

# Monthly Explorer

www.marylandoutdoorclub.org

Volume 5 / Issue 2

Adventure Sports • Travel • Social

**MARYLAND**  
Outdoor Club

P.O. Box 652, Columbia, MD 21045

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Monthly Explorer Contributors:  
Colin Babb, Christine Kent Bowles,  
Carrie Graff, Katie Stofer  
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(Picture above) Is that pointed into D.C.? MOC members take a break during the hike of Civil War forts.

## My Trip: Colin on Going Solo at Assateague

Going kayaking or backpacking on a long trip of several days or more with other people can be everything from relaxing to exhilarating to exhausting. Doing the same things on your own, however, almost always leads to some kind of extra adventure, because when something goes wrong – and it will – you're out there by yourself. When you go outdoors on your own, you should always make sure someone knows where you are. Perhaps most daunting for some is the simple fact that being on your own can be, well, lonely. Going out on your own has many rewards, not the least of which is experiencing things you might not otherwise. It also gives you time to develop your inner monologue (read: talk to yourself).

I decided on a whim to strap my kayak to the car (a rather ridiculous sight, considering the boat is about as long as my Sentra), and head out to Assateague for a weekend of paddling, backcountry camping, and just hanging out with the creatures of the island. I figured, it's October and it's getting (a little) cooler, so those horse flies won't be so bad.

I get to the park around noon, and note with glee that there are no horse flies hovering around my car. It's sunny, it's cloudless, it's a great day! I wavered on bringing my GPS, since it seemed unlikely I could get lost: the island runs straight

north-south, and there are signs posted to point out the camping areas. Luckily for me, I took the GPS anyway, just to test it out.

There was a crowd of people at the boat launch area, many of whom looked at me rather curiously. Were they jealous? Did they know something I didn't? So off I went, paddling along down the island. I was heading for a spot called Green Run, about 10 miles south from the landing. The backcountry camping sites on Assateague each consist of a couple of fire rings, a few park benches, a clearing, and a porta-potty. Along the way, I quickly began to catch sight of the ponies. Gliding by in my kayak, I came quite close. They looked back at me with content looks, their tails flicking at unseen pests. They quickly went back to their incessant chewing as I continued on.

It took me about three and a half hours to get to the campsite, which included a diversion into a swampy area that I thought might include a pathway right to the inlet. Within seconds of getting out of my kayak, the grass blossomed with tiny insects, all of them converging on me. For a moment, I thought, "This is interesting, look at all these bugs

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## Member Spotlight: Chuck Hildenbrand



**Lives in:**  
Manassas, VA

**Originally from:**  
Ponoma, NY

**Pays the bills by:**  
Firefighter/EMT

**Listening to:**

I'll listen to pretty much anything from System of a Down to Diamond Rio to Eminem to Handel, but I have a soft spot for 90's Country Music

**Favorite Adventure Sport / Activity:**

Camping, visiting historical sites and battlefields, and driving down random back roads.

**Favorite TV show:**

Rescue Me, NCIS, House, Family Guy, Grey's Anatomy

**Favorite Sports Team:**

Philadelphia Eagles

**Favorite Local Getaway:**

When it's warm out, I like to sit outside Foster's Grill with the New York Times, a sandwich, and some sweet tea, and watch the trains go by. During the Holiday Season, I love going on holiday candlelight tours of historical sites

**Pets:**

Between my work hours and apartment rules, I can't have one.

**Other Information:**

Last year, I graduated from Penn State with a degree in Geographic Information Science.  
We Are... Penn State!

## New Year, New Volunteer Events!

Starting last month, I transitioned from the MOC Newsletter Editor to Co-Preservation Coordinator (or Preservation Co-Coordinator) with Jesse Allen. You can call me CPC or PCC for short. Jesse and I will be working to bring you opportunities for volunteering throughout the area to help preserve and maintain the natural surroundings we all enjoy. As our work schedules naturally ebb and flow, you may hear more from me or more from Jesse.

I wanted to let you know of a couple of upcoming events and solicit ideas for more. I set up a new Yahoo! email group to help distribute notices for events that we plan. It's also an opportunity to publicize other events that we may not get to organize ourselves.

So, I need your help! Any activity or group you see that you'd like to work with, please post it to the group or email me directly. I especially could use ideas for the DC area as well as organizers willing to lead or co-lead those events.

Here are some ideas that I'm planning events around. I would love co-organizers!

- March 11: Jones Falls Clean Up, [www.jonesfalls.org/events](http://www.jonesfalls.org/events). This recurs monthly so it's a great opportunity to organize your own event.
- April 22 – 28: Baltimore Green Week. Starts with an EcoFestival on the 22nd, plus various events throughout the week.
- June 3: National Trails Day. So far, C&O Canal on the northwest side of DC has planned an event, but we are encouraged to find other trails/events we'd like to do.

Also, some news from Jesse: "I have been given points of contact with the Greenbelt National Park for some trail work there. The Perimeter Trail in Greenbelt NP has two bridges out and no apparently plans to do anything about it. MOC members have asked me on a couple of different occasions about the opportunity to work on this, since many members know and use the park for jogging etc. I don't know what's involved in building a bridge in a national park that will stand up to day to day use (and if I recall correctly, also needs to be sturdy enough to stand up to a horse crossing). I'm interested in pursuing this lead, though." If you've got any interest and/or expertise for this project, please contact [jallen@marylandoutdoorclub.org](mailto:jallen@marylandoutdoorclub.org)

–Katie Stofer

## MOC Happenings and Updates

### Polar Bears in the Chesapeake?

Chilly MOC members raised \$525 for the Special Olympics Maryland during the 2006 Polar Bear Plunge in the Chesapeake Bay. If you want to stay warm but still donate to the cause, donations are still being accepted online at the Special Olympics Maryland Web site ([www.somd.org](http://www.somd.org)). MOC plans on participating next year and is looking for even more people to take the plunge to raise awareness for this program.

### MOC Invades Canada

Plans are underway for the fifth Outdoor Club in Edmondton, Canada. This latest club will join the illustrious ranks of the Atlanta, Maryland, Calgary and Toronto Outdoor Clubs. The *Monthly Explorer* welcomes our fellow outdoor enthusiasts from up north.

– Jennifer Adach

## Solo on Assateague

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I realized that every single one of them – and there were hundreds of them – was a mosquito. I looked down at my legs, and each one now harbored at least 50 bugs that were busily sucking my blood.

I swatted at them, with each stroke of my hand killing whole generations of them. I grabbed my Off, and looked up to see a porta-potty, a place of refuge – albeit an odiferous one. I booked it through the grass, swatting and flailing around like a madman. Once inside, I bathed myself in bug spray and exited with brief relief, but the bugs kept coming.

It was clear the entire camp area had been taken over by the enemy. I knew the beach was the only true promised land. No mosquito, however hardy or aggressive could withstand the power of the ocean breeze. I grabbed a branch on the ground, and began swatting around my head and back, all the while charging towards the beach. The mosquitoes began to give up finally, their tiny wings no match for the stiff, gloriously constant wind that arrived to save me.

I sat on a massive piece of driftwood. The sun would be up for another three and a half hours. Do I pitch my tent on the beach, even though the park does not allow it, and stay the night? Or do I simply return now? I was tempted to stay. But the bugs quickly returned as I headed back into the woods, and I changed my mind.

Running all the way back, once again flailing and thrashing at the air, hoping to dispatch some more mosquitoes, I grabbed the kayak, threw it into the water, jumped in, and began paddling with the purpose and determination of a Polynesian war party. The little dive bombers continued out into the water, mercilessly continuing their attack. The mosquitoes finally gave up as I headed into the sound. For some reason, perhaps realizing there wasn't another soul within sight, my inner Frank Sinatra came out, and I began belting out favorites.

I was still several miles away when the sun went down and the island turned a pitch black. I got out my GPS. Luckily I had reset it and marked the spot I had gotten in the water at the landing. Eventually, I made it back to the landing. There was a van nearby whose owners arrived by kayak shortly after me, their laughing and chatter possible because they were guided by the light of my car. I was barely able to lift the boat onto the top of the car; my arms were like jelly after 7 hours. But I headed home...and gratefully slept in the comfort of my own bed.

The lessons for the day: You might want to stay away from the buggy side of Assateague until, oh, the snow starts falling; bring a flamethrower with you if you do go at some other time; and send hate mail to the park rangers if they don't bother to tell you how bad the mosquitoes are.

– Colin Babb

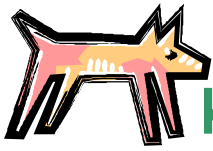
## Take Great Pictures: Winter Photography Tips

- ✓ Bundle up! If you're the type of photographer that really 'gets into the zone' when shooting, you may not realize how cold it is. Whether you're headed out just to snap a few shots – which can easily evolve into several dozen – or for an afternoon of shooting, be sure to dress appropriately. Wear layers that you can don or shed as needed. And don't forget about footwear: hiking boots or snow boots will keep your feet warmer and drier than tennis shoes. If you stay warm and comfortable, you'll have more fun and increase your odds of capturing beautiful, creative images.
- ✓ Carry several sets of extra batteries on winter photo shoots. Battery efficiency declines as temperatures drop, which means that your batteries will wear out faster in the winter.
- ✓ To properly expose snow, 'overexpose' your image by 1 to 2 stops of light. Camera meters work by evaluating the scene in your viewfinder and adjusting the exposure to make the scene an average tone called 'medium gray.' This works just fine for scenes that contain both light and dark tones that average out to 'medium gray.' However, when you fill your viewfinder with bright white snow, you'll end up with underexposed, gray snow if you trust your camera meter. To render snow white, you must compensate for your camera's shortcomings by 'overexposing' the snow by 1 to 2 stops of light. Do this using your camera's exposure compensation feature or by manually setting the exposure at +1 to +2. (If you're not sure how to do this, refer to your camera manual.) Meter the snow in your scene either by filling your viewfinder with nothing but snow (moving or zooming in, if necessary) while in matrix meter mode or by spot metering on an area of only snow. To render the snow white, add 1.5 to 2 stops of light if skies are overcast or add 1 to 1.5 stops if the snow is in bright sun. Note that these are only general rules of thumb; experiment and bracket your exposures to determine what works best in a specific situation.

*Christine Kent Bowles is a professional photographer in the Washington, D.C. / Baltimore area and a MOC member. To see samples of her work and learn more about her workshops, exhibits and other events, please visit her Web site at [www.ckbphotography.com](http://www.ckbphotography.com).*

### Monthly Statistics

3,370 – Total Members to Date  
85 – New Members in January  
60% – Female Members / 40% – Male Members  
33.7 – Average Member Age



# K-9 Corner

## Whining & Wine-ing

Hey Dog Lovers! This K-9 corner is dedicated to promoting our 1<sup>st</sup> ever Wag, Wash, and Wine event, to benefit the SPCA! This event is the first of its kind and we are hoping it will be a great success. Joe from Muddy Paw Wash (and a new member of MOC) in Annapolis has graciously donated his facilities for an evening of suds, water, and wine that is sure to promote wagging tails and fun for their human companions. No wine for under-aged pooches! We will be providing drinks, appetizers for humans, and even some treats for the dogs. Muddy Paws will provide all the amenities you needed to get your pooch clean and smelling, well, not like a dog. This is a great opportunity to check out Muddy Paw Wash while doing something great for an organization that helps animals find loving homes. If you have an SPCA animal, rescue dog, or even a dog from a breeder, think about how much they mean to you and how much entertainment and love they bring to your hectic, everyday life. This is a way they can help their fellow species.

Please see the MOC webpage for further details and if you don't have a dog....don't worry! All are welcome to watch the fun, partake in the festivities, and talk to other dog lovers and owners. Just being around these guys for a night can lower your stress level!

– Carrie Graff

## Upcoming Events

To see our full list of events, visit the MOC Web site: [www.marylandoutdoorclub.org](http://www.marylandoutdoorclub.org). Interested in something that's not on the list? Why not organize an event? See the organizer section on the MOC Web site, or speak with an officer.

Want to share organizer duties? You can use the new Member Forums to find a co-organizer.



Social Hour	Tuesday, 2/14
Easy/Moderate Hike in Patapsco Valley	Saturday, 2/18
Trip to Baltimore Aquarium	Saturday, 2/18
Backpacking in Greenridge State Forest	Saturday, 2/18 - Sunday, 2/19
Difficult Hike on Half Moon Mountain	Sunday, 2/19
"Love in a Beer Barrel" Discussion	Saturday, 2/25
Moderate Hike on AT (Annapolis & Black Rocks)	Saturday, 2/25
National Gallery Ice Skating	Sunday, 2/26
Moderate/Difficult Caledonia Hike & Elephant Safari	Sunday, 2/26
Wag, Wash & Wine	Monday, 2/27
Hiking & Hottubs	Friday, 3/10 – Sunday, 3/12

## Officers

### Amy Pickwick

Founder, President & Web Coordinator  
apickwick@marylandoutdoorclub.org

### Jeff Schneider

Web Developer  
jschneider@marylandoutdoorclub.org

### Jesse Allen

Preservation Coordinator  
jallen@marylandoutdoorclub.org

### Ian Wright

Social Coordinator  
iwright@marylandoutdoorclub.org

### Chuck Hildenbrand

Treasurer  
childrenbrand@marylandoutdoorclub.org

### Colin Babb

Event Coordinator  
cbabb@marylandoutdoorclub.org

### Kate Buck

Historian  
kbuck@marylandoutdoor.club.org

### Katie Stofer

Preservation Coordinator  
kstofer@marylandoutdoorclub.org

### Laura Paszkiewicz

Event Accountant  
payments@marylandoutdoorclub.org

### Web Site Committee:

**Chuck Hildenbrand**, Web Assistant  
**Matt Toerper**, Message Board Monitor

### John Putman

Event Coordinator  
jputman@marylandoutdoorclub.org

### Carrie Graff

K-9 Coordinator  
cgraff@marylandoutdoorclub.org

### Jennifer Adach

Newsletter Editor  
jadach@marylandoutdoorclub.org

**Want to be more involved? Officer and volunteer positions are still available! Visit the MOC Web site to learn more.**  
[www.marylandoutdoorclub.org](http://www.marylandoutdoorclub.org)

**Join MOC:** The Maryland Outdoor Club conducts all administrative tasks through our Web site to cut down on processing time and costs. If you are interested in joining, please visit [www.marylandoutdoorclub.org](http://www.marylandoutdoorclub.org) and click on any of the "Join Now" buttons you'll find throughout the site. Signing up is a short process and will save you time when you sign up for events. MOC does not sell or share your personal information with any third parties.