

Photo Journal: July 4, 2007, a morning on Biscayne Bay with kayak fishermen

I often canoe and occasionally kayak Biscayne Bay and get into the water either at Matheson Hammock Park or Blackpoint marina. On this day, we decided to head down to the Biscayne National Park entrance, further south on the coast. The plan was to meet up with several kayak fishermen. I always enjoy going out with the fishermen, in order to capture some fishing action. It's challenging because you can never anticipate when someone will hook one; I have to be as patient as the fishermen. I try to keep myself situated for the best lighting and cruise around keeping my eye on what's happening. Sometimes, there are no bites and I'll venture away and do my own thing. Of course, that's when the fish start biting.

Everyone met up around 7 am and all were on the water by 7:30. It was an extremely calm morning, the water was like glass. There were few clouds in the sky and by 7:30, the sunrise was already bright. I took advantage of this to capture some silhouette shots of the kayakers. Here are two examples:



The back lighting on the first photo made the sky and water almost indistinguishable from one another. The lighting allowed reflections to show on the water, giving this photo a very peaceful feeling. The wake behind the kayaker gives it a sense of movement also. I really like the second photo for a few reasons; it lent itself to black & white very well as the sky was hazy giving the background cityscape a ghost appearance and I like that there is a kayak and canoe in the photo and that the kayaker is moving past the canoe. This photo also shows the solitude of Biscayne Bay with the city in the background, meaning, you're never too far from heaven when in Miami.

I strayed away from the fishermen for awhile and looked for wildlife. Along a jetty I spotted a great blue heron and I would continue to follow him along the coast for awhile. My shots of the bird were mostly it trying to get away from me. Here are two get-away poses:



I used this day to practice continuous focus for those flight shots that just appear out of nowhere. The only decent shots I managed this day were the 2 above and one more of the same heron in actual flight.

I hung out with the fishermen the rest of the morning and their luck with fishing was much worse than mine. A couple barricudas were caught, but unfortunately these are not “bragging” fish. Even if you don’t capture some of the fishing action, it’s always fun to photograph kayakers or canoeists, especially in the morning light. With the right lighting, the reflections in the water are classic, and I try to experiment a little with that when possible. The first two photos below are of the same kayaker. The first photo was turned 180 degrees, which makes the reflection look like the real thing. I like how the ripples give it an action. If you examine these photos closely, you’ll notice that the reflection in the top photo is sharper. When I want to emphasize the reflection, I focus on some point in the reflection rather than the actual object. Either way, I notice that reflections can be surprisingly interesting by giving the photo an impressionistic feel to it. I find this to be so when photographing mangrove reflections. Recently, I visited Bruges, Belgium, a quaint city full of canals and gabled roof tops. One evening after a storm, the dusk light was magical as I walked along the canals and photographed reflections. I had one Belgian guy (he appeared to have started his happy hour earlier in the day) ask me what I was photographing as I had my camera pointed toward the water. He obviously didn’t see what I was seeing! Maybe it was the Belgian beer or maybe it was the classic case of native not noticing his surroundings. In any case, if you want to see those photos, they are posted on my pbase site (pbase.com/cmierkayaker). In short, shooting reflections while on the water can turn into a fun project with various colors and types of kayaks and canoes, and the variety of people who paddle the boats.



I hung out the rest of the day taking shots of the group and by 11 am, I was off the water and wandering around the marina and visiting the visitor's center. Except for the photos of the fishermen and the great blue heron that I chased along the coast, this was an uneventful day for photographing. Maybe it's the area, or maybe it was the day. I'll be heading back this way soon, so I'll see what happens here on another day.

Two more photos of the kayakers are included below. With fishermen, I try to capture them while fishing; these two photos do not demonstrate that at all. The first guy below is in between casts, and the two fishermen below him are talking about fishing (or something or other). Oh well, I had fun that day, and met some very nice people. They did inform me though that my camera was bad luck so I may have to hide it next time if I want to get any shots of these guys.





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