

Free Writing:

**A Sept. 6 KAYAK trip around
SEARS ISLAND or:**

"How I discovered America"

What danger lurks behind the fog?

*Quickkkk sketched impressions in 10 to 15 minutes
writing freely, unprocessed, plenty of mistakes
That's what makes "free writing"*

Frederic A. Moritz



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**It was 8:30 am, about the time Weather
Radio had predicted the fog would lift.**

Low tide would come at 1pm...

**And so it was time to put the [Osprey](#) in, on
the left side, just before the causeway from
Searsport to Sears Island....**

What danger lurks behind a possible morning fog? Plan carefully, think sharp. Trust in your sturdy "Osprey."

The state of Maine owns the island, and closed off the causeway road from the mainland to the island....until a decision is made on how to use this giant island.....

And so I had found a deserted overgrown road leading off to a beach to the left or east of the island....And once the "Osprey" was in the water, the car could be parked back up on the main road to the causeway...

And off I paddled, as the fog lifted out into Stockton Bay with a panorama of gulls and buoys and far in the distance the other side of the Bay enshrouded in the gently lifting steaming morning fog.

South I paddled and wove our way sometimes out into the Bay, sometimes closer to the causeway but leaving a patch of wide open water behind us to the beach of embarkation.....

The water was mirror calm on this, the sheltered part of the island. The causeway faded in the distance and the open Bay of Stockton and the mouth of the Penobscot which winds its way to Bucksport loomed far head.....

In the distance are platforms sunken into the Bay -- where freighters ply their way up to Bucksport to the paper mill there.....

And now I am in my stride as small groups of gulls clumped on the waters to entertain us -- and the clear sun began to illuminate the Bay ahead.

Sears Island to our right seemed to stretch

forever, as the feeling of exploration set in. Out of sight to the rear now was the causeway and the beach where I put in.....And very distant on the Sears Island shore was the rocky path open to hikers who wished to circumnavigate the island by hiking.....

And now I was paddling clockwise to round old Sears, to head out into the open Penobscot Bay where the waters would be unsheltered, the "seas" less predictable....

MEASURING THE RISKS

Before embarking I had a chat with two middle aged women hiking near the Causeway. They warned me to be careful, for the son of one had capsized the week before while rounding Sears Island in his kayak.

Morning reports from Weather Radio left me sure the waves would be no more than two feet -- well within the established capacity of the "Osprey." Still, I took it carefully, to be sure I did not stray into rough waters beyond my capacity, beyond my control....

With low tide not until 1pm the danger of straying onto treacherous hidden rocks or sandbars was minimal. But it was necessary to keep a sharp eye out for indications of shallow water whenever exploring closer to shore.

To go far into the Bay one had to gauge the winds, the waters, the size of possible waves. To explore closer into the island, one had to watch for bottom, for signs of rocks which might catch me, scrape me, or worse.....But there was no sign of treacherous currents.

So I was able to focus far ahead on a corner protrusion of Sears into the Bay. Where dozens, hundreds of gulls and ducks covered the island with scarcely any left over room, as the waves lapped around their feet.

Steady they held as the "Osprey" drew closer.....

And then finally, as the gulls grew larger, they suddenly took fright and flight....leaving barren bay washed rocks in their wake. Except for one strange tall "monument" which seemed to stretch into the sky.

It looked so stiff and firm, so tall, so plastic -- it could have been a front yard sign -- or a billboard for a fast food store. Frozen it was, as if erected in cement by park managers as a warning to boats to beware the rocks.

When this kayaker later checked the web, he concluded the mystery bird looked most like an Egret.

But consider again.

The giant "billboard" began to flap its wings, to soar into the air, with its long head and beak flowing, pointing forward like the lance of some knight in King Arthur's Court....like a warplane launched from an aircraft carrier.....

This flying bird of fish hunting war could be the famous giant blue heron, sighted in many parts of America, but in the winter only in the South.....Whatever it was, off it spread to dominate, to control the "airspace" over Sears Island.

(A friend suggested this was indeed the famous blue heron, but the next day my Unity College students came up with other

possibilities: an egret, a crane, even a stork)



Could it be an Egret?



Could it be a Heron?

And so I continued to paddle, now straight around the corner of the island, out into Penobscot Bay where the waters changed from mirror to waves.....Bow into the waves I moved, with the bow not quite dipping under each wave, riding up and down, propelled forward by the twin paddle blades.

Rest, work.....rest, paddle....adjust the seat straps, the foot braces for maximum power, leverage and back support. In this [Level II](#) more advance trip (all my previous ones were [Level I](#)) I was able to fully master the "Osprey's seat adjustments to vary the back angle, to pace the ride.

One paddles with a pivoting motion, not with broad strokes as with canoe. One holds the paddle with the hands about one foot apart. When the left hand pulls back, the right hand pushes forward, then the right hand pulls

back, the left hand forward.....It is this gentle steady pivot which gives the kayak added power and ease of mobility over the canoe.....much less arm movement, a gentle, steady pivot.

With the pivoting motion comes forward momentum, the kayak glides, and one buys one which blends with one's body, it should be a custom fit, so that one is not sitting in a boat, but rather the boat is an extension of one's body....

And now I rounded Sears, toward the southern tip, and ahead farther south perhaps a mile south of Sears in the middle of the Penobscot Bay channel was a small island, with steep cliffs, like a fortress at the mouth of the Bay.....

(Later checks reveal this is actually Squaw Head, just off the coast of Stockton Springs, one half mile east, southeast from Sears Island: an islet at high tide, a point at low tide)

I decided to cross the channel through moderate waves -- and as the "Osprey" moved forward, it was obvious that this was a bird haven, a kind of refuge.....

So straight ahead I paddled, and as I went farther and farther away from Sears Island out into the channel, the birds and gulls, and tiny baby gulls loomed on the horizon.....

Carefully we rounded a point and found a place to beach. And there is where I photographed the kayak, the island, the broad vista of the scene across the Bay. And there I had the Schnapps and called a friend by cell phone.....

And so some resting, remnants of coffee,

some photos unwinding a bit -- before resuming the paddle across the open channel back north toward Sears Island.....

And now the waves began to roughen, but the 13 foot kayak is very versatile, rides them gently, while power boats and fishing craft are distant in the channel, lightly shaded in the fog.

And now I am rounding Sears again, North on the Searsport Western side....and the fog is closing in.....and so it is important not to lose sight of the shore -- but not to accidentally beach....for if disoriented, one could paddle senselessly in the wrong direction.....

By now I have been in the water more than two hours --- with rest stops of course....and the way ahead in rougher waters is unclear, invisible, fogged in....I round another point -- and in the rough thick seaweed are many rocks protruding up. Around them I pass sometimes, betIen them at others.....

And finally the fog begins to lift -- and in the distance across Long Cove, I know I will come up upon the left, Istern side of the causeway ---- but it is invisible, hidden in the distance. Out again I paddle towards a giant red buoy floating in the channel, covered with a family of fisher birds.

And as I near, they are off in flight, with a quick wink it seems. So the "Osprey" pulls next to the giant red buoy, to chat a bit with the bobbing floating deserted machine.....

And then onward I paddle to cross Long Cove, back tired, sun hot, fog in and out....the destination still hidden.

Now it appears -- the causeway --- a speck far

in the distance.

DISCOVERING AMERICA

Where to put in? For I embarked from the other side of the Causeway --- and there is no way to get there again without paddling back four or five miles.

So I set our eyes upon a smooth beach -- and eventually draw nigh....to beach the "Osprey" --- and explore for road access to get the car down to the beach to car top the "Osprey".

But there is no road.....

And so I approach a serious looking middle aged Maine couple picnicking on the hill above the beach.

"Have I reached America?" I ask. About noon.

"Oh yes, this is the United States," says the man.

"I just came from Spain, " I reply.

The man does not smile. He probably does not really believe I am Christopher Columbus. I guess he sees me as just another, yes, just another tourist.

(Later calculation shows the total kayak trip at about six miles)

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PADDLE WITH MORITZ