

A DINGO STOLE MY PFD!!

Don't come up now...Don't come up now... my thoughts as a huge hump back whale slipped smoothly a meter or two below my kayak. So close, I swear I could see it watching me as it approached, so close that the scars and barnacles were visible on its back.

But I get ahead of myself, excited no doubt!

Two days previously (Fri Aug. 27, 2010), six club members had met at the Urangan boat harbour. Sue Alcock, Yvonne Harrison, Bruce Nicholson, Arny Hale, Terry Mc Garry and I were a little tense as we attempted to fit all our gear and food/water into our kayaks. None had previously paddled the 11k across to Fraser Island and up into Platypus Bay to kayak with the whales. Arny especially seemed to be struggling to fit it all in. We learned later that Beth had sent double supplies just to make sure her man did not go hungry!

In ideal conditions, a light SW. breeze and calm sea we launched on time at 8am and crossed the strait at the top of the tide for smoko at Moon Point. Yvonne and I were able to sail the last hour to Moon. Then an easy paddle on the outgoing tide 12k north to Coongal Creek. Much laughter as we enjoyed the antics of campers setting up their tents for the first time. We were also entertained by the efforts of a salvage team attempting to retrieve a stranded yacht from the beach in front of our camp.

Both of our chosen camp sites (Coongal Creek and Awinya Creek), are delightful sites. Soft grass under casuarina trees with a wide sandy beach in front and a fresh water Creek behind. Few sand flies and no mosquitos, but no tables or toilets either. Our table is a tarp on the grass and at toilet time there is no being coy, just pick up the roll and trowel and head for the hills.

Happy hour and dinner over, we soon headed to the tents.

Morning dawned clear and calm, no rush to pack up as the tide turned around 10 am to help us on our way the 15k north to Awinya Ck. Long walks along the beach, an exploratory trip up the Creek to find the best water supply, an afternoon nap under the trees and it was soon time for more wine and nibbles followed by a meal. Tomorrow we hoped to encounter some whales!

Sunday morning and again the sea is a mill pond as we launch and paddle north toward Rooney Point. Only 2k or so and we see activity in our path ahead. They find us, a pod of five playing happily and travelling slowly south. Sue was the whale 'expert' having paddled with them previously in Byron Bay. Her only advice was to not get between a whale and its calf. We all had our own adventure, excitement over the next almost an hour. Mine was that whale passing close under and its mate turning beside me, and another when I thought I had been caught between a whale and it's calf. Arny looked a bit desperate at one stage. His wife Beth (one of this world's spiritual people) had asked Arny to pour a little water collected from special places around the world (such as Muchu Pichu and Mexico) into the water among the whales. Arny was faithfully completing this mission when the whales got a little too close for comfort!

The sea had built and the whales decided that they had enjoyed our company for long enough, so they moved out into the bay and we returned to our camp at Awinya Ck. A quiet afternoon just reading, lounging (I use that word loosely) around camp, a bath in the Creek, wine and food until bed time. The laughter and stories went on till well after dark but camping usually means long nights in the tent.

Monday morning and still the weather favours us. Clear and calm in the lee of the island. We scan the bay for signs of whales, see none and decide on an early start toward home on the incoming tide. We check out potential camp sites as we paddle south, confident that we will return to do this again. The yacht is still on the beach at Coongal Ck. We make this a smoko break and are again entertained by the salvage efforts.

Wanting to cross to Urangan in the early morning calm and with the assisting tide, we paddle on the 27k to camp at Moon Point. It was not a good move as the sand flies were horrific! We bathed in repellent and the



Photo 1 - The crew at Frazer Island



Photo 2 - Beached



Photo 3 - Casuarina Camp



Photo 4 - All the creature comforts



Photo 5 - Back to Nature

little mongrels simply drank it! We walked along the beach in the breeze to gain some relief in the breeze then cooked and ate our meal at the water's edge. Dinner over, it was into the tents as daylight faded, only to be disturbed by noises coming from our kayak area. Is that you Arny (still sorting out Beth's mountain of food)? No, he is in his tent hiding from the sand flies. It's those bloody dingoes into our rubbish bag hung high in a tree. Out we get to rescue the rubbish and turn the kayaks over to protect the hatches and back to bed.

Our 6.30am start got us away from the sand flies and time for a leg stretch on the sand island midway across to Urangan. The occasional turtle or dugong was our only company. We approached the harbour at 9am, six abreast congratulating ourselves on a great few days, well aware that the weather had been most gentle with us. A final communication with the coastguard to thank them for monitoring our progress and then it was time to unpack the kayaks for the last time.

Oh yes, that stolen PFD.

On the first day we beached our kayaks at Coongal Ck. Yvonne stayed with the boats and watched the other five walk up to select the ideal camp site. A shout from Yvonne and within five minutes of our landing a dingo had grabbed a buoyancy vest from the end kayak (Bruce's) and was now in flight dragging/carrying it away up the beach. Now Bruce, no sprinter, but that poor little dog was terrified as Bruce raced after it with some very loud and not too complementary language cast in its direction! The dingo decided 'no challenge', dropped the P.F.D. and scarpered. Bruce regained his vest with a few teeth marks and the musalie bar still in the pocket.

Dave Pass.



Photo 6 - Day's end