

Dirtying Up the Kayak

A few weeks ago, I stood in my garage and looked at my kayak hanging from a mount on the wall. There were still streaks of dried mud smeared across it and shriveled-up weeds stuck to the seat from adventures past. I never bother to clean it because I like how it looks when it has been used. The only question was where and when my first voyage of the year would be.

I shot a text message out to a few of my adventure buddies. Within minutes, the plan materialized. On that coming Sunday, we would go kayak fishing on the Hunt River in North Kingstown.

Sunday came, and we arrived at our spot. It was a slow moving river, perfect for a mellow day on the water. My friends dropped in before me while I peed in some brush. I knew we would be paddling for a good part of the day, and there wasn't going to be another opportunity to do so for a while. I finished my business, then zipped up and dropped in.

We made our way upriver against the current, which is usually the better way to start your day. After a long day of paddling, you do not want to fight the current on the way back. I have made that mistake before, and I won't again.

The plan was to go fishing for bass, pickerel, trout or whatever was biting. Everyone chose their preferred lure while I chose the kind I always dig out. That would be the in-line spinner, or roostertail, as they are often referred to. They are my favorite style of lure to fish with. They are known for catching fish in big numbers, but not necessarily big fish, and I am okay with that. I decided to start the day with a golden yellow one.

Our little fleet of three kayaks and one canoe made its way upriver, occasionally backing up and wedging ourselves into the brush on the side. This prevents the current from pushing us back downstream as we cast our lines. We would try a spot for a few minutes, then paddle farther upriver where we would back into the side and try again.

As the day rolled on, none of us were getting any bites. It was really hot and we were losing steam. Little by little, we stopped fighting the river and let it push us downstream as we fished our way back at a more leisurely pace. Still, we got no bites.

The day wasn't over yet. Back at our trucks we decided to drive over to a little pond that runs off the Pawtuxet River in West Warwick. I suggested this spot because I always seem to have luck there.

I changed from my golden yellow roostertail to a silver one with red fur. It was a very sunny day and I figured the silver would reflect more light.

I dropped in and paddled my way dangerously close to a dam with a waterfall. Once again I was fighting the current. I had to constantly check to make sure I was not moving too close to the edge of the dam as to not go over it. The water usually gets deeper just before a dam, and I catch fish in spots like that fairly often. This tactic is dangerous and I do not recommend it, but it is what I did, and it paid off. On my first cast, I had a fish on. It was a largemouth bass, and the first fish of the day. I was on the board. As usual, after the first catch of the day, my interest in fishing waned for a bit and I focused more on kayaking. I crept up the pond pretty close to the edge. The trees on the side provided shade and broke up the wind that was pushing against me in the middle of the pond.

There were some shallow areas that made me glad to be using a sit-on-top kayak. The whole device floats on top of the water as opposed to the sit-inside kind. With these, you sit below the surface level of the water, and subsequently, might bottom out in weedy or shallow spots. The sit-on-top style is more ideal in these situations, at least in my opinion, but there are a lot of styles of kayaks for many different purposes.

Again we reached the point where we were sick of fighting the current and let ourselves drift back. A pond is usually a great place to kayak because of its still water, but this pond had a waterfall that created a current similar to the river's. The ride back is always nicer, but it ends quicker. I

managed to catch another bass and a pickerel on the way. Not a bad day.

We dragged our kayaks back to the truck. Mine has a rope tied to the front, which helps with the dragging. We tied them up, gave some fist bumps, and went our separate ways with the promise of another adventure in the near future.

Now the kayak rests in its rack with new markings of mud and pieces of dead weeds stuck in the seat. Whenever I enter my garage, I have to fight the impulse to take it off the wall and throw it in my truck. There are so many good places to go in Rhode Island, and I am always eager to give it a new coat of mud.