



MYRTLE BEACH, SC TO SOUTHPORT, NC

From the Logs of the Knotty Dog 2013

MYRTLE BEACH TO SOUTHPORT

We left the dock at 7:30 AM, getting an early start. Larry wanted to time our travels today to cover some shallow crossings at higher tide. OK, makes sense, fine with me.

We had a quiet evening last night at the Lighthouse Marina here in Myrtle Beach. There was not much activity going on...in fact, none at all. There's also not much scenic character at the marina as it's surrounded by condos that seemed empty, waiting for their seasonal occupants and most of the boats, the same, sitting idly in their permanent slips awaiting the arrival of their snowbird captains. The place was void of cruisers like us, thus nothing to watch, no coming and going of traffic and most importantly - no wakes.

We felt a bit lonely as we're used to the coming and going of the snow birds heading north and all the wakes that cometh "witheth". You've surely noticed The Lighthouse Marina's icon as you head north or south in this area. It's location, as it is most noticeably marked, by the big



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black and white candy cane striped fake lighthouse right on the ICW, marking the narrow entrance to their marina. Most of the places that cruisers stop in this area are right on the ICW, exposed docks, paralleling the traffic and suffering the wakes from the constant traffic of fishing boats, tour boats, and the north-south cruisers. Last time we were docked on one and we were waked to death. So this time we thought we'd try the protection of the marina. Well, you can count on absolutely no wakes in here, in fact the only activity was watching a couple herons walking the dock and peering in the window at us, probably wondering what in the heck we were doing there and per chance did we have any snacks to throw at them.

As we entered the narrow marina entrance we were surprised to see it open up into such a large expanse of docks, condos and boats. Who would have thought all this was hidden from view while traveling the ICW? You really have

no idea traveling the ICW what is actually behind all these little entrances. Now we do. As we came in we couldn't see where we were supposed to go and no one was around to help



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us. The place was like a ghost town or marina. The dock master, who Larry called earlier in the day to make a reservation, said he would not be here when we were scheduled to arrive because it was after hours - so he gave us docking location instructions. As we entered the marina none of the instructions made any sense. The place was one gigantic maze of docks and no numbers that we could see to guide us. We tried calling the dock master again, hoping for a miracle that he might still be there and luckily he was. He gave us some more instructions, which were basically to come farther into the marina. We went in farther and still couldn't figure out where he wanted us, still no markers or boats that looked like what he was describing. We called again. He said to come in still further, we did. He said he'd come out to the dock and guide us in. We finally saw two guys on a dock but they weren't paying any attention to us so we still weren't sure where the heck he was. We call him again and sure enough he was one of the guys on the dock and finally waved at us! Geez. We ended all the way in the very back of the marina. Now why he didn't he say that in the first place? Not sure what was going on there but it was a bit weird. We got docked finally and off

he and Larry went to the office to check in. He was very nice and friendly once we got settled but didn't seem like he was used to cruisers like us coming to the marina. I guess it's mostly permanent residents here that just come and go on their own. First thing I did was get out the buggy and wheel Ziggy down the long dock and up the steep ramp looking for some grass in this land of concrete and also carrying a big bag of trash of which there was not a trash can within site. After a little exercise for Ziggy, we headed back to the boat, Ziggy in the buggy and me with the bag of trash.

Nothing around close that we could see like restaurants or stores without going on a long walk. We were tired and didn't want to take a chance that we couldn't find a place with out-



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green spring growth. The scenery along that river topped the list for me so far. Ironically, the last time we came through this area I thought it was boring but now I know it must have had something to do with the bad weather. All I had on my mind was getting someplace south where it wasn't freezing cold. Everything that trip looked naked, gray and bleak.

I would liked to have spent more time photographing the area but we are on the go. It's always a challenge trying to take pictures on the water on a moving boat. Many times the weather or sun doesn't cooperated, or that osprey is looking the other way, or the fact that you are moving and bobbing around, etc. You just do the best you can as Larry drives that boat on up the ditch. Fall would be a beautiful time to see this area too with the changing colors. The landscape would be even more varied. We were also amazed at

side seating with Ziggy so just ate a home cooked meal on the boat and enjoyed sitting outside for the first time in many weeks in the warm sun without bugs biting us. They must spray this huge condo complex for bugs is all I can figure out or maybe they don't like it here with all the concrete. It was a welcome relief for a change. Ziggy got a bath and basked in the warmth of the sun until he was dry.

It was so calm and peaceful in here with no one around. I took advantage of the peacefulness by staying up late offloading the pictures I took of Wiccamaw River yesterday. It was such a beautiful area, with such amazing lush



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nous geometric shapes of the condos. But, I'm amazed at the natural beauty here surrounding Myrtle Beach. Surprisingly there's lots of nature and wildlife meshed in with the, too numerous to count, repetitive looking condos and seasonal vacation places. Lots to see as we passed, one after the other, day fishing boats for hire and lots of funky restaurants. I was surprised to see the derelict looking casino ships still at the same docks, looking as grungy as ever, just like when we saw them even 10 years ago in the Nordhavn. Add to all this, some lush golf courses that have greens that run right up to the edge of the ICW, it does make for some interesting sights.

the numerous osprey nests in the old growth trees and the many mature cypress trees that had planted their wide trunk bases in the brackish waters.

It's a beautiful flat calm morning as we leave providing great reflections in the water. Too bad most of it is reflecting only the monoto-

We leave the congestion of the area and begin our turn out towards the ocean inlet. A couple day fishing boats come up on our stern quickly. I'm bracing for the wake but luckily they veer off into the other fork in the channel heading out the inlet to the ocean. We soon see



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only the top half of the boats as they race along as their bottom half is hidden by the marsh grasses. We turn to port and continue on up the ICW. Larry wants to make some good time today as we have some shallow areas we need to get through but I see some eagles, wood storks and egrets and beautiful scenery. I keep asking him to stop so I can take pictures. So far he's very patient and cooperates but I know he wants to get up the road. I try to go out on the back cockpit to take a picture. I know why the bugs weren't at Lighthouse Marina, that's because they were right here and act like they haven't had a decent meal in awhile. I do my best to swat them off between shots as this is just too darn pretty here. I see several eagles perched up on some very tall trees quite far away. They look amazing and I hope I can get a decent shot

with this telephoto and moving boat. I want to take more pictures but we really need to move on or face some trouble in the shallows later on today. Too bad we couldn't stay longer, as it's an absolutely beautiful inlet!



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As we cross the inlet and head up the ditch, there are some really nice homes on the left with the longest docks I've ever seen coming out across the marsh. We passed a little fisherman dragging a net and a crab pot guy dropping pots on the far side of the channel. The water is smooth as glass.

Then...we see the sheriff.. in a boat like our Protector boat that we have at home! He's facing us, stopped in the center of the channel, just like he's waiting for us with maybe a big fat ticket. Is he waiting for us we wonder? He looks so intimidating like a face off with us. Does he want us to stop? We don't know what to do. We slow down and proceed by him slowly and wave. He just stares at us. We slowly we pass him, he then he makes his move, and turns quickly around and follows us, right behind us, tail gating for miles! It was very intimidating. We weren't sure why and so kept our wake to a minimum not sure what the protocol was in this area. At one point Larry even hailed him on the radio to ask if something was wrong. Not

friendly. This was really slowing our schedule down and now we were getting concerned about those shallow areas later today that we wanted cross with more tide depth. It was weird having this guy on our tail. If I went out on the back to take a picture he was right there staring at us.

Eventually we just try to forget about him and enjoy our trip (but going very slow as not to make a wake). On the left are more beautiful



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an eye sore. To tell you the truth we are just not enjoying our trip with this weird guy following right behind us waiting for us to do something wrong. We finally come to another ocean inlet, a wide area with lots of boat congestion. I guess he found his prey for the day and suddenly raced right by us and after another boat, not stopping them, but stalking them like he did us. We managed to get by him eventually picking up speed along with some other boats so were more incognito and since he seemed to preoccupied with his new prey and finally were out of sight of him! Good riddens! He followed us for so many miles we began to wonder if he was out of his jurisdiction. I guess we'll never know.

houses and on the right off in the distance along the ocean side are the row upon row of identical looking houses by the ocean, really

The rest of the cruise to Southport was fortu-



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nately pretty uneventful. Larry made pretty good time trying to make up for what we lost. Lots of sights whizzed by like the great old shrimp boats and many old derelict boats that seemed to have found their fate, lying sideways in the marsh mud, left there and forgotten. We also luckily managed to scoot over all the shallow areas today even though we were behind schedule for the favorable tides.

Once we were within a few miles of Southport we see masses of white birds, egrets and ibis, flying together, dancing together across the sky like a giant ballet. It was breathtaking. We saw masses of egrets and pinkish ibis, and a handful of herons and wood storks who preferred the more laid back activity of wading and hunting in the muddy waters of the grasses. There is a reserve just south of Southport and the birds really have taken advantage of the area. So glad the community left it as a preserve for them.

Soon though it was time to head to port and

settle in for some rest in Southport. We love Southport, the town and like the marina. The docks are really nice, not as new as I remembered and a bit wobbly at our slip but still up-to-date and clean. We took advantage to wash



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the boat thoroughly. Sadly the little restaurant that we remembered in the old converted gas station across the road from the marina was closed. We ended up putting Ziggy in the buggy and headed down the waterfront towards town, past the fishing boats and stopped at the first place that looked like we could eat outside with a dog. No problem they said and we sat down and ordered some food. Sadly though, the bugs were also friendly, too friendly and we couldn't eat fast enough. We gulped what we ordered down and got the hell out of there, along with a whole new fresh batch of bites to itch for the next few days. These bugs are going to do us in for this trip this year.



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