

Orcas Island
June 30 - July 3, 2011

We did it! We went around Orcas Island and back! Gary Henderson used his considerable expertise at sailing in the San Juan Islands to guide us into the good currents and to avoid the bad ones. Becky Hardey shared her skills, wisdom, insight, and practical knowledge to benefit All Hands. Mike Tomitz exercised his demonstrated ability to select the very best campsite. Susan Conrad (now back from Montana!) escorted us to the west coast of Lummi and was handy upon the return to Gooseberry Point. Ron Frederick fiddled with some charts beforehand.

Getting to Clark Island was a good, opening challenge: 3 ft. waves, with wind behind them. En route, Mike discovered that an old injury had not healed sufficiently for him to make the entire trip, and Clark Island was the place for him to await our return to Clark on the way back. Making it to Point Doughty finished off the first day with 15.0 nautical miles in 5 hours & 45 minutes (average speed of 2.6 knots, max of 5.0 knots). The weather was not so good, but not so bad as to spoil the spirits. We were the only ones there.

An early start on the second day allowed us to use the swift current in President Channel, so we made the 7.3 nm to Jones Island in 1 hour and 35 minutes(!) Becky believes we occasionally got up to 7.2 knots! We topped off the water supply there and pushed on through Pole Pass well before the contrary current even started to build. Making it to Blind Island was a breeze, where we had neighbors only an hour or so after we had selected the best campsite. We made a couple of small trips to the ferry terminal on Shaw Island, mostly for beer and ice cream. The day's totals were 13.1 nm in 3 hours & 50 minutes.

The third day was an easy one: the major objective being the arrival at Obstruction Pass no sooner than the slack before flood, i.e. 1250 hrs. We did get there earlier, but the remainder of the current did not stop us at all; passage through Obstruction Pass was a piece of cake. (At some point we might like to return to that area, camp at the state park close by, and see Obstruction and Peavine Passes in all their glory, both in flood and in ebb.) We lunched at Doe Bay, passed close by Lawrence Point without any trouble, and went on to Clark Island, for a mere 13.6 nm.

The fourth day we had a choice: either (1) to fear the ebb current and get started very early in the morning or later in the afternoon or (2) to go when we jolly well felt like going in. The winds were forecast to be coming from the south or southwest, setting the stage for a wind-current conflict. We elected to ignore the slack, but start early, i.e. before the ebb current could build to any real velocity. With a following wind and seas, we made it back to Lummi Island in 53 minutes, and back to Gooseberry Point well before the 1100 hours estimated time of arrival. Totals for the day were 6.3 nm in 2 hours & 7 minutes, with a max speed of 4.5 knots.

All told, it was a good trip of 48.0 nautical miles. The northeastern coast of Orcas is beautiful; some folks talked about wanting to do it again in winter.

**Your 5'16" sardine chopper,
Ron Frederick**