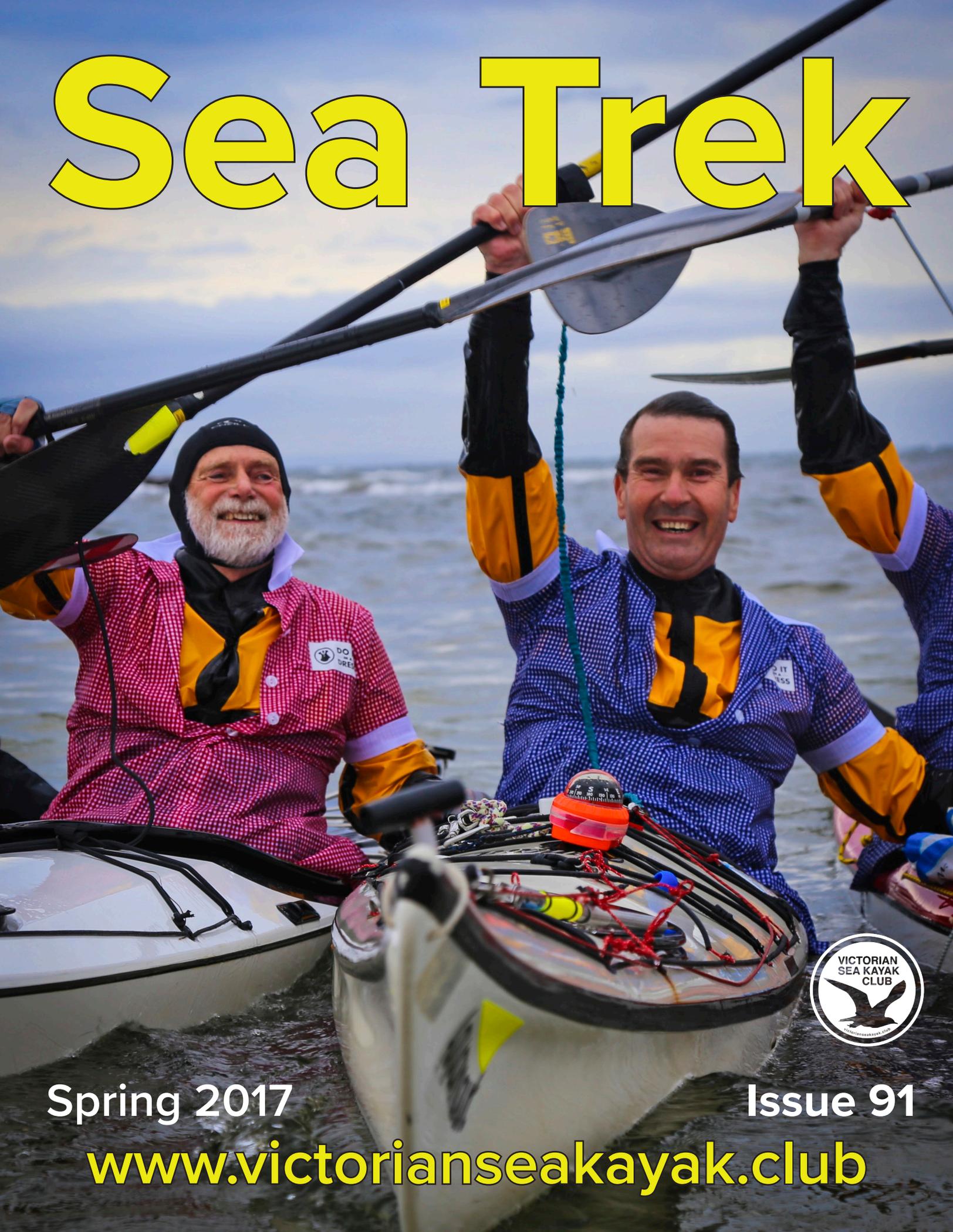


# Sea Trek



Spring 2017

Issue 91

[www.victorianskayak.club](http://www.victorianskayak.club)

# Victorian Sea Kayak Club

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**Sub Editor**  
Laureen Knight

Some of the VSKC crew enjoying the Pizza at the Prom weekend.

Photo: Ben Flora



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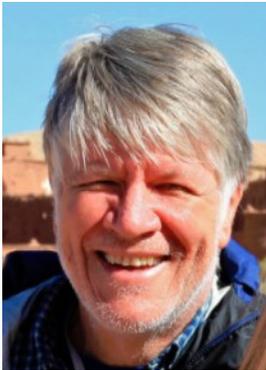
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Skullduggery



# VSKC

Victorian Sea Kayak Club



## President's Heads Up *Sea Trek* Spring 2017

Well, the water is warming up and we are moving into the peak-paddling season. So, stow the winter paddling kit and enjoy getting out on the water over the holiday season. I am reminded yet again though to reiterate our focus on safety on the water. This is the first year for a while where I can recall two fatal kayak related drownings on Port Phillip Bay. One was a solo paddler out from Altona and the second one was also a solo paddler out from Canadian Bay. Her kayak was found over at Portarlington, but no sign of the paddler. There is a message there – extended solo paddling is risky. I urge all members to honestly self-assess before embarking on paddles, and we now have a useful checklist to assist with that on the website.

Christmas and New Year is a time we all tend to orient around family, but I do hope members can squeeze in some Club paddles to celebrate the festive season with fellow members. Trips are starting to appear on the website, but I know that members will also be planning some private trips – I am off to paddle the islands off NW Tasmania with a group of seven. If planning private trips, think about inviting some new VSKC colleagues along, we want to see as many members as possible getting the chance to push the boundaries on their

paddling repertoire. You learn out on the water, not on You Tube!

We had a fabulous annual Paddle Fest weekend at Barwon Heads with great weather, around 100 attendees, great talks and a full range of paddles and skill sessions on offer. I particularly enjoyed Beau Miles talk as he explored just how do you return from something like a Bass Strait crossing and tell your friends what you really experienced? How do you convey the story, how do you make it real, how do you capture the essence of it? More generally, many people commented to me how much they enjoyed the venue and events. We will certainly be back there next year. We are in the process of getting feedback from attendees and will tweak planning for next year as required. It was fantastic to have Mick MacRobb's close family along as we awarded the inaugural Mick MacRobb Photography Award, won by our sterling *Sea Trek* Editor, Ben Flora. We hope this perpetual trophy will become over time a fitting tribute to our dear mate, Mick.

The new Club Committee has met, and I am particularly pleased to welcome new Committee Members - Peter Newman (Vice President), Kathryn Botherway (Membership), Ron Morris (Trips) and Chantelle Mizzi (Communications). They



VSKC members @ AGM : Photo: Georgia & Tom

join myself, Joe Alberico (Secretary) and Ben Flora (Sea Trek), with the Treasurer and Training roles still being filled. The Committee has decided that there is one big thing we want to see well implemented in 2018, and that is the new skills grading system, and the associated reworking of our training and trip leadership activities. That will start with a special members forum in early 2018 to workshop implementation of the new model. We want to maximise ownership of the new approach. Apart from that, we have decided to make our overarching focus 'enhancing our members experience'. This means, getting our member communication working consistently well (i.e. email, web and social media) and enhancing functionality of the website to make it easier for members and trip leaders to get trips up and running. So, watch this space for further announcements regarding this.

So, it is great to see Sea Trek hitting our spray decks just ahead of Christmas. Hopefully, there will be some new kayaking goodies in Christmas stockings, but more importantly get out onto the water and enjoy. As our new VSKC tee shirts have printed on the back – 'adventure is out there'. So bring on a season of safe, inclusive, sustainable paddling. I look for-

ward to seeing you all out on the water and with you all the very best for Christmas and the New Year.

**Richard Rawling**  
VSKC President

### Cover

Photo: Do it in a Dress,  
Georgia Clarke-Edwards



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Red Eye AGM Paddle, Photo: Ben Flora

## Editorial Musings

At last an AGM where the weather couldn't really be better for a November weekend in Victoria. I believe no paddles that were planned were cancelled and I know that most people enjoyed the paddles they attended. Some were challenging and fear confronting and others were not. But hey, that is why we take on the sport, hobby or activity of sea kayaking. We are free to push ourselves with the safety of more experienced paddlers there to help if things go wrong. A Blue Water Festival at it's best.

The Barwon Heads Caravan Park is big, well rather huge, however, we all managed to stay relatively closely camped on the south side of the football field. The facilities were all very nice and clean and the football club rooms served us well. The weekend kicked off on Friday with some instruction paddles from Rob Mercer and Mark Sundin. The rescue training session was so successful that the leaders and trainers of the VSKC have already adapted the training strategy of teams racing against each other against a clock and perform a series of successful rescue techniques along the way. We put this to good use at our next Canadian Bay new club member paddle in November.

One of the AGM highlights for me was the video competition, which was very healthy this year. Instead of our two entries last year we had six. The winner's Georgia and Tom put together an amazing "Do it in a

Editor: Ben Flora



**Nov 2017**

Dress" video. We saw some synchronized sea kayaking and drone footage on this one. Not to mention another video entry with a bunch of old men playing with a giant rubber ducky/dragon on the east coast of Australia. Some strangeness indeed, but it looked like lot's of fun and gathered many laughs during the viewing on the Saturday evening.

The photo competition had it's winners, named later in the magazine, however, after counting votes, about 30% of the attendees voted. Sounds like politics to me. Maybe next year people can vote early and before the end of Saturday for this one.



| Red Eye AGM Paddle : Photo: Ben Flora

Our guest speaker Geoff Murray was enthralling with his stories and pictures of his kayaking journeys to lands near the northern and southern poles of our wonderful planet earth. He was also one of our judges, who carried the winning vote for our first Perpetual Mick MacRobb photo competition winner.

All in all it was a great weekend with many paddles, story telling, workshops, camaraderie, photos and more.

Coming up next is Mark Sundin's story of the weekend from an 'outsider's' perspective, I think it captures the spirit of the 2017 VSKC Blue Water Festival and AGM weekend at Barwon Heads.

The AGM was big, however, our aim at Sea Trek is to give you a good perspective of what others in the club were exploring in the last quarter or so. Doing it in a Dress and a trip to Mexico also stand out. Keep reading to find out more.

Thanks to Kate Alberico for proof reading this edition of Sea Trek and thanks to all the writers and

photographers who have contributed to Sea Trek 91 and it's predecessors.

Without you this magazine would not exist.

Ben Flora





# Barwon Heads Blue Water Festival and AGM

Photo: Ben Flora

# The Blue Water Festival, an 'outsiders' take



Words and photos: Mark Sundin

It's always a tough one packing for our annual migration south for the Victorian Sea Kayak Club's Blue Water Festival. We invariably leave Sydney in balmy spring weather, the cold weather gear having been dispensed with for another season, and never quite manage to get our heads around the fact that several degrees of latitude south does tend to cool things down!

Having mostly been blown to smithereens at the previous two years' events, we did our best to prepare for whatever may be, despite a forecast promising plenty of sunshine.

The club put the weekend on at Barwon Heads this year, a seaside village so idyllic it was used as the backdrop for the TV series *Sea Change*.

We drove down to Melbourne via the eastern edge of the city and caught the Sorrento to Queenscliff Ferry across to the surf coast. If you haven't done that before, it's a real treat, and they have a bar!

On the Friday we had coaching booked for more than thirty club members; a morning session on forward paddling, and an afternoon of very targeted rescue practice cloaked in the inevitable buffoonery of Rob's excellent rescue game.



Don't assume we're going to let you use your paddle, just because it's meant to be kayak coaching!

Geoff Murray had sailed across from his native Tassie on the Spirit to be the headline act for the weekend, and we caught up with him and enjoyed some local seafood and spring water at a beautiful little restaurant perched on a wharf.

On the Saturday morning I accompanied Gerard, Tina and a big group on a paddle out along the surf coast between Barwon Heads and the entrance to Port Phillip Bay, a broad expanse of small rolling swell that traverses a sandy sea floor, of at times, wildly varying depths.

Scanning the water ahead provided the occasional highlight as a peak seemed to rise alarmingly and then dissipate as quickly as it had appeared. Every now and then there was a hint of white water, ranging from about 500m to about 800m behind the surf zone, but we clipped along the calm, windless sea profile without incident.

At about the point where we were due to turn, I looked south and saw a big green wall that was threatening to break. Years of ocean paddling experience told me it wouldn't. Ignoring my experience, the wave began to turn transparent. I decided a desperate charge was my best form of defence, and busted over the lip into a lot

of clear air as it did, in fact, start to tumble over. With a degree of hubris, I thought "Phew, I'm glad it missed me, but I bet there's some collateral damage on the other side!" as I glanced back at the hissing white wall that was heading for my new paddle mates.

Then the hissing sound changed ears, and when I swung my head around there was a bigger one, and I wasn't going to get away this time! Charging regardless, I hit the wave almost vertical, was pushed straight up into the air by the pile of whitewater, driven backwards into a not-so-elegant reverse endo, which terminated, by my best guess, on the 'over-the-falls' part of the breaking wave, where I was window-shaded three times before managing to grab a handful of purchase with my roll and breathe again. The trace on my GPS shows a 12 second ride backwards, but I swear it was 6 minutes.... With my sinuses now remarkably clear and chiropractic work done, I then set about retrieving my very expensive sunnies (on a float), my \$90 hat and my pump (also both floating). So a good tale, but not an expensive one!

Excitement over, Gerard and his able deputies then calmly put the group back together, and retrieved the riderless horses. Ben deck-carried one of the swimmers (as we'd practiced the afternoon before), and within 5 minutes we were all sharing a laugh about the experience.



A wider course home was deemed appropriate, so we paddled out to the submerged wreck of the HMAS Canberra, before running back to Barwon Heads on some very cool little waves.

Back at the beach a few curious souls tested out my demo Audax, before we made our way back to HQ for lunch.

In the arvo Rob told the tale of the Audax, from concept through to design and manufacture; a story that surprises most paddlers when they hear first-hand just what's involved in bringing a new design to market. In a part of the world where a plumb bow sea kayak is often



treated with suspicion if not bewilderment, we hope we managed to explode some of the myths peddled about this new style of boat.

On Saturday night our mate from Tassie, Geoff Murray, presented his gobsmacking trove of images and tales from years spent paddling in Greenland and Antarctica.

Preceding that however, the club honoured Mick MacRobb by naming their hotly contested photo competition in his memory, and invited Mick's Mum and Dad,

Photo: Laureen Knight



Graeme and Jenny, and his partner Lyn to speak and present the award. It was lovely moment, in a room full of warmth and good wishes, and well done to the Vics say we.

The final day dawned with blue sky and warm sunshine yet again, so Rob took the opportunity to join in on the club's surf coaching session in the insanely fun Tiderace Action, where from all reports all he did was surf himself silly. He certainly had a grin from sunscreen-smeard ear to ear when he came back from the beach!

The weekend finished with a catered lunch and a farewell from President Richard, and this year everyone went away with a sunburnt nose and big smile. What a top weekend.

Thanks so much to Richard, Steve, and the committee of the VSKC for inviting us down and making us feel so welcome. You know you're coming to play with a healthy club when they welcome outsiders and their seditious ideas in good humour, with an open mind, and we had a ball.



Mark Sundin

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The Perpetual Mick MacRobb  
Photographic Award  
Winning Photograph



Congratulations to Ben Flora for winning the first Perpetual Mick MacRobb Photographic Award at the AGM this year. His name will be engraved on the huon pine trophy (above left) along with future winners.

We can see where Mick gets his story telling from, as dad, Graeme was able to entertain us with some more stories from Mick's past as the family presented the trophy.

**2017**

Jenny, Lyn, Graeme and Ben. Photos Lauren Knight





Club house and stalls at the AGM  
Photos: Georgia and Tom

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# 2017 AGM Photo Competition Winners



*Mark Sundin*

Landscape category winner:

Peter Sharp

Start collecting your best shots for the Perpetual Mick MacRobb Photographic Award at the 2018 Blue Water Festival and AGM!





Flora and Fauna category winner:

Gayle Edith

## 2017 AGM

Humour category winner:

Peter Costello

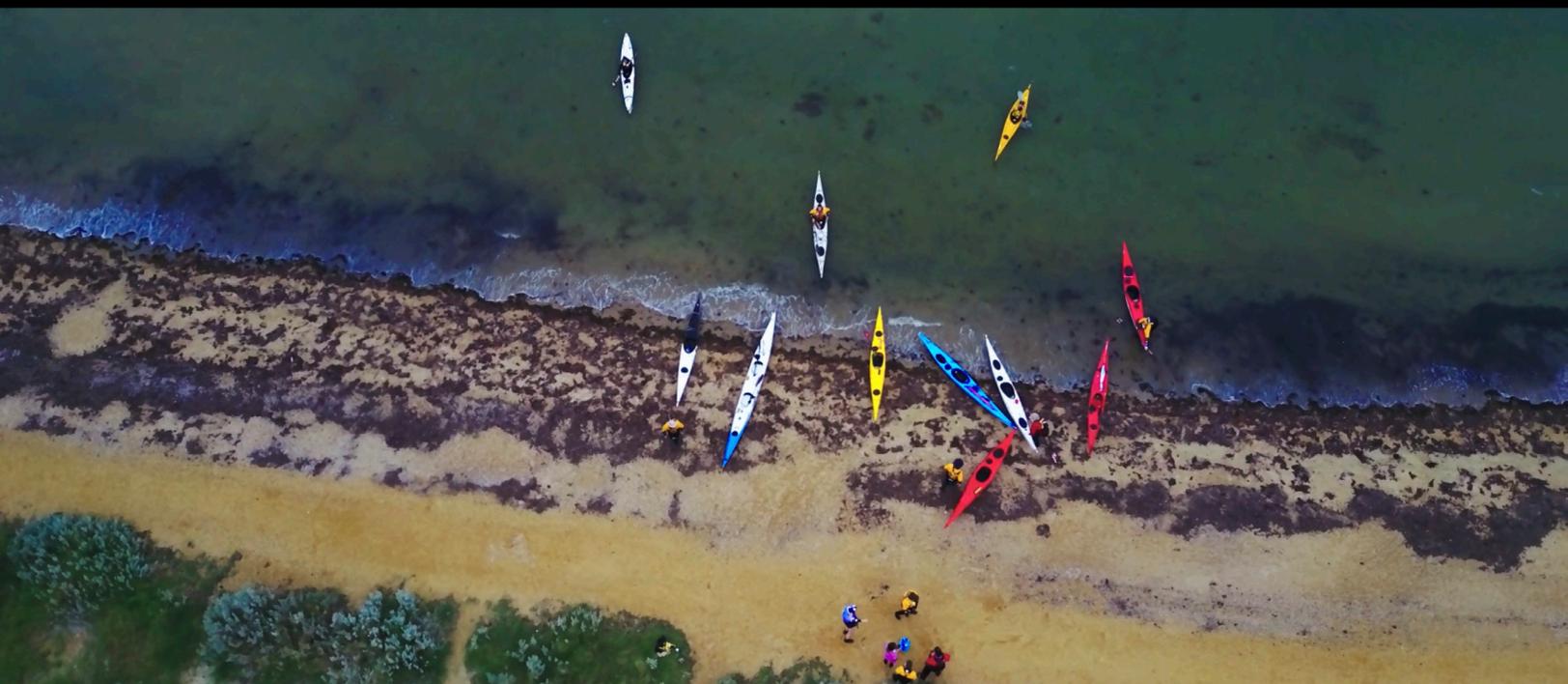




Video category winner: Do It In a Dress.  
Tom Mackie and Georgia Clarke-Edwards

## 2017 AGM

Action category winner:  
Andrew Campbell





## Celebrating 10,000km of Red Eye Paddling

| Photo: Lauren Knight

The distance from Melbourne, Australia, to Cape Town, South Africa, is about 10,300 km, a similar distance as the 10,000km milestone recently achieved by the red-eye paddle. It is a large distance and this is a story about the endurance of the weekly red-eye paddle. My red-eye journey started about 9,000 km ago.

My first thought about the red-eye was: "This is very early to be finishing a paddle; it's before most people are even awake!" I think it was February 2004 and I had little to no paddling experience. I thought a 9 am start was reasonably early?

My first impression about the red-eye paddlers was: "They look 'hard core!'"

With the benefit of hindsight I think the paddlers were "dressed for immersion", they were well prepared and had gear that was well used. The VSKC members I met that day encouraged me to explore kayaking, have fun and develop my skills. I was to learn that the red-eye paddle runs year round and about 2 months later I found myself exploring sea kayaking on Port Phillip Bay

in 20 to 30 knot westerly winds; that was fun as the waves were over a metre with foam crests and some spray. A short 3 months later, in July 2004, I found myself paddling in 25 to 35 knot S-SE winds and as the paddle started at 6 am in the morning, it was still dark! As I paddled out of the Sandringham yacht club harbour into the blackness with the harbour lights behind, all I could see were the white foam crests, the waves were black. That was definitely outside my comfort zone! Fortunately, my night vision improved, I stayed upright, and I had fun!

I sometimes suspect others new to the red-eye might have a similar experience.

As I recall, I was sent out first into the darkness that morning, so that Peter (PC) and Hrojve (HM) could keep an eye on me, and pick up any pieces if I were to capsize!

I think that if I had asked PC if he had any concerns about doing the red-eye paddle, he would have said "no, I'm not afraid of any pirates that might turn up,

but I would hate to go paddling without someone to talk to”.



| Photo: Ben Flora

More seriously, risk awareness becomes an unconscious habit, a skill that is observed in, and mentored by, trip leader(s) and developed over time with practice.

As I recall, in 2004 the focus of the red-eye was the paddle. Typically paddlers packed and left at the conclusion of the paddle due to other commitments.

With the move to Ricketts Point, now it's unusual if no one stays for a cup of coffee or breakfast after the paddle. Sure there are some that must leave due to other family commitments, but that's fine. The post paddle coffee and breakfast is a great opportunity to discuss life, to debrief and discuss paddling risks so that we can improve our situational risk awareness and improve plans for risk mitigation.

Another important aspect of the red-eye paddle is a focus at the end of the paddle on skills development, rescue and rolling practice. As the red-eye paddle runs throughout the year, this does mean that a kayak roll or rescue practice in mid-winter requires that participants must be dressed for immersion as the water temperature does fall to about 8°C. With summer on the way, we can take a more relaxed approach to skills practice and spend more time in the water.



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Words: Andrew Campbell

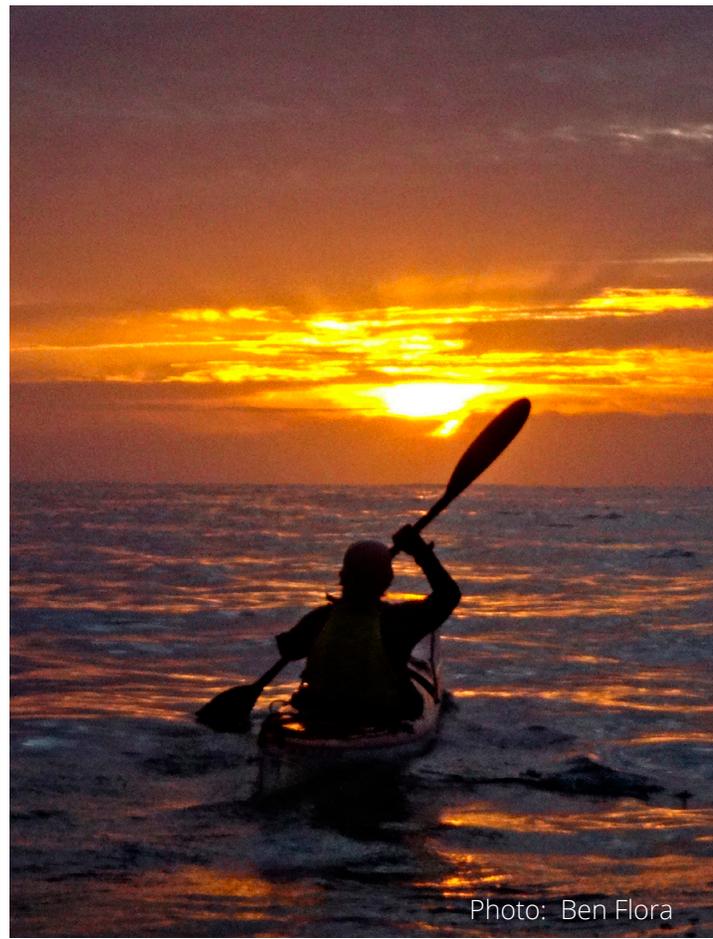


Photo: Ben Flora

# Musical Chairs of Baja California Sur

Words and Photos: Caroline Durré





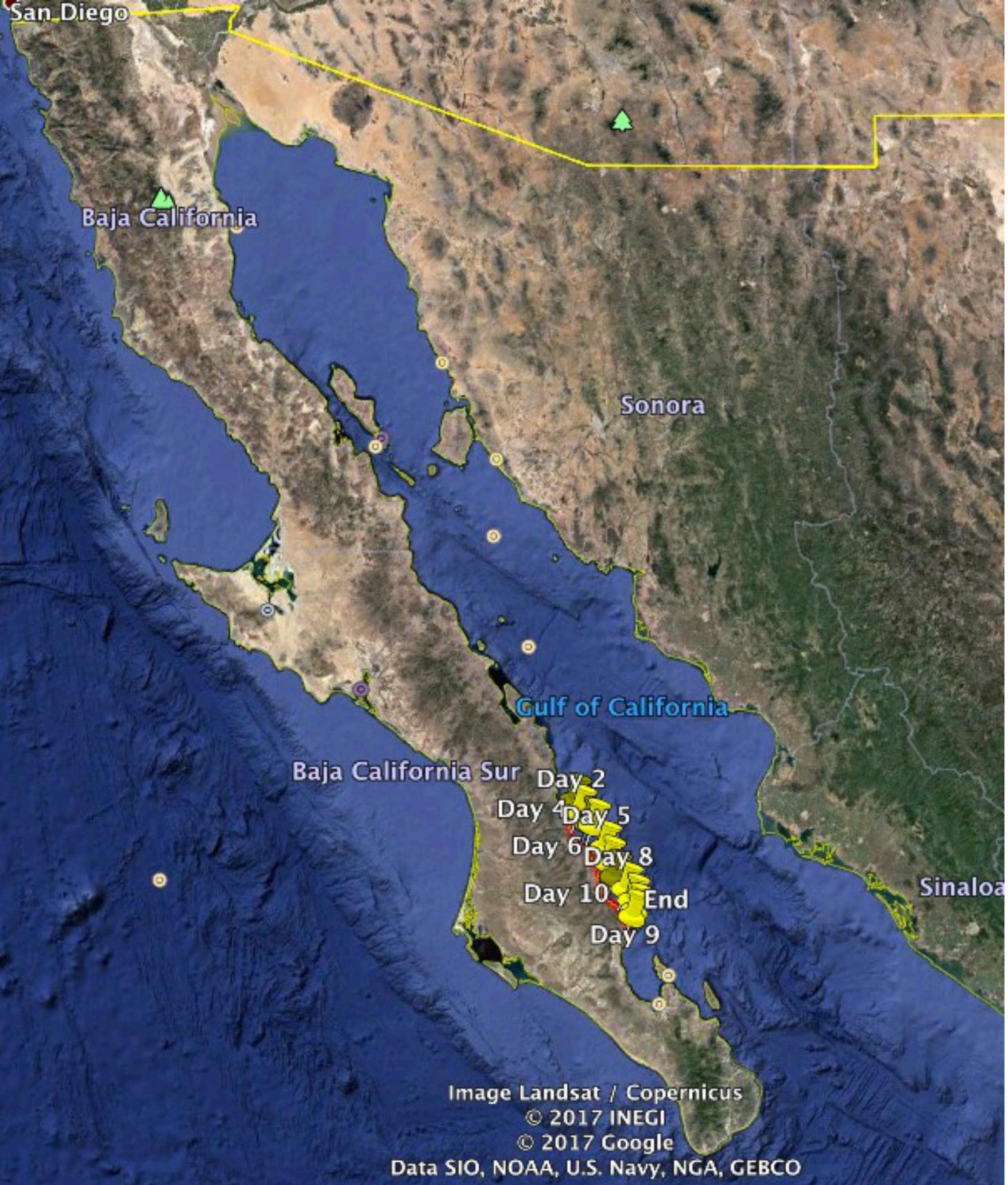
Two years ago I went to Mexico for the first time. Since then I have wanted to see more of this huge and diverse country. Finally I made it back on October 22, and delved into a twelve-day sea kayaking trip, run by Baja Outdoor Activities, a company based in La Paz, Baja Sur. I flew to our rendezvous, the small town of Loreto, from Los Angeles, and joined twelve travellers from USA and Canada with local guides Mario and Cristián.

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Baja California Sur : Caroline Durré

**Oct 22**



Baja California Sur :  
 GPS Image data : Jeff Taylor  
 Google Map image : Mark Durré

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Enseñada Blanca, our put-in point, was about 40 minutes' drive south of Loreto. From here we began our unvaried southerly heading, the cloudless sun in our faces all day long. At this time of year a helpful northerly is the prevailing wind, but the weather didn't follow the expected pattern. It was hotter than usual and the wind came from every quarter; however the conditions were never extreme.

There were a variety of boats in which we played musical chairs: three doubles including two Seaward 'Passat G3' and a huge Necky 'Nootka'; three plastic singles with skegs- Wilderness Systems 'Tempest 170' and Seaward 'Tye', and the rest of the boats fibreglass singles with rudders, including

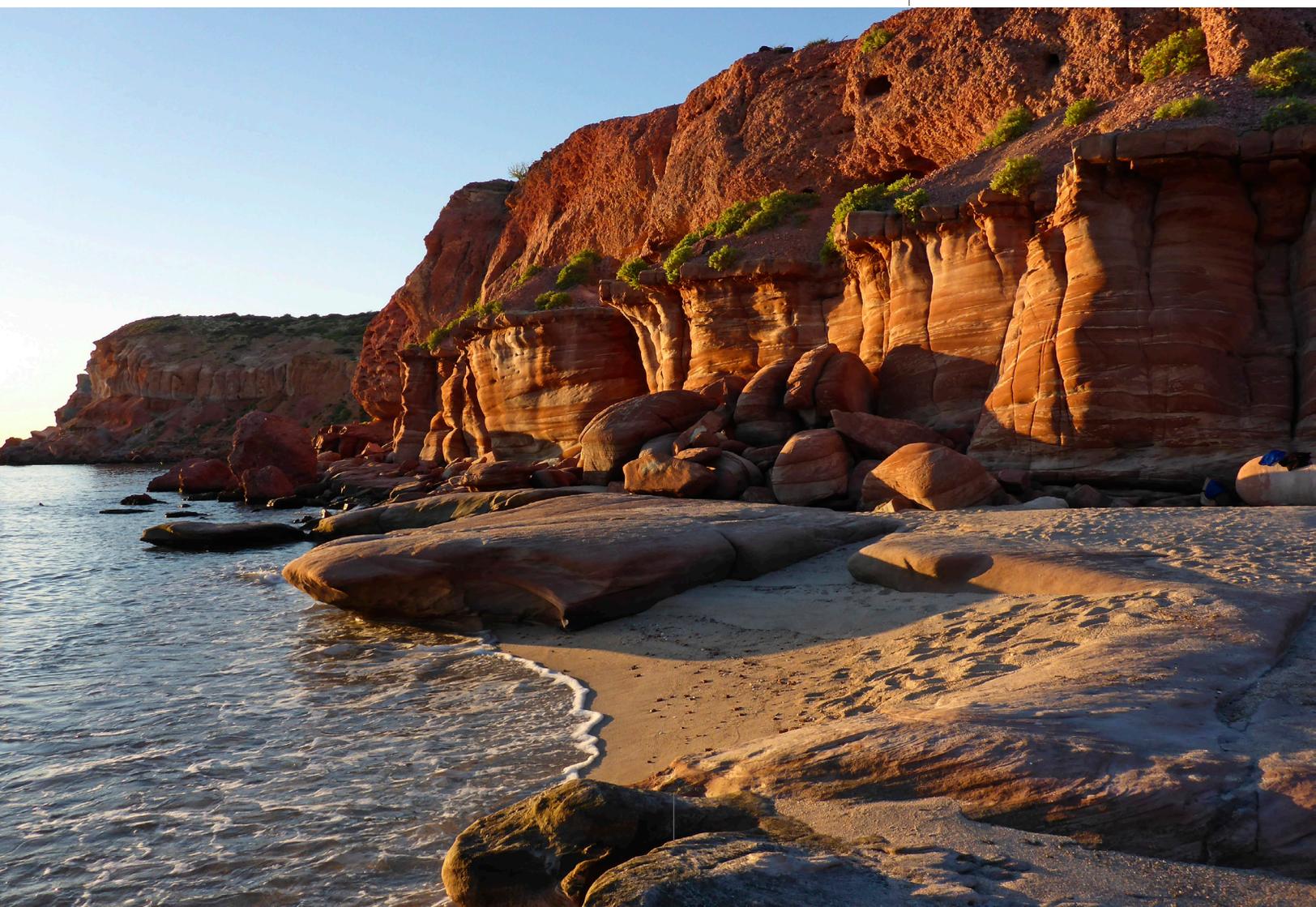


Swift 'Pitaya', and Seaward 'Aurora' and 'Navigator', this last my favourite boat.

Baja California is a formed from the San Andreas fault. As a result it is geologically dynamic. Its layers of volcanic ash and lava, mixed with sandstones and conglomerates, are fractured by earth movements and erosion that give rise to dramatic jagged hills. From the sea the land is a sequence of steep-sided chaotic ranges.

Over ten days of paddling we averaged 15km a day, on a couple of days facing a brisk southerly. We paddled on some lovely rolling glossy swells over an aqua sea, past villages, some of which are only accessible from the sea, in their isolated inlets. Water is precious here, and is brought in by road or boat.

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The main business is fishing, carried out on a small scale using the 'panga', an open fibreglass boat with an outboard motor.

The stresses of the journey didn't arise from paddling distance or sea state, which were very manageable, but from being in the tropics. It was hot, both by day and by night, and friction sores and coral scrapes easily became infected and were slow to heal.

There was some enchanting snorkelling among the psychedelic colours of tropical fish, as well as moray eels, stonefish, rays and pipefish. The unfamiliar tropical birds, including blue-footed boobies, frigatebirds, osprey, turkey vultures, brown pelicans, collared kingfisher, herons, egrets, gulls and cormorants, and magical hummingbirds, were a delight, and, as a plant enthusiast I was entranced by the cactus landscapes, so exotic to an Australian.





Baja California Sur : Caroline Durré

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On the final days we passed the extraordinary pink-and-green striped sea cliffs of Arroyo Verde. Finally, near the village of El Portugués we came to our take-out beach, where the boats were emptied and loaded for the long drive to La Paz.



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Caroline Durré



Baja California Sur : Caroline Durré

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Do it in a Dress



With the words 'Adventure Is Out There' ringing in our ears, Tom and I crawled out from a cosy warm bed into the chilly morning air at a cheery 4:20 am on Saturday morning. It was once again time to rug-up, slurp down some hot coffee and join the brave parade of gents down at Ricketts Point for the weekly Red-Eye paddle.

We'll never forget our first paddle down at Ricketts - a face-numbing, finger-freezing, stiff-armed, mid-winters paddle on a glassy bay. We drove home glum, with the sombre impression that maybe the Saturday morning paddle was merely a chance for older gentlemen to catch up in the name of a leisurely float. However, we felt it unfair to judge so hastily and fronted up the very next week. In a cheeky twist of fate Mother Nature decided to turn up the dial and Tom and I had to eat our words. "Madness!" we yelled to each other across a howling wind, "These old guys are crazy! Absolute nutters!" And just like that the penny dropped: the red-eye was indeed an invaluable paddle for adventurous souls who put on a full display of skill, bravado, comradery and mentorship. The weeks to follow were jam-packed with learning, laughter, cold, and the occasional ripper wave.

On the Saturday morning of the 28th of October 2017 we knew the Red-Eye gang was ready for another adventure, but this time it was to be slightly different. After having recently become an ambassador for a charity called One Girl, a small Melbourne based not for profit which aims to fund thoughtful initiatives for the education of girls in poverty stricken areas of Africa, I was thrilled to learn, that with the huge helping hand of Peter Costello, we were going to be putting on a charity paddle. More specifically, a 'Do It In A Dress' paddle, to raise awareness and funds for those in need.

We hit the water with a splash, and with the biggest pod of sea kayakers, we had ever paddled with to date, we cruised up to Half-Moon Bay in raucous high spirits. The weather was truly splendid, and we seemed to ride a wave of chatter and laughter back to Ricketts Point in a timeless daze. From there it was time for everyone to slip into a cute little number (in the form of a school girl dress) for a good wold fashioned school girl roll!

In what must have been a very odd sight indeed, we had a large group of dress clad men showing off perfect rolls in perfect unison! They even pulled off a

seamless Mexican roll which was an impressive feat to behold. It was madness at its finest, and showed the spectacular willingness of the guys to get involved for such a good cause.

With a big effort from Neil Brenton and Raia Wall, we were all treated to a fry-up breakfast of bacon, eggs, donuts, croissants and much more. All the food had been generously donated by various businesses (Mr. Donuts, Burd Eggs, Seedling Cafe & Gamekeepers Meats) which made for an utterly magic morning.

But beyond the kayak antics, the buzzing atmosphere, the delicious food and the wonderful memories, we were able to team up together and raise over \$700 towards a lifetime of change for girls with little hope of a prosperous future, and for that we are eternally grateful and would like to thank everyone involved, so very much.

By Tom Mackie  
and Georgia Clarke-Edwards





Photos: Georgia Clarke-Edwards



Sept

2017

Photos: Nic Faramaz

# Red Eye Do It In A Dress



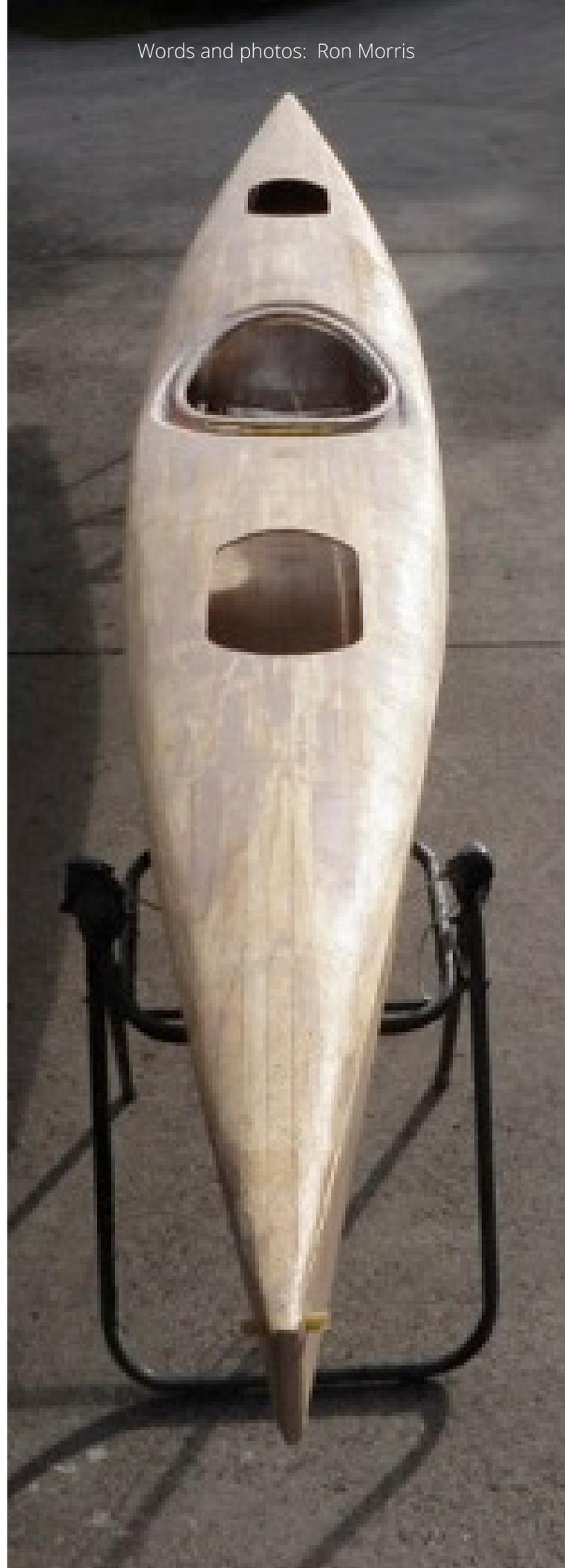
# Why build a boat?

When the editor asked me to write an article about building boats, my thought was automatically 'Why me?' I am far from an 'experienced' boat builder, and I know there are people within the club who have much more experience than I in the black art of boat construction.

So, as I retired to my garage, to make more mess from a batch of epoxy resin that will probably produce a substandard part, I thought about the reason why I continued to delve into the mostly frustrating art of boat building. There are so many different types of boats one can build: skin on frame, stitch and glue, strip plank, fibreglass, or paper mache. And each and every one of these styles, has in itself literally thousands of different techniques one can use to develop a finished product. It was then I realised it was not possible to write a 'how to guide' for boat building for several reasons. The two main ones being that it would be boring, and you are better off looking at YouTube for advice on boat construction. (Nick Schade has some great instructional videos.) Instead, I decided I would explore the greatest of all questions. Not how to build, but WHY? Why build a boat?

From the start of time, padding and building a craft to paddle were synonymous with each other. There were no kayaking shops, online stores, or commercial producers of fine fibreglass wares. So, if you were inclined to paddle a long skinny craft, you needed to start by building one. As technology has progressed, we now have the luxury of being able to purchase a nicely made commercial product from the comfort of our keyboards, if we so desire. It is an appealing proposition. By parting with some hard earned cash, we can get in return, a scientifically designed, technically produced, shiny new boat, with next to no building skills required by the paddler.

I recall my first foray into combining fibreglass and kayaks. My first sea kayak was an old eBay special. It was battered and bruised, had missing hatch rims, missing bulkheads, a half modified keel, and a multitude of large holes which had no place being on a sea kayak. It was an absolute mess, and I loved it. So, I did what any person with no real knowledge about sea kayaks



would do. I took to it with an angle grinder, cut out all the parts I thought were not needed, including the seat, foot plate and rudder pedals, and learned how to mix resin. I learnt the difference between Polyester, Vinylester and Epoxy. I learnt the difference between chop strand mat, and woven cloth. By the time I finished patching that boat, it weighed about 15kg more than it should, was uncomfortable, had sharp pieces of fibreglass all over it, and was as ugly as a sea kayak could be. But I learnt one very important lesson. Anything can be fixed, modified and improved with enough patience and perseverance.



Like learning to roll, which can reduce the fear of capsize, learning to patch a boat can reduce the fear of damage. The knowledge that no matter what type of damage you do to your shiny new steed, you are capable of restoring it, allows a certain amount of freedom.

After fixing, patching and restoring several fibreglass boats, the natural progression was to build a boat. Now, this is never an easy step to take. There are garages full of half-finished projects across Australia, dreams yet to be realised, and abandoned ideas which have succumbed to the realities of everyday life. So, the only responsible thing to do, to was dive into it, head first, with little thought or consideration given to work space, time of year, (cold weather makes fibreglassing a challenge), materials or time-frame. And this is what I did, starting on my very first stitch and glue project.

Now, for those of you wondering why I am stitching together a boat, there are 2 main construction methods for a timber boat: strip timber, and stitch and glue (S&G). Stitch and glue is essentially using lengths of plywood, cut into panels, and joining them together like a giant jigsaw puzzle before covering the whole thing in fibreglass. S&G has the benefit of being reasonably quick, (I emphasis reasonably) requires less knowledge of woodworking techniques,

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and can produce a very nice end result. The designs are usually of a hard chine or multi-chine concept, as the flat panels of ply do not form round hulls too well. For rounded hull shapes, a strip plank method is utilised. This involves cross sections, called forms or moulds, being placed on a working surface. Then narrow planks of timber are attached to these forms, one at a time, and finally fibreglassed over. After the hull and deck are made, the forms are then removed. Strip planking can produce some beautiful complex designs due to the tight curvatures you can get from the narrow strips. It is however, more time consuming than S&G as each plank needs to be individually affixed.

A lot of people are of the belief that a timber boat is



not as strong as a commercially available fibreglass product. This is simply not true. Timber boats with epoxy sheathing are just as strong as their fibreglass counterparts, are generally a lot lighter, and are very easy to mend. A quick sand, some epoxy and maybe a new strip of timber, and the boat can be as good as new. As long as you don't mind a few scratches, I find they can make excellent rock gardening boats.



People often want to know how long it takes to build a boat. Google will happily tell you in working hours, but in the real world, months is a much better gauge. I have built one strip plank in 6 months, where I used staples to fix the planks, body filler to fair imperfections, and covered my hideous workmanship in paint. Another one took me 18 months, using bead and cove (this is another topic), clamps and finished in a clear finish. So there is no hard and fast rule on how long it will take. It will depend on your level of perfectionism, and even things like weather. The other thing I have found is that the deck takes about one third, the hull one third, and the other components, (cockpit, skeg, bulkheads, hatches, deck lines) another third of the total build time. It is surprising how painstakingly slow building a cockpit combing can be!

Through the boats I have built, I have found a new appreciation for the craft I paddle. I now understand more about how a hull will handle in the water, about how a skeg or rudder affects performance, about weight distribution and centre of gravity, about the way wind affects a deck, and ergonomics within a cockpit. These were all concepts I had read about in reviews and articles, but until I built my own boats and paddled them, I didn't truly understand it. This thirst for knowledge about boat performance has led me to design my own boat, which I am currently making, messily, in fibreglass.



For anybody who is interested, to make a kayak plug (inner mould) by hand, then build a mould around it, and then make a single fibreglass kayak from that mould, is a horrible, horrible undertaking. This was advice I have been given, and of course I ignored it. But that may be another story...

What can I tell you about what I have learnt from my somewhat limited experiences of building kayaks? I have learnt that if you are to build your own kayak,

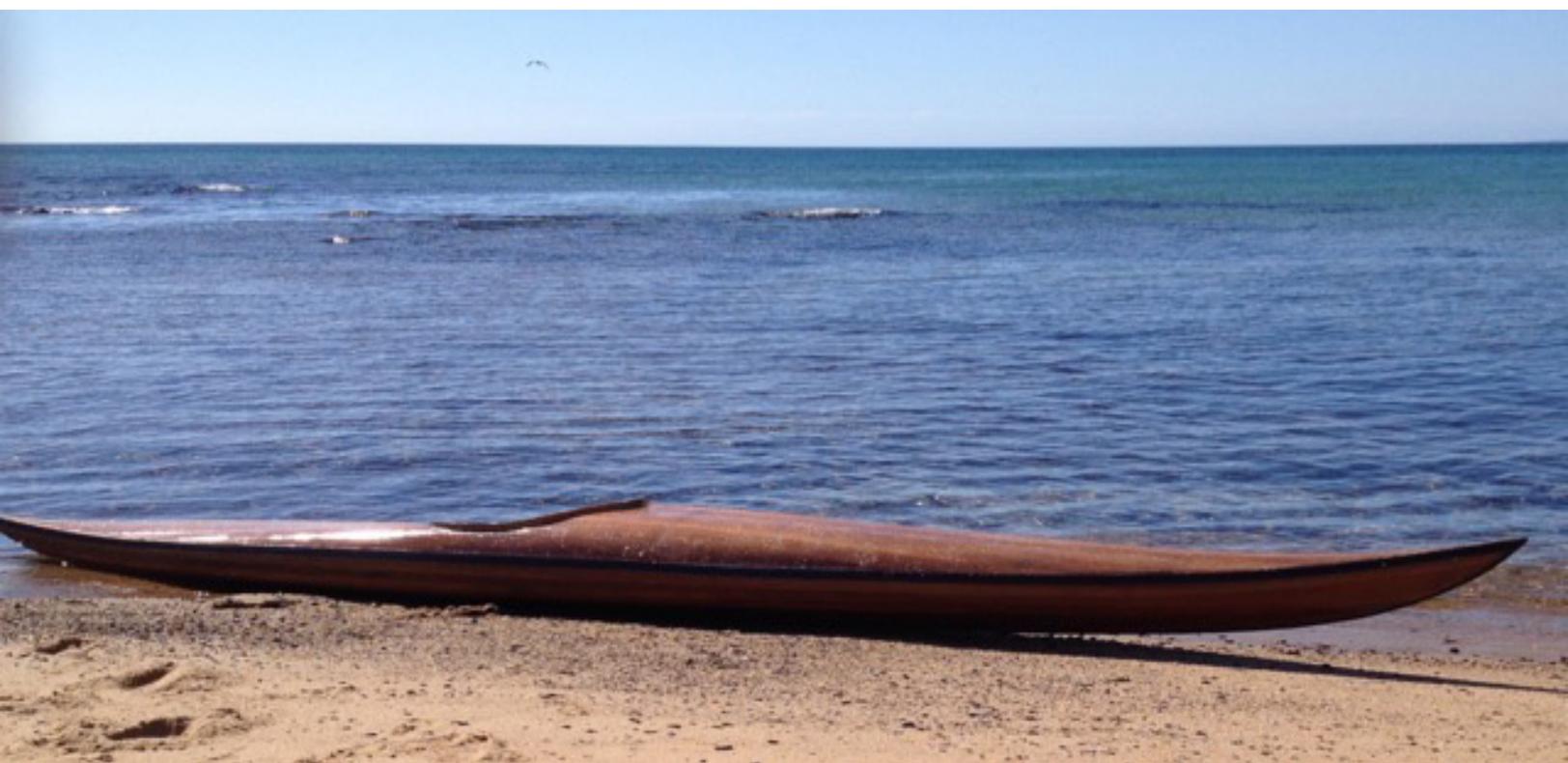
you will be constantly frustrated with things not working out the way you envisaged, you will undoubtedly spend more time and make more mistakes than you could have hoped for, you will spend more money on the project than you had ever thought possible, and you will end up with a product that will never be as special to anybody else as it is to you.

So, why would anybody in the modern world decide to undertake the feat of building their own kayak? Well, the same question could be asked of our sport in general. Why paddle a kayak across a body of water when there are plenty of great power boats to do it for us? Because we can. You will never regret the experience of building a boat, just because you can. It is an achievement that nobody can take away from you. So, even if you are not ready to start buying litres of epoxy and meters of western red cedar, I would encourage you to look at your boat, and ask yourself 'what repairs or modifications can I make?' Take out that drill and start putting in some deck fittings or new custom seat. Once you overcome the phobia of drilling and cutting into fibreglass, the possibilities to customise and build are endless. Who knows, you too may end up with a garage full of half-finished boats, as long as you dare to dream.



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Ron Morris





# The Dark Side of Norman Island

Norman Island, Wilson's Prom



Pizza at the Prom is now a staple Victorian Sea Kayak Club annual event. Those who are lucky enough to get in early with their booking will be admitted to the thirty person Tidal River base camp trip. This includes a Pizza feast and a big brekkie to boot. At one time the club was struggling to get these numbers, however these days the waiting list is getting longer. How times have changed.

The Sunday morning paddle was one of the most memorable sea kayaking paddles ever for me. Why is this so? I am about to explain. About sixteen of us put up our hands to take on the blue waters of the Bass Strait. The darker waters of the deep ocean were beckoning. The trip leaders Richard R and Tina E had plans to paddle to Norman Island. It was about a 16–18 km return paddle, from a beach launch at Tidal River. The weather report for the day was a 10 to 15 knot south westerly, with a swell to about 1 meter. Nothing to be too concerned about, but to the inexperienced, this was enough of a challenge.

Story Ben Flora

We loaded our kayaks onto our wheels and set off from our camp site to the beach at about 8.30am. A beautiful stroll along the banks of the Tidal River along the hard flat red sand made it easy going. The river, flanked by soft rounded boulders and worn peaks, eased its way into the sea.

The group gathered to hear the brief, after stowing away our wheels in a safe spot on the sand dunes. We were instructed to paddle to “Norman” point and then wait there for further instructions. From Norman point, we headed west to a small beach across the Sandy Point bay. Some of the crew landed there and a few decided this was far enough for the day and returned to Tidal River. The rest headed for Norman Island.

They say there are three kinds of sea kayakers. The crossers, are those who like the challenge of doing crossings and plan trips from one island to the next. These can be big or small like the Bass Strait or a trip from Sorrento to the South Channel Fort. The tourers, who like to crawl around the coast, camping and paddling for weeks on end, and then finally there is the day tripper. The kayaker who simply enjoys heading out for a day trip here and there.

It dawned on me as we headed to Norman Island that this was my first blue water crossing. It was only 6km from the mainland to Norman Island but nevertheless a milestone to tick off. There wasn't much swell and we chose a line pointing to the west side of the island so that we could use it as a wind break as we approached.

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It wasn't long before we were there, out of the wind and looking at the grasses which flanked the mainland side of Norman Island. Tufts of grass spotted the island's side above the red round rocks jutting into the sea. We saw seals sunbaking quite high up the rocks.

Steve C and a few others were all of a sudden heading around the island. I put my hand up and followed quickly. It was really a reconnaissance visit to see how rough it was, as the sea rebound on the ocean side of the island could be wild and troublesome. We watched carefully and paddled steadfastly around the north eastern point of Norman Island. There was only four of us on this part of the paddle. The rest had decided to return to Tidal river with the other trip leaders. It was rough. Washing machine rough in 1 to 2 meter swells.

This was the first time I witnessed waves peaking against each other and I was about to head through it. The paddling was tense as no one wanted to capsize in these conditions. The four of us gathered close as we paddled the down the seaward side of Norman Island. I made sure there was always a paddle in the water. A steady stroke to keep balance and move forward in the wild conditions.

As I rose on a peak, I could see the horizon of Bass Straight to the South. Shortly afterwards, the horizon disappeared as I dropped into a trough. It was on the next peak that I thought I saw a whale in the distance. It looked like a log moving across the water. I yelled out "whale", but it was gone as quickly as it came. I couldn't even be sure what it really was, it was just too far away. However, all of a sudden a whale unmistakably breached just 20 meters to the right of us, to take a breath. Keith R was just to my right and between me and the whale. The whales back and dorsal fin slid across the waves. I screamed "whale, whale, yee haaaaa".

We all watched. It was magnificent. The whale spurted air from the hole on the top of its body, as it slowly curled its way back into the depths of the sea. We all saw this one for sure. At this point, we were all quite vocal and on high alert. Who knows what was going to come up next. It was just the trick we needed to break the tense paddling we had been doing for the last 15 minutes. Within a few more strokes, Steve C and I looked forward, and there was a pod of about 6 penguins floating in front of us. Quickly they darted back into the safety of the deep dark water. Steve was on a high now. He was trumpeting "This is what Sea Kayaking is all about!" We all smiled at each other and kept paddling in the crests of rebound. This was one of those moments when everything came together and the four of us will never forget it. However, it only was going to get better. Ten minutes later we saw seals and then dolphins. All this happened on the ocean side of Norman Island and all within a thirty minute period.

I told myself the water was darker on this side and perhaps a whole lot deeper. Who knew what was really underneath us, in those depths? Perhaps, schools of fish all pushed up against the island, with all manner of sea creatures having a feast of some sort. Whatever was there, we were in the thick of it, witnessing a surge of sea creatures as they came to the surface to rest and replenish. As we passed around the southern point of the island, I could see the mainland. We paddled home with a following sea and spotted the rest of our crew well in front of us bobbing up and down in the swell closer to the mainland. Eventually, we caught up with the group and paddled to shore though some small waves at Tidal river. Not an easy task for some of us on that day.

One of my kayaking goals was to see a whale, but I had imagined this to occur with a specifically designed paddle to a whale watching location. I was never prepared for one to surface next to us in the dark blue waters on the ocean side of Norman Island that day.

Ben Flora

# The Second International Sea Kayaking Educators Symposium



Canoeing at your AGM and paddle event at Barwon Heads, I was reminded of how insightful and contagious a strong paddling community can be. In particular, it reminded me of my brief time with Greenland style paddlers on the banks of the Hudson River (NY state), a few hours north of Manhattan. The Hudson River Greenland Paddling Festival (June, 2012) experience was a time that explains the origins of how and why, ISKES came about. The early morning bustle of day-two at Barwon Heads, amidst the hay-fever heat of early summer, had me back on the banks of the famous American river. Writing a paper on the festival, I noted that the event

*seemed to wax and wane between a ma-and-pa dinner gathering, and a full-blown carnival. Day-attendees arrived en masse, doubling the numbers. Sore heads emerged each morning, atoning for a late-night session via yoga or Pilates. The scene was never loud, but thick and busy. Equipment was everywhere, yet never out of place and attendees seemed endemic, familiar to each other and the scene. They were professional campers, fastidious cooks and sipped bottomless, black, horrible coffee. Conversations started with first names and endearing nicknames. It was not, for many, the first time they had met. Sessions would head to the water, or meet under a particular tree in tight-clusters of conversation. Each group was warm with gesture, mirroring the muted colour palette of subarctic coast; paddlers and kayaks were a smudged scene of browns, whites and blacks. Departures of two or more would slide into the slow-moving river, blending in. It was the most purposeful sea kayaking scene I'd ever seen.*

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I returned to Australia with the idea of building a like minded community of sea kayakers: those who identify with, practice, learn and educate through sea kayaking. Working through the idea with good friend and fellow paddler Brian Wattchow, the ISKES (International Sea Kayaking Educators Symposium) was born.

Collaborating with Outward Bound Hong Kong under the watchful eye of Aaron Funnel, the inaugural ISKES took place on Wong Wan Chau island (several hours north of Hong Kong) in late 2015. Thirty-Five International delegates from 13 countries took part in what was a terrific gathering of guides, instructors, lecturers, researchers and practitioners, sea kayaking educators from all walks of life.

ISKES returns to the international community of sea kayaking educators in 2018 at Wilsons Promontory National Park/Yirak/Wammum on Nov 11-15 (directly on the back of the VSKC 2018 AGM and paddle weekend), under the themes 'Coastings' and 'Crossings'. Your very own John Jacoby, 5x crosser of Bass Strait will open the event on the Sunday evening. The registration fee of \$650 includes lodge accommodation, all meals, film events, daily paddling and equipment, transfers to and from the park, delegate pack and the potential for up-skilling from expert instructors from the UK, USA, NZ and Australia\*.

For all information go to: [www.ISKES.org](http://www.ISKES.org)

Presenter abstracts will be asked for in early 2018 when the registration page is launched. For all inquiries please contact [beau.miles@monash.edu](mailto:beau.miles@monash.edu)

\*Naturally, domestic paddlers are encouraged to provide their own kit where possible, and get themselves to the Park. Some short-courses within the 5-day ISKES event will incur an extra cost based on passing on the cost of American Canoeing Association (ACA), Paddling Australia (the soon to be re-branded Australian Canoeing), or British Canoe Union (BCU) coaching.

Beau Miles. [Beau.miles@monash.edu](mailto:Beau.miles@monash.edu)



# Happy Birthday



Photo: Richard Rawling



Some action of a different sort.

Congratulations to Terry for notching up a big one.

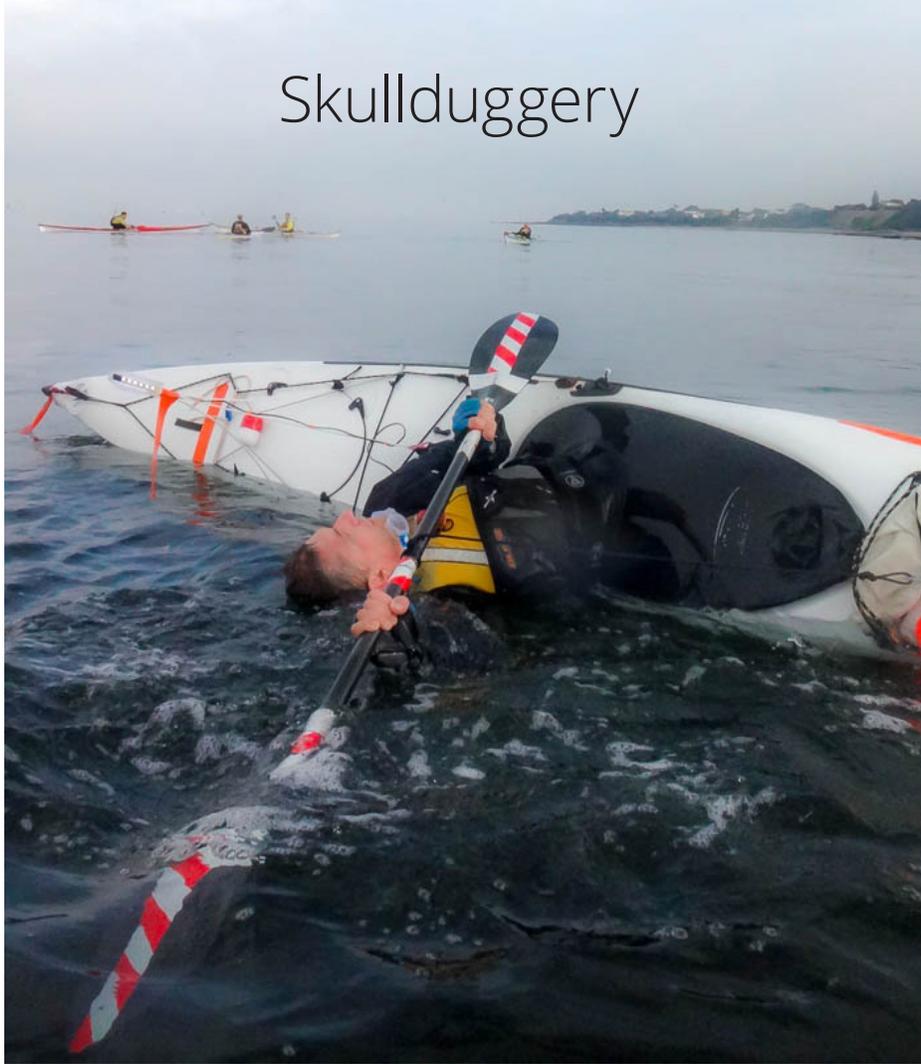
What a cake!

Don't they say?

"Yummy yummy yellow!"

**2017 Dec**

# Skullduggery



Goodaye Ben

*I've been meaning to ask you, since I first viewed your recent Sea Trek No. 89 magazine, about this new Victorian technique for rolling involving a 'skull' stroke, as shown in your lovely full page photo on page 13.*

*Is there a sideways twist to the head, or a forward and back motion to energize the upward movement of the body during the roll. Do the eyes poking out or the tongue wagging from side to side help with this cunning new stroke, designed obviously to minimize the effects of gravity during a roll?*

*Does hair gel help? Or is it the style of the hair cut that is critical. I can see a Mohican cut would definitely add to increased drag during this fascinating new stroke. I can see definitely see advantages with a flat topped 'mullet' cut.*

*Are women with long hair disadvantaged by the weight of water in their hair? If this is the case, then bloke paddlers with heads as bald as a wombat's bum, would have a decided advantage with this skull stroke.  
Perhaps a nice coat of marine wax and polish on a bald pate would give even a greater distinct advantage?*

*I wonder if I can share this exciting new skull stroke with our Kiwi paddlers?*

*cheers*

*Paul Caffyn  
kayakpc@xtra.co.nz  
28 August 2017*

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# VSKC

Victorian Sea Kayak Club

