

Indian River Lagoon - Continued

He also shares a large trimaran with his older brother, and he is restoring a Peep Hen he rescued from the indifferent original owner, who had let it simply sit by the roadside for years. His SeaPearl 21 was on a trailer near the docks.

By mid-afternoon Ted and I began preparing our boats to get into the water. Stin's boat, of course, had been in the water since Thursday. Ted ribbed me about the SeaPearl's touted ten minutes from trailer to launching, but whoever came up with that marketing bullet had not seen my personal approach to getting ready to go. Ten minutes is for installing the boat plug and wondering where you set down your car keys.

In keeping with a time-honored WCTSS tradition, we each went our own way after launching. Stin went out sailing in the Lagoon, I had left the Honda 2 hp in the car (yes, on purpose), so I started off rowing, and I think Ted motored off to inspect prospective campsites. The plan was for all of us to meet on one of the low islands bordering Mullet Creek, which runs right in front of the fish camp. Jonathan loaded up the C Dory with firewood, and he and his wife Petra headed for a spot he thought we would find suitable for a campfire and overnight stay.

Once out in the breeze (NW 6-8 mph) I put up the sails and had a nice little spin around the area, very much enjoying the beautiful low light and beauty in all directions. I'm sad to say that I had not been sailing since the mid-November Cayo Costa trip. Various factors, but especially foul and cold weather, have thwarted my boating plans this winter.

Stin reduced sail and disappeared in the small group of islands in front of the camp. I put the mainsail away and sailed on the mizzen alone into the channel or tidal creek where I had last seen Stin. The winds are fluky in the trees and mangroves, but I ghosted along until I spotted the others beached and pulled in with them. Jonathan was building a fire, which turned out to be a beauty. The fuel was large logs of Australian pine, which burned very hot without the gunshot popping that our native Southern Pine produces. The temperature dropped rapidly, eventually reaching near freezing, but the fire was so effective we all sat around it comfortably until nearly 11 pm.

Raccoons came aboard *Moon Shadow* and Ted's boat around midnight, doing no damage and promptly departing when asked for identification. Sunday morning was overcast at first. The wind was a pleasant 5-7 mph out of the NW. Ted and Stin planned to sail South with the wind down to Horseshoe Island past Sebastian Inlet. Jonathan took Petra back to the fish camp, and I followed under oar power to pick him up at the dock in my boat. One of the purposes of the trip for me was to do a little work aboard *Moon Shadow* with Jonathan, who will team with me on the upcoming Everglades Challenge. We rowed a while in various configurations, and then sailed North as the sun came out and the wind picked up to around 7-10 mph. Jonathan was at the helm the entire time while I tried his patience talking about the race, sailing techniques, etc. He passed this test with high marks, never once asking me to shut up or take my turn at the helm. We worked upwind about eight miles, and then turned around for a nice run back, arriving at the dock around 4:30 in the afternoon. Ted had just left, and Stin was there in his boat preparing to go back to a gunk hole for one more night out. He said that he and Ted had a very nice day sailing, exploring the Islands, and having lunch on an island. Beyond any doubt, the trip was a success. Stin had a long outing, Ted got some sailing in and avoided fixing his fence, Jonathan and I got to work together. Best of all for me and, I hope, eventually for the squadron was the introduction to a sailing area new to many of us. The water was clear, with enough depth for trailer sailors. There are large shallow areas of two feet or so, but the deeper water and maneuver room for our boats is much greater than at Cedar Key and most of Pine Island Sound. The bottom was soft, as far as I could tell, without extensive oyster bars or rock hazards. There were dozens of clean, attractive spoil islands with beaches and trees nicely spaced along the ICW and elsewhere. Much of the shoreline is undeveloped or low density development, and there is a state park at Sebastian Inlet. Finally, the hospitality, charm, and security at Honest John's Fish Camp put it at the top of my list of favorite launch points. Let's do this again with a larger group!

For photos please visit:

<http://ftp.ij.net/wctss/wctss/photos49.htm>

Mark Your Calendars!

- 1. Everglades Challenge Start - March 6th** - East Beach of Ft. DeSoto Park at the south end of Mullet Key. Members Bill Fite, Jonathan Arthur, Meade Gougeon, and Paul Myers will start this 300 miles race to Key Largo at the crack of DAWN! Breakfast at the SeaHorse restaurant on Pass-a-Grille Beach after the launch for everyone who stays ashore!
- 2. Cayo Costa in the Spring - March 19nd -21st** - The Squadron's favorite hangout at Pelican Bay will be our rally point for Friday afternoon March 19th. Destinations on Saturday determined by winds and whims! Cookout on the beach Friday evening. This is a favorite. Put it on your calendar ASAP! Launch at Eldred's Marina near Placida, or Pineland Marina on Pine Island.
- 3. Spring Break Escape! April 3rd - 6th!** Launch at the City Marina in Punta Gorda - <http://www.laishleymarina.com/> - on Saturday, April 3 and sail to Pelican Bay/Cayo Costa. Sunday sail down to Tween Waters and get a slip or anchor and dinghy in. Monday either sail back to Cayo Costa or if the wind is right make a long run for Burnt Store Marina - again there is an anchorage on a spoil island right by the entrance for those opposed to slips. Tuesday sail back to the City Marina and pull out.
- 4. Great 5th Annual Florida Gulf Coast Small Craft Festival at Cortez - April 17 -19**
- 5. Crystal River Boating Bash - April 22nd - 25th** - Camping, sailing, boatbuilding - a full weekend of fun put on by our friends, most of whom are also WCTSS members! Check the details and call for camping reservations. See: <http://www.tsca.net/CRBB/bash.htm>
- 6. Cedar Key Small Boat Meet - April 30th - May 3rd** - Friday through Monday. The big day is Saturday, but come for three or four days to soak up the atmosphere.
- 7. FISH! (Florida Inshore Sailing Holiday) - June 12th - 16th** - A Squadron original dreamed up by Jonathan Arthur who lives and works on the Indian River. We'll sail the waters of the Indian River Lagoon on the east coast Intracoastal Waterway. More details to come.