

Nine ISK members attended the 2009 Night Navigation event on Mille Lacs Lake. In a return to days gone by, we had reservations for sites one, 2 and 3. These sites are down on the flat below the main campground. They get a bit more breeze than the group campsite and are right next to a boat launch. The ISK screen tent served admirably as a rain fly on Friday night. The campground rules limit us to two small tents on a campsite, so those at campsite 1 pitched their tents under the bigtop. This was despite Rhett's advocacy for us to just sleep in the screen tent.

Saturday morning we learned about using, charts, topographic maps, and GPS maps for course plotting. We also used our handheld compasses to take bearings on landmarks. By noon we had plotted two alternative courses for the night navigation practice. In the afternoon we paddling a triangular course to get a sense of our speed as a group and to practice paddling as a group. Then we went over by the beach to practice rescues.

Sunset was at 7 PM. We had to wait until nautical twilight, 8 PM to launch. The moon was up, the sky was partly cloudy, so we did have some light to navigate by. The forecast 10 to 15 MPH winds did not arrive. One remarkable part of the night was the sight of lighted bobbers being cast from the fishing pier in the park. They looked like marker lights on the water and arcing sparks when cast. The water level was very low, it seemed like the sand spit off the south end of Lower Twin Island would never end.

There were some definite advantages to doing the night navigation in late September, no bugs was huge, being able to launch at 8 PM instead of 11 PM made a difference in how tired we were the next morning.

Overall the event was a great success, everyone had a good time and we got practice paddling under unusual conditions.

