

July 23 -24, 2013

Exploring Cape Cod's South Shore – Part II

My last adventure on Cape Cod took me from my home port of Lewis Bay west to Falmouth. This time it was east to Chatham. With the gear packed and Possum ready I headed out of Lewis Bay at 11 AM. The wind was the usual SW 15-20. After tacking out of the bay and gaining enough room to safely round Point Gammon I had a pleasant wing on wing ride along the coast for about 16 NM to Monomoy Island, the long spit of land extending south from the southeast tip of the Cape for about 5 miles. Being a protected habitat for birds I couldn't go ashore but did enjoy stretching my legs in shallow water and enjoying the thousands of piping plovers searching for mates and nesting ground around. On the ride north toward Stage Harbor I was surrounded by several dozen seals who kept popping up to eyeball me then ducking and coming up on the other side of the boat.

The entrance to Stage Harbor is narrow and has a strong flow. I arrived on the ebbing tide but still had enough SW wind to creep in. Stage Harbor has several nooks and crannies. I opted for far into the bay so as to be able to walk to town. Thinking the tide was almost down, I anchored in about 2 feet of water. To my pleasant surprise my wife Diane called and said she and her girl friends were going out to eat in Chatham so instead of freeze dried lasagna I enjoyed the luxury of a lobster roll at the Chatham Bars Inn. When they drove me back to the boat a few hours later, Possum was resting on the mud flats but within a half hour was nicely floating again.

The forecast was for winds shifting to NE during the night bringing rain and stronger winds the next day. I watched the harbor of moored boats swing around to face N as I dozed off for the night. Next morning the wind was quickly rising; time to get going. A quick breakfast of yogurt and granola I stowed the tent, took in a single reef and set sail. The NE wind pushed me out of the harbor with the ebbing tide. Once out on the open ocean the waves rose to 4-6 feet and with the wind just abaft the beam. I surfed along at speeds of up to 10 knots. Glad I had the reef because it was getting at little on the edge. After a few miles I wanted to douse the jib only to find the roller gear jammed. I came about, hove to, crawled out on the deck and managed to free it.

After several hours of exhilarating sailing I rounded the head of Point Gammon and headed for the entrance to Lewis Bay and home by 11 AM before the rain arrived. Safely ashore, I told the guy who runs the local sailing school that I'd just sailed in from Chatham. "In that little boat?" The capabilities and security of the Wayfarer are amazing.

Martha's Vineyard will be the next adventure. This will depend on wind direction. Martha's Vineyard is SW from Lewis Bay. That would be 16NM right into the teeth of the usual 15-20 SW wind; a long, wet, upwind slog. Tomorrow's forecast is for WNW wind. Maybe I'll go!



Lighthouse at Point Gammon



Beach houses along Cape Cod's south shore



Nosy seals



A whole squadron of them



Chatham's Stage Harbor



A quiet shallow anchorage



Leaving Stage Harbor under darkening skies and increasing wind

