

First Coast Fly Fisher

October 2006

www.fcff.org

Jacksonville, FL



Woody Huband And Friend On A Fine Late-Summer High Tide.

MEETING & SPEAKER

FCFF Meeting: Monday, October 2 -- Capt. John Meskauskas will be FCFF's October speaker. John is a full time flyfishing and light tackle guide from Stuart, FL, where he was raised. His guide service is called Grand Slam Guide Service, both in reference to fishing as well as baseball. John spent three seasons in the Colorado Rockies organization and is still an avid baseball fan. Casting at 6, meeting at 7 p.m.

COMING EVENTS

Saturday, October 7 & 8 -- October Tailing Red Outing -- Launch from the Palm Valley Ramp at 7 both days. John Adams has volunteered his 22 foot pontoon boat to use as a flagship for kayakers. We'll chase that 9 a.m. Saturday Vilano high tide back to Palm Valley (10 a.m., Sunday). If we can keep the kayakers on the tide and on the move with John, perhaps we can get a couple of good long high tide days in. More info at October meeting.

FCFF Meeting: Monday, November 6 -- Come explore the fisheries just an hour south with Daytona's Capt. Kent Gibbens. Kent will talk about fishing inshore on the Tomoka River, Daytona, and North Mosquito Lagoon. November outing

Kayaks

A Primer To Help You Find Your Perfect Boat

from www.canoekayak.com

Given the serious growth in interest in kayaking in our club, your editor diligently searched the web for a general primer on kayaks. We found this at www.canoekayak.com. It's a basic look at kayak hull design, categories of boats, and definitions. Use it to help you find the perfect stealth craft.



What Are the Different Types of Kayaks?

Kayaks can be divided into four general categories: *Recreational kayaks* are all-around boats designed for mild river trips and other casual use on bays and ponds. They are generally wider and shorter than touring kayaks, which makes them easier to turn but more difficult to travel in a straight line).

Touring kayaks are often designed for extended wilderness trips and all the gear they entail. These long kayaks are very stable and have good carrying capacity, but because they track well, they do not turn as easily as shorter boats. They are sometimes called sea kayaks, though they're certainly not restricted to the ocean. Some models are designed for day touring, offering less storage space in exchange for lighter weight and improved maneuverability.

Whitewater kayaks are designed with exceptional maneuverability to negotiate rapids. They are shorter, and can have rounded bottoms or flat planing hulls, and more rocker (upturn in the ends) to deal with waves. They are not enjoyable for touring, because they are difficult to paddle in a straight line.

Whitewater kayaks have gone through a lot of evolution in the last five or six years, so we've given them their own section here. Read all about it: *Whitewater Basics*.

Downriver kayaks are specialty boats designed to travel quickly through the water, and they are most often used for racing. These boats are very long and narrow, making them tippy and not well suited for novice paddlers. Their straight keel allows them to track efficiently, but they're difficult to turn.

What About the Kayak's Dimensions?

Length: Longer kayaks have a number of advantages: they are usually easier to paddle, more stable, and capable of carrying heavier loads with less loss of performance. They also track better, move faster, and glide farther with each stroke than shorter boats, allowing greater efficiency with less effort. Shorter kayaks, on the other hand, are no doubt lighter, less expensive (depending on material choice, of course), less cumbersome, and easier to transport. But their most

important virtue is quicker turns. A short hull is also preferable for paddling on narrow streams, and for smaller individuals and children.

Width: The width of a kayak has a definite influence on the boat's handling characteristics. The primary function of width is stability. But handling is sacrificed for that extra width, and a narrow kayak does not work very well in strong currents.

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Dynamics of the Salt Marsh

by Dr. Elizabeth Wenner



Dick Michaelson With Salt Marsh Sheephead

Salt marshes are transitional areas between land and water, occurring along the intertidal shore of estuaries and sounds where salinity (salt content) ranges from near ocean strength to near fresh in upriver marshes. Because salt marshes in [southeastern coastal states] are influenced by the twice daily rise and fall of tides, they are subject to rapid changes in salinity, temperature and water depth.

Salinity, frequency and extent of flooding of the marsh determine the types of plants and animals found there. The low marsh zone floods twice daily in South Carolina, while the high marsh floods only during storms and unusually high tides. Animals and plants live in these zones of the marsh, depending on how well they can withstand the drier conditions of the upper marsh or the wet conditions that regularly occur in the lower marsh.

Salt Marsh Cordgrass

One plant, smooth cordgrass (*Spartina alterniflora*), dominates the regularly flooded lowmarsh. Smooth cordgrass is the most abundant salt marsh plant in South Carolina and is responsible for much of the marsh's productivity. *Spartina's* successful adaptations enable it to live where few other plants could survive. It has narrow, tough blades and special glands that secrete excess salt, making it ideal to withstand the high heat and daily exposure to salt water. Few animals eat this plant, but many animals and plants live on it or on the marsh surface protected by its roots and stalks. *Spartina* stalks are thick and are very tough and well anchored by a root system.

From a distance, the low marsh appears to be uniform; however, there are two forms of *Spartina*. A tall form grows along creek banks and can reach heights of 9 feet. A short form of *Spartina* occurs in interior parts of the low marsh and ranges from 2 to 3 feet in height. In contrast to the low marsh which has one major species of plant, the high marsh contains a mixture of several species including black needlerush, salt meadow cordgrass and short-form smooth cordgrass. This

high marsh area grades into a marsh-upland border which is a transitional zone between the salt marsh and the maritime shrub community that consists of wax myrtle, yaupon and cedar.

[The southern coastal states] also have brackish marshes which occur in water of lower salt content. Salinity, however, still controls what species

of plants and animals occur in brackish marshes. Common plants in these marshes include a mixture of black needlerush and big cordgrass. Brackish marshes are also a transitional habitat between freshwater marshes and salt marshes and contain species from both.

Salt Marsh Ecology: What Lives in the Salt Marsh?

Salt marshes rank among the most productive ecosystems on earth. Live *Spartina* is not a source of food but dead marsh plants are a source of nourishment for many species. Decaying *Spartina* breaks into small pieces called detritus that fuels the marsh and its animals. In spring and summer, marshes are lush green, highly productive and grow in height.

In late fall, the green *Spartina* begins to turn brown as leaves die and decomposition begins. Water, waves, wind and storms dislodge and break up decaying leaves, and transport them to mud flats and other locations around the marsh. This dead plant matter, or detritus, forms an attachment site for microscopic organisms such as bacteria, fungi and small algae. These organisms colonize the broken bits of plant material and break down portions of the detritus that are not digestible by animals.

For the most part, this decomposition occurs on or in the sediments where bottom-dwelling scavengers such as worms, fishes, shrimps and crabs live. These animals eat the decaying plant material, along with the bacteria, fungi and attached organisms. They then digest the material and excrete the undigested plant remains in feces that can be colonized again by microorganisms. As the microorganisms utilize detritus

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Salt Marshes: Alive with Bio Diversity

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and reduce it to smaller and smaller pieces, the remaining detritus becomes fertilizer for the next *Spartina* crop. In this way, the whole food web cycle is repeated.

Microscopic animals associated with detritus also cover the surface of mud in the salt marsh. They help stabilize sediments, are food for larger organisms and contribute to an enrichment of the sediments. Large numbers of more sizable invertebrates (animals without backbones) inhabit salt marshes.

Rapid changes in salinity, temperature and exposure create stressful conditions and thereby limit how many species occur in this habitat. Fiddler crabs, marsh snails and marsh mussels are typical invertebrate species which live in salt marshes. The popular and highly prized oyster generally borders salt marshes. Fiddler crabs and marsh snails shred dead plant material during feeding, aiding the decomposition process.

Insects are also abundant in the salt marsh. Most of these salt marsh invertebrates consume living plants, or fluids secreted by the plants. Some insects also feed on detritus, though the importance of their role in the food web as grazers and detritus feeders is small compared to their importance to the abundant species of birds who depend on them for food. The undigested grass eaten by insects is deposited as feces on the marsh surface where it becomes part of the detrital food web. Many fish species living near the salt marsh rely on insects for food during part of the year.

Fishes, crabs, and shrimps live in salt marshes where stems, leaves, and roots provide food and shelter from predators. The young of many species, such as the blue crab, white shrimp and spot tail bass utilize the salt marsh as a nursery. Without benefit of an abundance of food and protection given by marsh plants, few younger animals would survive to adulthood. Many fishes which inhabit marshes move on and off the marsh surface with the tide. Once they leave the protection of the marsh surface to enter the adjacent tidal creek, they become more susceptible to being eaten by large predators living in creeks.

Some marsh-dwelling fishes and shrimps remain on the marsh surface after the tide recedes. They live in potholes and standing pools of water. These common marsh inhabitants include mummichogs and grass shrimp. Few reptiles



Fiddlers with orange mating claws display in mid-September. Photo: Dick Michaelson

live in salt marsh habitats. Diamond back terrapins are probably the most common species in the marsh, where they lay eggs and forage during high tide.

American alligators do occur in brackish salt marshes but are not often found in high salinity marshes. Regularly flooded salt marshes provide excellent habitat for birds, with many places for feeding, reproducing and roosting. Species such as the red-winged black bird alternately eat

insects and seeds depending on the season. Other birds, such as herons and egrets, feed on fishes, shrimps and fiddler crabs. These graceful predators are year-round residents of our marshes and frequently perch on mud banks watching for movement of prey in tidal pools. The commonly heard but seldom seen clapper rail forms roosting areas on the marsh surface within the protective cover of marsh grass. Birds contribute important nutrients to the salt marshes through their feces, which accumulate in large quantities around nesting colonies. In turn, feces fertilize marsh grass, an important function in the marsh food web.

Current Status of Salt Marshes

Salt marshes have not always been regarded as valuable resources. Over half of our original salt marshes in the United States have been destroyed, many of them between 1950 and the mid-1970s. Most of that destruction was due to filling of marshes to create more land area for homes, industry and agriculture. Other losses were caused by ditching for mosquito control and diking to create impoundments. Fortunately, people are beginning to realize the importance of these habitats. Federal and state laws and regulations now reflect an appreciation by the general public for the function and value of marshes.

Salt marshes perform many functions valuable to human beings. As previously mentioned, they are a major producer of detritus and provide nursery grounds for numerous commercially and recreationally important species. In addition, salt marshes serve as filters to remove sediments and toxins from the water. Marsh plants break down many pollutants into less harmful forms. Uptake by sediments and burial in the marsh minimize the toxic effects of pollutants. There is a limit to this capacity to serve as a waste treatment center. Excessive

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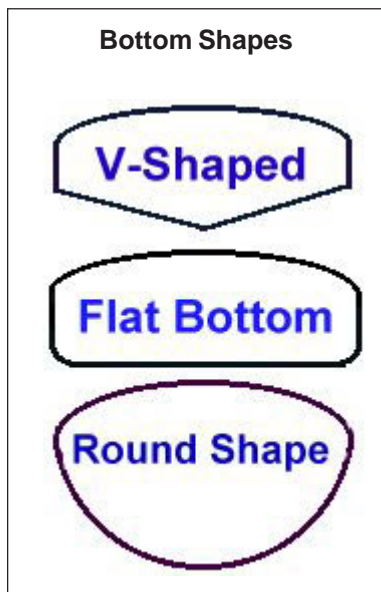
Kayaks

Type of Kayak You Buy Depends on Type of Water You Paddle

(continued from page 2) Additional width does add to a boat's carrying capacity (though not as much as length), but kayaks that are really wide require a lot of effort to paddle, because the hull has to push aside a lot more water.

How Do Hulls Differ?

The general principles of kayak design are really quite simple. Hulls with flat bottoms, hard chines (sharp, nearly right-angle edges where bottom and sides meet), and greater flare (curvature of the sides outward) have greater stability. Conversely, round hulls with soft chines (a gradual curve where bottom and sides meet) and less flare have less stability, but are more nimble and easier to roll if they should tip over.



A long, skinny kayak with a bow shaped like a narrow V will be fast, because the bow slices through the water rather than piling it up in front of the boat. If instead you make a kayak that is broad in the beam and carry that fullness forward and aft, you have a freighter, not a racer. That kayak might be great for carrying big loads and riding waves, but it will not be quick or very nimble.

Symmetry: Kayaks are either symmetrical, which means that the front half and the back half of the kayak have the same shape, or asymmetrical, which means that they don't.

Symmetry affects not only the efficiency of the boat as it moves through water, but also its ability to turn. Symmetrical boats are better for quick maneuvering, as in negotiating small streams or whitewater. Asymmetrical boat designs usually lengthen and streamline the bow for more efficient and faster passage through the water. Directional control is increased, but turning ability is decreased.

There are two types of asymmetrical shapes: fishform and Swedeform. Fishform boats have more volume fore (ahead) of the midpoint, and Swedeform have more volume aft (behind) of the midpoint.

Rocker: The upturn of the kayak's hull from one end to the other (as viewed from the side of the kayak)

is called rocker. Kayaks with a lot of rocker pivot easily because their ends sit higher in the water and offer less resistance to waves. However, they do not track well. Kayaks with little rocker track much better because they resist the turning forces of waves, current, wind, and inefficient paddling strokes. As a result, they do not turn as easily when the paddler applies a proper turning stroke or lean.

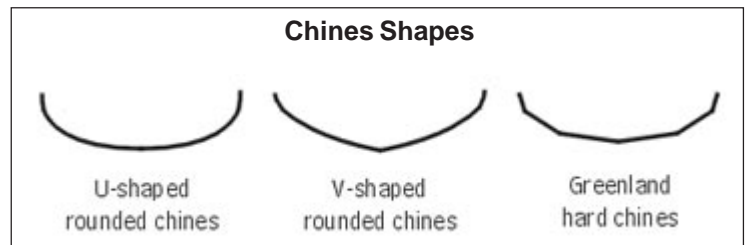
Bottom Shapes: The bottom of a kayak (as viewed from its ends) ranges from flat to V-shaped. Flat-bottomed kayaks seem very stable at first. Rounded hulls are initially less stable than flat bottoms, but they have greater secondary stability when the boat is leaned. The more pronounced the V-shape on the bottom, the better the boat's directional control, but the worse its initial stability. Flat planing hulls are common on whitewater boats, while more rounded bottoms are favored by touring-kayak designers.

Chines: The transition between the bottom of the kayak and its sides is called the chine. An abrupt, nearly right-angle transition is called a hard chine, and a smoother, more rounded one is a soft chine.

Flare is defined as the angle of a kayak's sides outward from the hull. Kayaks with flared sides have greater stability, but are more difficult to roll.

Volume: You'll commonly hear kayakers refer to the volume of a boat. This is literally the amount of space inside the boat, which is expressed in terms of gallons or liters.

These days, there are more kayak designs from which to choose than ever before. Try to paddle as many different models as you possibly can, and look for the one that fits your most frequent style of paddling. And don't forget: there's no law that says you can't have more than one kayak.



Hook-up On Ray's Flat

Look closely and you'll see FCFFer Robert Bernardo gets a good tug from a redfish in the shadow of the cross on Ray's Flat, west side of the Intracoastal, north of Cedar Point.

A couple of summers ago our own Ray Waters had a heart attack while on a tailing reds outing; Ray died on this flat helping teach a new fly fisher the ropes. He was one of our great friends and most beloved fishing pals.

We miss you Ray but we are happy in the knowledge that the fish are accomodating up there.



(Salt Marsh -- continued from page 4)

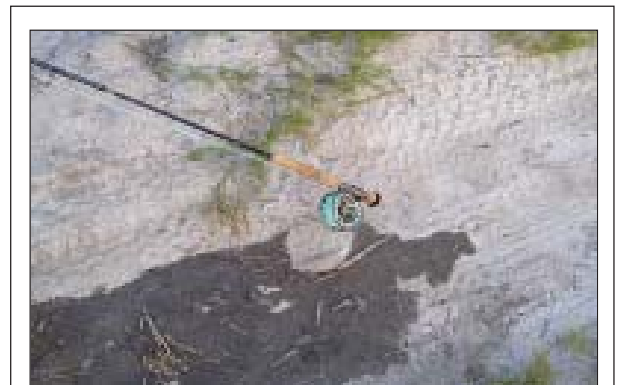
pollutants can overburden the cleansing capabilities of marshes. Marshes also act as buffers for the mainland by slowing and absorbing storm surges, thereby reducing erosion of the coastline. In addition to all this, they provide a scenic vista in our state.

Outright destruction of salt marshes has been greatly minimized due to federal and state laws. Yet, a number of threats to salt marsh habitats still exists. Loss of quality and function of marshes is a serious problem. Over half of the nation's people now live and work within coastal counties. The cumulative impact of these people within the watershed surrounding salt marshes can be significant. Subtle impacts which affect salt marshes include water flow modifications and pollution. Ditching to control mosquitoes has altered water flow in some marshes. This can cause water, with its vital load of nutrients, to bypass marshes.

Birds that require low, wet marshes diminish along with the food supply in ditched marshes. Building canals for flood control is another modification that increases surface water levels on marshes which, in turn, stresses and kills marsh grass. Nonpoint-source pollution resulting from land runoff from diverse locations such as bridges, roads (petroleum products from cars), and air (industrial output) and from farms and lawns (pesticides and fertilizers) is difficult to control. Any one discharge may involve only small amounts of chemicals which are diluted by the receiving streams, but when combined with other chemicals from multiple other discharges, significant concentrations of pollutants may result. The precise effects of these pollutants are still largely unknown, but the potential for problems is clear. Pollution may disrupt the food web in the salt marsh by killing off some species and prompting others to greatly increase in number. Pollution also threatens the economic, aesthetic and recreational value of our marshes.

Likely solutions include major changes in land use practices at the local level and adopting special methods to minimize runoff such as porous pavement, planting of buffer strips and construction of detention basins to contain road and agricultural runoff. Individual citizens can combat nonpoint source pollution by changing their everyday actions. There are a number of federal and state agencies and nonprofit groups that produce informational materials on regulations and conservation pertaining to salt marshes and other wetlands. It is important that citizens take a personal interest in conservation of marshes because of the benefits and values they provide for all of us now and for future generations.

Dr. Elizabeth Wenner wrote this in conjunction with the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, Marine Resources Research Institute.



High Tide Creeps In At Simpson's Creek



FCFF Photo Page

Top Left -- **Bill Lott** caught this 7-lb!!!, 22-inch smallmouth bass on VA's New River. The state is checking to see if the size warrants a certificate.

Top right -- **Donn McKinnon** has had a very good tailing red season this year. Here's another of his catches.

Center Left -- Our pal **Capt. Tony Bozzella** enjoyed this big-boy red this month from the flooded flats.

Center Right -- Saltwater Flytyer's **Don Reed** took this sturgeon on fly fishing with FCFFer Jim McCulley's Maine contingent.

Bottom Left -- Paul Hutchin prepares to launch at this month's tailing redfish outing with daughter Kathryn.



Full Color Fall in the Northwoods

FCFF Speaker Bill Sherer sent us this photo he took last week of Helen Lake, in the Sylvania Wilderness of Michigan's Upper Peninsula, just above the WI state line. Bill is a master fly tyer and one of the world's premier musky guides from Boulder Junction, WI. Visit his website at <http://www.wetieit.com>

For Sale -- 14 Foot Stiffy Push Pole . . .\$100

STIFFY push pole is a 1.25" high visibility white fiberglass shaft, with gel coat impregnated throughout. 14' Long. Asking \$100. Retail for \$179. Excellent condition. Used only 10 times. Call Rich Santos (904)497-9736

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