

DID YOU SEE IT?



Following on from last month's safety tips, **Jim Harlow** explains the difference between looking and actually seeing

Keeping a good lookout is just the first step. The next step is understanding that your mind can play tricks on you and that there is a huge difference between looking and seeing.

Have a look at The Monkey Business Illusion – www.youtube.com/watch?v=IGQmdoK_ZfY

You may wonder how people can miss such obvious things. This isn't trickery; it's an example of psychological phenomena that explain why we can miss things that are changing right in front of us.

So what does this mean for rowers and what can catch us out?

First and foremost we need to know that we make mistakes. Human error is inevitable and so having coaches oversee outings, keeping to the circulation plan, etc is vital.

When we are focussing really hard on one task our brain has limited capacity to deal with other things. During a challenging piece of work in the boat you are at risk. Coaches and coxes need to be extra vigilant when their crews are really focussed on a task. We all know examples of crews rowing into trees.

During your high workload activity you only have time for a quick glance. But you cannot take everything in during that glance. So don't just glance in one direction but vary where you look. Most importantly, you need to glance in the direction of where you expect a hazard to be. If you are new to a stretch of water then ask experienced people where hazards are and be aware of local safety advice.

Make sure you have a long, hard lookout beforehand; have a coach looking out for you during the exercise and conduct it in an area with few hazards. If you are not supervised then have a really good look before you start.

Know your club's circulation plan that identifies where the hazards are because this will help you work out where best to conduct your outing.

Be aware that we are particularly vulnerable to slow moving objects.

Avoid sessions in limited visibility. Don't make it any harder for yourself!

Jim Harlow is an airline pilot whose speciality is training and, in particular, the analysis of the human factors underlying accidents and incidents with a view to integrating counter measures into crew training. He has seen many examples of problems caused by dedicated, professional people who get into trouble, despite their best efforts.



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