

Boating Tips

Float Planes

The weather couldn't have been better. We were on our way to our club raftout at Mildred Island on the Delta from our berth at Riverboat Marina at 10 a.m. and you could just smell "summer" in the air. (By the way, there is no difference between a "raftout" and a "raftup" that I'm aware of. If anyone can clarify please do.)

The temperature was forecast to be in the high 90s and the water was warm! A perfect scenario for a visit to Mildred, because you almost always get a nice breeze through there to cool you off on hot summer days. We were not disappointed!

After all of the ground tackle was secured for all boats, I jumped in the dink and motored around to meet some of the neighbors. I've found over the years that most (boating) folks enjoy meeting their neighbors for the weekend. So I motored on over to the "Orchard" at the SW corner of the island. There



Rich Sellers with his PA18 Super Cub.

were a 38-foot Bayliner just like ours and a totally cool Legacy motoryacht rafted up on his port side.

The guy in the motoryacht introduces himself as one Mr. Rich Sellers of Discovery Bay. After a nice talk he said he had to go and get something from his dock and would be back in



BY KEVIN O'LEARY

a few hours. Next thing I knew he landed his plane and pulled up to a mooring about 20 yards from his raftout. I'm thinking... This is really cool. I need to get to know this guy better...

Next thing I know I've got an appointment with Rich to fly the next day. Now mind you, I don't fly with anybody. I've seen this guy put this plane in places as small as the deck of an aircraft carrier. He's good... really good! Hey, my wife Susan, the "Admiral," said I could fly with him, so what does THAT tell you? (I know... I have no idea either.)

Anyway, the next day we motor over with a "camera" boat and drop me off at the plane. Rich is with us and explains how to get my 6'3" lanky butt into the back seat of the plane. I got into a tiff with the aircraft about this, but soon found myself very comfortable in the back seat. I put the headphones on and hit the noise suppression switch knowing that the (starboard) window would be open for the flight.

After going through Rich's pre-flight checklist, we took off for a one-hour flight around the Delta at an approximate 500-foot altitude. Along the way we did about six "touch and go" landings on various sloughs just for the fun of it.

We flew to Discovery Bay,



Rich and Kevo flying over the raftout.

Horseshoe Bend, Mandeville and Franks Tract before safely returning to land at Mildred. What a flight! It was an unusual and exciting way to “view” our weekend from above. (I highly recommend it!)

Aircraft Stats:

Wing Span:	36 ft.
Passengers:	2
Horsepower:	180
Weight:	2,000 lbs.
Top Speed:	125 mph
Cruising Speed:	100 mph
Fuel Capacity:	37 gal.
Range:	2.5 hours / 250 mi
Ceiling:	12,000 ft.

Now, some of you are probably asking what the heck all this talk about “float planes” has to do with boating tips and you in general. Well, the fact is that float planes have to comply with the same rules we boaters do while navigating on or near the water. The USCG makes reference to the food chain.

The food chain is slang for which vessels are “stand on” or “give way” to other vessels. But before getting into the food chain, let me explain “stand on” and “give way”:

In maritime law they don’t use the term “right of way.” Collisions at sea are rarely if ever completely the fault of one of the two parties involved. Right of way is a “black and white” term. You are either right or wrong.

In order for the courts to assign a percentage of responsibility for collisions to both parties they had to come up with terms that reflect this reality. Hence the terms “stand on” or “give way.”

In a perfect world, the “stand on” vessel maintains its course and speed. The “give way” vessel must not interfere with the course or speed of the “stand on” vessel. On the water there are no stop lights, yellow lines or stop signs, so the rules are very different than vehicular laws. But I digress...



Kevo getting situated in the back seat for the flight.

The food chain in this order:

- Vessel not under command.
- Vessel restricted in ability to maneuver.
- Vessel constrained by draft (international only).
- Vessel engaged in fishing.
- Sailing vessel.
- Power-driven vessel.
- Seaplane.

Kevo’s Tip:

Recreational powerboats are “give way” to all commercial and government powerboats regardless from which direction the vessel is approaching you. Most boaters are not familiar with the food chain, let alone that seaplanes are on it.

Seaplanes are at the bottom of the food chain. They cannot interfere with any nautical traffic; however, if you see one coming in for a landing in your path GET OUT OF THE WAY. Ha!

Be safe & happy boating!

As usual, feedback is appreciated. I can be reached at 925/890-8428 or kevo@yachtsmanmagazine.com. ☺

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