

SISC Small Boat Cruises – Fall 2024 Summary

Compiled by the Flying 15 Team

This Small Boat Cruise summary begins with looking back at boats participating in the first SISC Small Boat Cruise in June 2012, and then fast forwards to highlight some of the boats participating in the Fall 2024 Monthly Small Boat Cruises.

Initial SISC Small Boat Cruise

The initial SISC Small Boat Cruise in June of 2012 was organized by Rob Denny. Martin Herbert in his Delaware Ducker and Rob Denny in his *Wee Lass* participated. Rob reminisces, “That’s a lovely photo Martin came up with of our two boats anchored in James Bay on Prevost Island, quite a few years ago! I only wish I could still do the kind of trips we did then, but age is catching up with me, and it’s just not possible anymore.” Rob has just written up *Wee Lass*’ story, which can be seen at this link:

<https://www.saltspringsailing.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/story-of-wee-lass.pdf>

Martin believes that *Wee Lass* might have been the only dry sailed boat on the Club docks then, an interesting precedent.



Photo above right: Rob Denny’s Wee Lass and Martin Herbert’s Delaware Ducker at James Bay, Prevost Island, June 18, 2012. Photo by Ruth Riddell

Delaware Ducker

In 2012, as well as in our October and November 2024 Small Boat Cruises, Martin joined the cruise in his classic 1880’s wooden sail/rowboat, the Delaware Ducker. Martin shares, “*To the right is a shot of my Delaware Ducker sailing home from the first Small Boat Cruise, June 18th, 2012, organized by Rob Denny. (Photo by Ruth Riddell).*”

“I had my first adventure sailing a Ducker in 1981 when I had gone to race in the International Canoe World Championships on the east coast of the USA. There I met the curator of small boats at the Mystic Seaport.

That is a must-see museum and I had free run of it and got to sail Ben Fuller’s boat. I came home with a set of plans and built this boat 32 years ago. I altered the method to lapstrake ply construction, making it much lighter. The modifications changed the boat, some for the better and some not, but I love what I got and have used her for over 30 years.”



“Since the first SISC Small Boat Cruise, I have cruised in her on the Salish Sea, on mountain lakes in the Rockies and even down the Columbia and Bow Rivers. She also took first place in a rowing race at the Port Townsend Wooden Boat Festival. She is a lovely boat to row, having been designed before there were motors on boats, in the 1880’s.”

“Here is a link to an article on Delaware Duckers written by Ben Fuller, the fellow who introduced me to them, including some great details, photos and drawings: <https://smallboatsmonthly.com/article/delaware-ducker/>”.

“Contemporaneous with the *melonseed*, the *sneakbox*, the *railbird skiff*, and the *South Jersey Beach Skiff* was the *Delaware Ducker*. Chapelle believed that she was a development on the Adirondack Guide Boat and the decked sailing canoe, since she is narrow and double ended, but she is a more substantial boat than either. Smaller and lighter than the *melonseed* or the *sneakbox*, she is light enough to be worked in the marshes but seaworthy enough for rough water. She is decked fore, aft, and narrow washboards. For certain, she evolved from the earlier racer, called the double-ender, which was more substantial and carried more sail. They are a thrill to sail, fast and responsive, but require a certain skill from the helmsman, especially when they dip their boom in the water. The Ducker is subject of a famous Thomas Eakins painting *Sailing* which hangs in the Philadelphia Museum of Art. The boat is sprit rig and carries two crew.” <https://traditionalsmallcraft.com/Duckers.html>



Left: Martin with his Delaware Ducker at the Port Townsend Wooden Boat Festival in 2016.

Below: the Delaware Ducker on the SISC docks and Martin in his boat in October 2024.





Left: Martin's Delaware Ducker fully renovated and varnished in 2023.

Clinker-Built Rowboat, SNUG

At the September 2024 SISC Small Boat Cruise, Bernadette Mertens-McAllister joined us in her beautifully built and immaculately restored clinker-built wooden rowboat, SNUG. Turn back the clock 90 years, when SNUG would be out fishing and meeting friends on neighbouring islands. SNUG's restoration by Bernadette is described in the SISC Club Stories 2024 at this link: <https://www.saltspringsailing.ca/the-story-of-snug-a-rowboat/>



Above and left: Bernadette with SNUG in the 2024 Small Boat Cruises.

Port Townsend 11

At the November 2024 SISC Small Boat Cruise, Greg Slakov joined the cruise, rowing his immaculately handcrafted Port Townsend 11. Winds were light so he easily made it to Chocolate Beach before the Flying 15s drifted over. Greg explained, “About 15 years ago an American boat designer named Russell Brown designed a dinghy called the PT11 (Port



Townsend 11). It is extremely well-designed, and I had my eye on it for many years. I decided to copy his boat the best I could using photos and other information on the internet. I did my drawings and, in the winter of 2022/23, I built it. It is a sailing and rowing dinghy that splits into two parts so that the bow can fit in the stern and be stored in about half the space of a normal dinghy. We use it as the tender to Sorcery, our Olson 34. It weighs about 90 pounds, comes apart or goes together (in the water) in about 30 seconds, and it really moves along under oar or sail. The only bad things about it are that it is quite cramped to sail, and it is fragile, so landing on barnacles and rocky beaches is frowned upon.”

Martin Herbert wrote a fascinating photo essay about the construction of Greg’s boat: <https://www.saltspringsailing.ca/greg-slakov-builds-a-dinghy/>. For anyone curious to learn more about this innovative ‘tender’, check out: <http://www.ptwatercraft.com/ptwatercraft/PT11Home.html>.



Greg’s Port Townsend II, being re-assembled in the water.





Greg's two-piece tender, assembled ready for rowing.

Club Lasers

All types of small boats are welcome to join the SISC Small Boat Cruises, including paddle boards, kayaks, canoes, and more. At the November 2024 cruise, John Hillier sailed one of the SISC Lasers. What a fun, nimble boat! And a real pleasure to watch John sailing; he 'wears' the Laser...amazing.

Celebrating 55 years since building the first 144 boats, "Laser now rules the waves around the world in over 50 countries...more than 200,000 Lasers have been built, more than any other boat, ever. They are sailed at Olympic, Nationals, in Men, Women, Juniors and Masters levels and of course as a fun boat... Since January 16, 2009 the official Laser sailboat speed record of 16.8 knots has been held by Mark Denzer of Honolulu, Hawaii." All this according to the following: <https://laserperformance.com/50-years-laser/50-years-laser-sailors/>



SISC owns three Lasers for Club members to use (contact Laser Fleet Manager Ewan Dean laserprogram@saltspringsailing.ca if you are interested), and numerous members have Lasers tucked away at home. Dust off your Lasers, turn up your daily workout, and save the date this Spring so you are ready for the upcoming SISC Laser Race Series!

Flying 15s

The fleet of Flying 15s joined the 2024 cruises, often using the time to practise mooring or anchoring, building our boat handling skills, picnicking, and getting to know each other. Over the Fall, we slowly solidified into a close-knit team of gals, including some guys who are 'one of the gals'. We really look forward to sailing with each other and are curious to learn more about the beautiful unique boats that join the cruise each month.



Sometimes we stop for a picnic; here we boarded SISC member Martin Thorn's sailboat for a gourmet picnic near Goat Island.



Jan Macpherson and Jane Squier frequently sail F15 Fire Fox in our SISC Small Boat Cruises.

Five to seven Flying 15s join the monthly cruises, often practising techniques our Coach John Hillier has introduced. Martin Herbert in Kay D and Simon Wheeler in Bluebird are “one of the gals”.



Conclusion

SISC Monthly Small Boat Cruises will start up again in March. It's a ton of fun, join us in your favourite small boat, motorized tenders are welcome, too! If you'd like to learn more about the unique boats participating in this fun event, check out Off Centre Harbour to access over 1000 info-packed videos on hand-made boats, maintenance, and sailing tips. Here's a preview: <https://www.facebook.com/reel/27449020551412664>



If anyone is interested in reading about other past small boat cruises over the years at SISC, visit these links from the Club Stories page on the website:

2020:

<https://www.saltspringsailing.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/martin-h-small-boats-2020.pdf>

<https://www.saltspringsailing.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/small-boat-group-2020.pdf>

2023:

<https://www.saltspringsailing.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/mh-ls-small-boat-crse-report-aug-2023.pdf>