma via Potato Point



Day 5 - 41km  
 Wind SE 12knts  
 Swell NE 1m

Longest day paddled to get a good stopping point, great rock and points of interest on the way. Had a slog against the tide out of the Narooma inlet, bumping into seals (literally), before exploring some caves under the local golf course. Glasshouse Rocks are spectacular and worth a visit. Brilliant bucket caves at Mystery Bay (see photo of Adrian). Set up camp on private land after spending 90 minutes trying to find something suitable.

Clockwise from left: The trio leaving Narooma, Glasshouse Rock (NB), Mystery Bay (AC), Does my head look big in this? (CA)

Narooma to Barragga Bay via Mystery Bay and Bermagui



Day 6 - Rest

NE 25knts +

Day 7 - 27km

SE 10-12knts

Swell NE 1.5m

Surf landing for lunch at Picnic Point – some of the team got wet, but all stayed upright. Close shave when landing at Baronda Head, before Adrian cut through the rocks and did a dash up the beach for the best campsite.

Images left to right: Barragga Bay at dusk (NB), Baronda Head (AC)

Barragga Bay to Nelson  
Beach via Picnic Point



Day 8 - Rest

SE 15knts

Day 9 - 26km

NE to SE 12knts

Swell NE 1.5m

8 - Paddle on lagoon and surf session. Discovered the new prototype for a portable inflatable camp toilet.

9 - Morning Tea and restock in Tathra, great coastline south of Tathra. Long swell period swell and breaking wave 250m off beach made interesting landing at Bournda Island. Brilliant bioluminescence show as waves broke off the bommies and beaches.

Clockwise from left: Sunrise at Nelson Beach (AC), Bournda Island (NB), Adrian testing the prototype camp toilet (it's a hollow log) (CA), look who's been in the campsite (AC)

Nelson Beach to Bournda Island via Tathra





Day 10 - 24km  
NE 10knts  
Swell E 1m

One party member got an early soaking when paddling too close to a bommie...luckily their cap was recovered. Coffee, cake and surfing on Merimbula bar.

Images left to right: Tura Head (AC), Departing Merimbula (NB)

Bournda Island to Pambula  
Inlet via Merimbula



Day 11 - Rest  
SW 25knts

Paddle on Pambula Lake, read a book, kayak hatches filling up with windswept sand, while Caoimhin has the joy of riding a bus to Batemans Bay to collect the car to drop off at Eden, and then a "taxi" ride back from Eden with campsite manager.

Image: Pambula (NB)

Pambula



Day 12 - 31km  
Calm later E  
12knts

Calm after the storm, no wind day! Oily calm seas, before exploring the caves and rock gardens of Twofold Bay. Shouts and screams from onlookers at Eden above the rock gardens – mates of Adrian's...he always knows someone no matter where you are up and down the NSW coast.

Images left to right: Big penguins (NB), arriving in Eden (there's three boats in this photo)

Pambula to Eden (Boydton)





# Five go to Raja Ampat

KAREN DARBY

When Alison suggested a paddling trip to West Papua I had to do some research, as I was unaware of this as a paddling destination. Turns out it has picture perfect tropical islands, beautiful coral reefs, unbelievably good snorkelling and friendly locals.

Alison had found a company called kayak4conservation operating in Raja Ampat. They are trying to build tourism that directly benefits local people and promotes conservation efforts in the region.

Highlights of the trip for me were:

- The snorkelling. Huge numbers of fish and wonderful coral. My favourite snorkel was when we stopped at an island during the day and drifted (flew!) with the tide along the reef drop-off on the edge of the island.
- Stopping at a beautiful little island on our 25 km crossing to Fam. Everything you expect a tropical island to be. White sand, palm trees, more fish, coral and amazingly blue water.
- Sitting on the beach at Airborek watching the sunset turn the tropical storm clouds red.
- Watching schools of fish under our homestay at Warikaf and waiting for the bigger predators lurking in deeper water to attack.
- Seeing the dawn display of the Red Bird of Paradise.
- Tony's bonus highlight
- The first beer and air conditioning for 10 days when we got back to Sorong.





## Trip Details

**Team:** Alison Curtin, Rae and Neil Duffy, Tony Murphy, Karen Darby and Kate from England. Trips run with six people.

**Location:** Raja Ampat - chain of islands off the western tip of West Papua, Indonesia.

**Trip:** We did a 10 day trip which included 2 nights camping. <https://kayak4conservation.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Description-10Day-Trip-A.pdf>

**Transport:** While close to Australia getting there isn't easy. We flew to Bali, Makassar and Sorong before getting a boat out to kayak4conservation on the island of Wasai.

**Kayaks:** Locally built and based on a South African design. They were

competent sea kayaks; Alison said it felt a lot like her Mirage 530.

**Conditions:** At the time of our visit in October-November conditions are very benign. No swell, and winds not expected to be more than 15 knots. There were some interesting tidal flows at times and one small section of paddling where we had wind against tide and it got a bit rough. Yes several club instructors and guides may have had no skirt or pfd anywhere useful as this happened.

**Accommodation:** Local homestays. Very basic but all in beautiful locations either on the beach or built over the water. Just a mattress on the floor and a mosquito net and windows without glass to let the breeze in.

**Food:** You eat what the locals eat.

Fish, rice, stir-fried greens for three meals a day. Some homestays are attempting foreigner food, mostly you will eat a lot of fish. Places to buy alternative food are rare.

**Guide:** The guide is a local who knows how to get from A to B and can communicate with homestay owners. Don't expect professionally qualified kayak guides. Our guide Ayub was friendly and incredibly resourceful when problems occurred. He was also very strong and towed Kate an incredible 20+kms on one day. The contents of his kayak could be interesting. One day I noted he was transporting in his kayak all his own gear, 20 litres of water for our camp, seven lunches for us, two papayas, three coconuts and five freshly caught tuna.





# An uninhabited island in the south west pacific

ALISON CURTIN

I'm a huge fan of David Attenborough, as I'm sure many paddlers are, so you would appreciate how privileged and lucky I was to visit Phillip Island by kayak, an uninhabited island 6km south of Norfolk Island.

It was an unplanned adventure while I was visiting a friend working on Norfolk Island last Easter. We did a day trip in inflatable kayaks off Norfolk which was heaps of fun. The coast line is spectacular once you get outside the surrounding reef. This is done by a speed boat loaded with kayaks getting winched into the water and gunning it out between sets. While the swell seemed small in height they were long and full. Landing for a snorkel and swim on a rock garden, made us appreciate the surge and just how tough the boats were.

Anyway I had spied Phillip Island when we arrived and a quick chat with the tour operator led to a boat hire and expedition out to the island for Dave and I. It took a couple of goes to launch of the steps/ladder at the jetty and sprint out of the harbour without getting caught in the surf breaking on the surrounding reef and then a pleasant hour paddling over. How to land? We had been given directions to the one place this was going to be okay, which we followed, into a small

harbour, and then before we had made a plan we were launched onto the rock platform and leapt out of the kayak in socks to stop the kayak going back with the returning wave. Socks on rocks work well - a tip from the local Norfolk fisherman.

After putting on our shoes, we then climbed up to the top of Phillip island, it reaches 280m above sea level. On the way the evidence of past erosion caused by pigs, goats and rabbits was still obvious due to the reddish colour that was caused by the absence of topsoil. All the ferals were removed by 1988 and the island is naturally revegetating and now once again home to a prolific array of seabirds.

I looked under bushes and saw nesting red-tailed tropicbirds; crept



to get within a metre of the bird, which continued to pose. Many birds streamed along the high steep cliffs and we could see enormous turtles in the water below. We saw tropicbirds, boobies, terns, ternlets and gannets.

Next we decided to circumnavigate the island (I think it may have been a first by kayak!). The view from the south side of the island back up the cliffs was equally as impressive from the cliff bases, although we didn't get in close because of the swell. Once all the way around





we landed again for lunch before paddling back to Norfolk.

We had hoped to go to the beach where friends were snorkelling and swimming on Norfolk but looking at the waves breaking on the reef from the outside, we were not going to get through. So back to the 'harbour' where we had started. Once again we negotiated the surf zone without any hassles. Once inside we had to land on the boat ramp as the surge was too big to get out at the steps where we had launched. Hmm, we lined up next to the ramp, it was a metre above my head - how are we going to do this? A few locals had stopped to watch as this was not usual and perhaps they wondered about the sharks - which get fed here daily (well-fed sharks - why worry!). Then suddenly we were up on the slimy boat ramp and I seal launched onto my stomach, being in the front of

the kayak, hanging onto my paddle in one hand, and the kayak hooked by my foot. And luckily this worked and Dave got out too and the locals

moved on - no fish feeding after all, but a fantastic day out and definitely my best ever David Attenborough-like experience!





*Adrian Clayton relaxing on a rest day at Nelson Beach  
(Image - Caoimhin Ardren)*

