



The Pandozer

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IN BRIEF

- While walking on the beach near Shallow Inlet I was nearly swallowed up by quicksand. True but exaggerated. It never went over my knee.
- While surfing in the other day I pulled into a big tube and got spat out. Not true. I caught a small crumbling wave and still managed to be spat out of the kayak and onto the sand. True.

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Victorian Bush Encounter

Choose the odd one out;

- A) Native wallaby
- B) Southern Hairy Nosed Wombat
- C) Feral cat

Too hard? How about;

- A) Leaping bundle of freedom and light.
- B) Sturdy protector of honour and humble giver of goodness.
- C) Vile taker of life and spreader of disfiguring disease.

No doubt the domesticated pussy cat, let loose amongst the Australian bush, conjures up images more like the above than, 'Go get 'em tiger!' The creature that squirms playfully at it left, right, uppercut's the

ball of wool does exactly the same with Mr Willy Wagtail and Mrs. Metallic Skink just before disemboweling them.

Walking out from Sealers Cove to Tidal River I spotted a member of the feral menace. It wasn't hard, it was sitting squarely in the middle of the track looking up at me from its twelve week old kitten eyes, from one eyelid of which clung a bush tick. I paused a few meters from it and squatted down. Even as I extended a conciliatory open palm, slightly cupped to suggest a hidden piece of cheese, I was busy deciding what to do if it came to me. Would it accompany me quietly for the ten kilometer walk to the ranger's station and an uncertain fate? Or would I sus-

pend my sincerely held objection to harming animals for long enough to wring it's neck? You don't belong here kitty, what do I do with you? I wanted an ice-cream, not a moral dilemma.

Then I saw it as a little human being, traveling foreign lands, expanding, persisting, surviving. There was no hint of guilt in it's eyes. If harm and destruction was to be it's legacy it didn't know it. Could I really kill the strange little kitty-human-mirror-to-my-guilt? No, but I could still try to catch it and sell it to a passing circus festival. Kitty-human-mirrors are very exotic. It evaded my lunge with a graceful arcing leap. The pursuit into the tangled undergrowth was futile, it was gone.

Day to Day

- 29. Erith Island to Garden Cove, Deal Island, 2km
- 30. Deal Island R&R (wind)
- 31. Deal Island R&R (wind)
- 32. Deal Island R&R (wind)
- 33. Deal Island R&R (wind)
- 34. Deal Island to Hogan Island, 39km
- 35. Hogan Island to Sealers Cove, Wilsons Promontory NP, 54km
- 36. Wilsons Prom R&R (walk to Tidal River for supplies, 20km)
- 37. Wilsons Prom R&R (wind)
- 38. Wilsons Prom R&R (wind)
- 39. Wilsons Prom R&R (wind and hail)
- 40. Wilsons Prom to beach near Shallow Inlet, 49km
- 41. Shallow Inlet R&R (wind)
- 42. Shallow Inlet to Seaspray, 47km

The Backbone of Bass Strait

Pain shoots up my hamstring as I lever out of the Hope and Grace. Stepping up the sandy ledge proves too much and I topple backwards onto the sand. Seasickness gathers where spine meets brain and sends waves of nausea into my stomach. It's been my constant companion since the pre-dawn departure fourteen hours earlier. Slowly, I can feel it leaking away into the sand and back to its watery home. Standing back up I defer the ledge until my legs gather up enough blood to function predictably. Taking a moment to straighten out my fingers I note several fat new blisters rising out of puffy, waterlogged skin. I look forward to draining them after I'm washed, warm, dry, and dinner's cooking.

Rising at 2.45am I'd been surprised at how dark it was. Where's the bloody moon... or even stars for that matter? The only light was from the mast of the yacht anchored in the bay. The moon had already tucked below the horizon and a patchy blanket of cloud drifted along on a 5-10 knot north-westerly breeze. The kayak

loaded itself as I drifted back to a warmer, softer place. Pausing on the beach with cold, wet sand between my toes I contorted for the symbolic toe touches and windmill arms. The headlight uses LED's (light emitting diodes), and casts an unearthly blue glow all of about two meters. Sitting in the kayak it served to illuminate nothing more than the fact that I was indeed sitting in a kayak, in the dark.

Near-shore rocks protect the end of Killiecrankie Bay and I was looking for the narrow passage through them. Switching the headlight off was only a slight improvement as I floated around like a stooge in a lunatic's game of Blind Man's Bluff. By then desperately seeking a solid object to orient myself against, I saw the light on Craggy Island. If I kept that in sight on the horizon, I reasoned, there could be no rocks between us, no big ones anyway. My mouth was agape in the fashion of a third ear, or perhaps a radar, listening intently for the tell-tale sound of breaking waves. Dodging around one surging, submerged

reef I cleared all obstacles and began to relax. The stars that were missing from the sky twinkled around the paddle blades as I pulled them through the water. Phosphorescence. Strangeness heaped upon curiosity and smothered with eeriness.

It was in the dark, the distant beacon my only horizon, unknown swell rising and falling, that I developed the mild case of seasickness. Solid land was the only cure, and that being far away it's just dumb luck that it wasn't worse.

Colours slowly invaded the kayak as day dawned overcast. The next twelve hours were one long process of making Deal Island look increasingly bigger. Rests became more frequent but never lasted long as the headwind, although light, chewed into progress. If I'd had a had a brawny paddling companion, or even a petite one, I would have felt no shame in asking for a tow over the last few kilometers. I was close to my paddling limit. Who knows, maybe another slow five or a delirious ten?

I like pigs. Dogs

look up to us.

Cats look down

on us. Pigs treat

us as equals.

-Winston Churchill

Latest Breaking News

The battery is down to 23% so I won't dilly dally here. Today heralded a welcome break in what seems like a lifetime of gale warnings and small craft advisories. I'm well inside Victorian territory at Seaspray, a small holiday village on Ninety Mile Beach. With the high pressure system dominating the

weather for the next few days I'll push along to Lakes Entrance for a rendezvous with Granny Grace and other relatives. Mum's family come from nearby Bairnsdale. My paddling hat and handheld bilge pump were washed off the deck of the kayak this morning as I broke through the small surf. I

didn't notice the missing hat until an hour later when the sun broke through clouds. The pump wasn't noticed until I pulled ashore this afternoon (drilled in the shore-break). Add to that the EPIRB, VHF radio, Dover gift, hand-line, 6m rope AND a sponge, I'm a certified Larry-lose-it! Lovin' it.

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Done anything interesting lately?

Climbed a mountain, surfed a new wave, stumbled into an abandoned gold mine? The Pandozer wants your adventure stories. You need to be a student, keep it sharp (100-200 words), and expect no payment. If I receive a few submissions I'll expand The Pandozer by a few pages and stop producing the school updates. It's called consolidating resources, and may have something to do with economies of scale.

Send it as a Word attachment with your name and school for publication. Get your teacher to check it because I'm a sloppy editor.



The Anterior Cruciate Ligament of Bass Strait

Soon after leaving the relative shelter of Erith Island I became deeply suspicious that I'd grossly over-estimated my ability. My mind flashed back to the girl in the Grade 3/4 class at Whitemark who started with, "Yeah, we've got a DVD at home called The Perfect Storm..." Not recognising her prophecy and thinking her mischievous I shouted her down with cries of bad luck.

I remind you at this point that I come from the class of sea kayaker who equates knots with shoelaces rather than wind speed, and bow's with sweeping gestures of deference over the front portion of floating vessels. My version of a perfect storm may not stand up to meteorological scrutiny.

The previous day's 40 knot westerly had whipped up waves of two meters with sets around three meters. The odd monster would come through but I'm already busy stuffing those memories deep in the corner of my brain sealed and bolted with a flashing TRAUMA sign. The size in itself would not have been a problem if the wind wasn't blowing 25-30 knots across the bow. It was enough to confuse the swell and litter the sea with whitecaps. In the wrong place at the wrong time those whitecaps meant a mouthful of water and a flash of uncertainty.

After adjusting to the conditions (about three hours later), I felt reasonably comfortable and began to appreciate the harsh beauty of the seascape. The inclination to turn downwind and lessen the load on my shoulders was

only tempered by the unlikelihood of reaching New Zealand shores by nightfall. I'd only snap back to attention when a wave clipped the stern (back bit) as I crested it, and it slung me around ninety degrees. Yes Sir!

The smile I cracked just out from landfall at Hogan Island was pure, unraveled relief, a rare treat to conclude a rare day.

UNSOLVED MYSTERIES

1. What happens when someone paddles for over eight hours, drinks three liters of water through a sucker tube, but can at no stage release their grip on the paddle because they're in conditions beyond their ability?
2. Why was someone searching through dense, hill-top scrub for their yellow toilet bag more than a kilometer from their camp on Erith Island?***
3. Are sightings of a lightly bearded, homeless man carrying green shopping bags through Wilsons Promontory National Park believable? Witnesses report hearing him muttering about kitty-humans as he passed by.

*** Surprisingly, it was found.

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