

# KAYAK ANGLER

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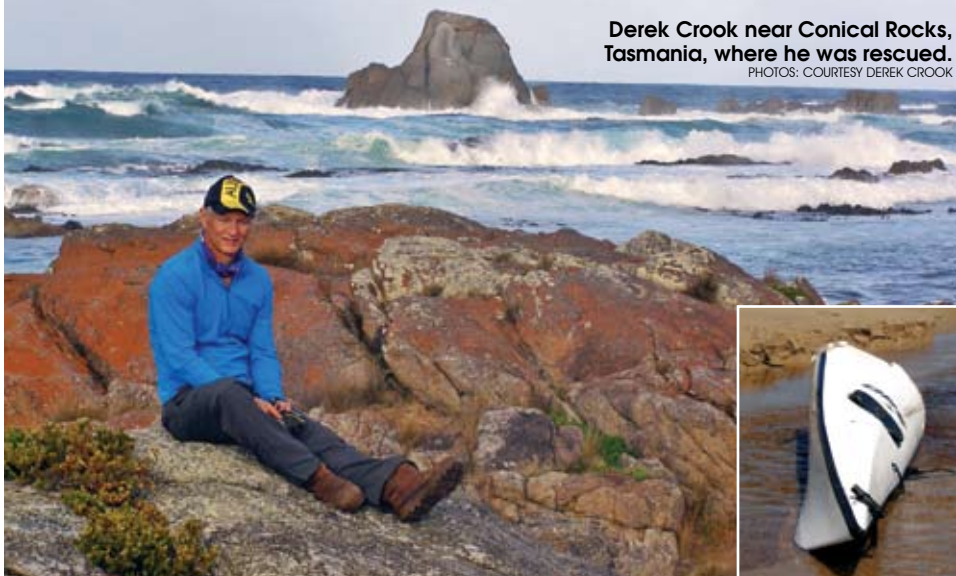


## Flotsam & Jetsam

NEWS FROM THE PADDLING WORLD

Derek Crook near Conical Rocks, Tasmania, where he was rescued.

PHOTOS: COURTESY DEREK CROOK



SEARCH & RESCUE BY TIM SHUFF

## A Devilish Day in Tasmania

RESCUE PUTS NEW SATELLITE TECHNOLOGY IN THE SPOTLIGHT

A MASSIVE WAVE upended his kayak and pounded it like a pile driver. The next moment, Derek Crook was upside down and out of his cockpit, tumbling underwater.

On the morning of January 29, 2008, Crook was two thirds into a solo circumnavigation of Tasmania, holed up in a cabin near the mouth of the Pieman River. He couldn't judge the sea conditions because a reef protected the shore, so he decided to paddle around the outside of the reef to see if the winds might be calm enough to continue down the coast.

Outside the reef he encountered a headwind so strong he knew paddling would be impossible. In fact, getting back to shore looked impossible—huge waves were breaking across the place where he'd just exited the reef. He struggled to find a path back to shore. And then the wave slammed him.

Crook, 51, of Nanaimo, B.C., has an unbeatable paddling resume. He has paddled around Moresby Island on the Queen Charlottes, paddled the whole Inside Passage, circumnavigated Vancouver Island and raced the Yukon River Quest three times. He is an expert at sea kayak self-rescue and he invented the paddle float counterbalance—an idea commercialized by North Water.

Floating in the Southern Sea was the time to draw on these skills. Problem was, his stern hatch cover had ripped off. With half his kayak flooded, he couldn't stay in or on his boat long enough to paddle any closer to shore, 200 metres away. After three hours of trying, he was drifting further out and becoming exhausted and hypothermic.

He pulled out his pen flares, shot one off, fumbled to load a second, dropped it in the water and realized he'd lost all his others. As a last resort, he pulled out his SPOT satellite messenger and pressed 911—something he now wishes he'd done much sooner.

It was a big day for the brand new SPOT. Crook was the first Canadian, and the first sea kayaker, to use the device's 911 function. While Crook clung to his boat, Globalstar's Texas-based dispatchers scrambled. They phoned his wife in Nanaimo, the Canadian Embassy in Australia, and the Australian Embassy (a roundabout protocol which has since been revised). SAR crews were on the scene an hour and a half later, at about the same time that two locals spotted Crook and braved the seas in a motorboat to pluck him from the water.

The next thing Crook remembers, he was being hooked up to an IV by paramedics and stretched into a helicopter. He spent a day and half in the hospital recovering from hypothermia. His kayak washed ashore in pieces 24 kilometres north and all his gear was lost.

Crook partly blames equipment failure. He says the rear hatch of his Australian-made kayak was only held closed by "a flimsy bungy" and if he'd had his own kayak, a Current Designs Extreme, he could have self-rescued. Of course, better judgment would have prevented the accident: "My rule is 'haste makes waste' and I broke that rule," he admits. But ultimately, he says his story speaks to the value of the satellite beacon as a must-have: "Things can happen that no matter how good you may think you are...you won't be able to self-rescue."