

CONNAYAK



C O N N E C T I C U T S E A K A Y A K E R S

June 2000

A Blustery Bluff Point Revisited

by Ed Milnes

It's 8:30 AM, Dust Devils are racing across the dirt parking lot, paper and other debris blowing like tumbleweed, and Sea Gulls flapping their wings in vain trying to make headway. Were we really going to paddle in this? It was listed as a "Novice" trip, but conditions seemed a little "advanced" for novices. I stood looking at the water, buffeted by a stiff 20+mph wind (gusting to an estimated 30 mph) and considered canceling the trip. A car pulled in, kayak on top and another right behind him. Too late to change the phone line message and cancel now. By 10:30 AM there were 17 paddlers dressed in drysuits and wetsuits with drytops chomping at the bit, ready to paddle. Thankfully, the conditions had improved... a little. Wind speed had dropped to 15 mph and it wasn't gusting quite so strongly. We left the launch with a pretty good tail wind gusting and pushing us along, sometimes helping but mostly requiring corrective strokes and leans - it made for a tiring opening to the day. By the time we reached Pine Island the conditions had improved even more. We grouped up at the island and discussed our strategy for the next portion of the trip - the paddle over to the bluffs. We decide to stay fairly close to shore in the lee of the dunes in case the wind picked up, otherwise it could mean a quick trip to the Dumplings (islands) and Fishers Island and a long paddle back - not exactly on the days itinerary. We made the bluffs in short order with no problems and with an uneventful beach landing we climbed the trail to the top of the cliffs for lunch and conversation. Sitting there in the sunshine in our drysuits and wet suits and paddle jackets we must have been quite a sight to the hikers and mountain bikers in their shorts and light jackets (it was probably mid 70's by then). After an inauspicious start, it turned out to be quite a beautiful morning.

With appetites sated, it was back to our boats! As we made our way back to the mouth of the harbor a couple of people left to return to the ramp. The rest of us headed past Avery Point and continued toward the beach at the mouth of the Thames River. The wind had shifted and picked up little again, driving up whitecaps and spreading out the group, (remember the "Our Larger Groups" newsletter article, Nov. 1999?) but we made it to the beach without incidence.

Once at the beach we had time for a few Eskimo Rolls and a little Sculling. Mind you, this was to cool off, not show off. Well...there were a few onlookers on the beach watching the spectacle, but that many kayaks always attracts attention. After the "Show" we started back for the ramp passing the beautiful buildings of the Avery Point Campus. It was an uneventful, though long paddle back. By the time we were back in the salt ponds by the Groton-New London Airport the group had spread out again as the long paddle took it's toll. Back at the ramp it was time for a few more "rolls" and the job of carrying the boat back to the car, (the boat sure felt heavier than it did when we left!). All told the trip lasted from 10:30am to about 3:15pm, a tiring but fulfilling day.

As I re-read this, I started thinking about what we had done right and wrong on this trip. The article didn't start out to be an object lesson but I can't help but analyze the trip. The first thing that comes to mind is the decision not to cancel; all things considered I probably should have cancelled the event. The NOAA predicted 15 to 20 mph winds with gusts to 30 blowing from the north. When I arrived, it was blowing at least 20 mph sustained if not more. This brings to mind an important point, (and I can't stress this enough). If there is any question as to whether or not we will paddle due to inclement weather it is very important to check the message phone center phone line for trip updates or cancellations before leaving for the launch ramp (203-603-4615). I try to update this by 7:00AM the morning of the launch. This is especially important if you are making a long drive. I recommend checking the phone center a day ahead just to make sure that there have been no changes in the scheduled event regardless of predicted weather. Trip organizers should call me at home before 7:00am so I can change the message on the message center.

One of the most difficult parts of the "job" of president is making the decision to cancel a paddle. If it is raining and windy with thunder and lightning, it's easy - cancel. On the other hand canceling trips due to predicted weather is a tough call. When I made the decision on Branford Harbor, it was thundering and raining (down pour) with prediction of rain for the rest of the morning (60 percent chance) and a return of strong thunder and lighting storms in the afternoon. The predicted storms and rain waited until much later in the day. We could have paddled. But due to the trip rating (novice) the predicted weather and the water temperature (water temps in the upper 40's) I felt the right

photo

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thing to do was play it safe and cancel.

Should we have cancelled Bluff Point (April 30th)? Probably. What we did right was, stop as we left the sheltered salt pond and discussed conditions and made sure everyone was comfortable paddling in them. We did this again as we passed the harbor entrance on our way to the beach at the mouth of the Thames River after lunch.

Remember that on any given day the conditions can vary and change dramatically from the predicted weather. Also remember that ultimately the decision to launch is your own and since the weather is often more unsettled and changeable in the spring, it calls for more care in how we dress and whether or not we paddle.

The trip ratings for events are what we expect the trip to be. If you are unsure if you should be paddling with us that day call the organizer and talk to him or her.

As I often tell myself if the weather is uncooperative "There will be plenty more days to paddle". Remember the Irish fisherman's saying "A man who is not afraid of the sea will soon be drowned for he is going out on a day when he shouldn't. But we do be afraid so we are only drowned now and again"..
- Ed Milnes

skinning the greenland Kayak

Two issues ago, we ran an article showing Greenland style skin boats with their frames completed and intended to follow up with the skinning of the kayaks in the following issue. As of this writing, Dean Bertoldi just started to unroll the fabric and I reluctantly plunged ahead with a few false starts and a few areas that had to be cut open and re-sewed.

"Frustrating" is the polite word I'll use rather than printing my true feelings. The skinning of the boat was my least favorite part of the project to say the least and deceptively time consuming.

I believe I made a mistake choosing a synthetic fabric rather than canvas. I wanted permanency but just created other problems in the process - one of which is wrinkles pulling from the sewing stitches since the polyester is thin although it's brutally tough. Polyester forces me to use more toxic and exotic products for the coating rather than the lenseed oil and paints that is traditionally used on canvas. I spoke to one person about coatings who said "the worse it is for you, the better it is".

Canvas soaks up the coatings whereas

coatings have to penetrate the surface the of the polyester. Polyester is also more revealing of discrepancies in the boat shape whereas canvas tends to bridge shapes more smoothly because of it's thicker and stiffer nature.

I averaged about an hour for each 1 1/2 feet of sewing (18 ft. boat = 12 hrs.) plus I haven't done the coaming details and the coating of the skin. Once again, it's hard to get information and there's lots of conflicting opinions and methods. I feel like I just aggravated the people I called and as the skinning progressed, I was not happy with the deck shape. Maybe Greenlanders are small people with tiny feet. My deck seems to be a little too high and boxy in it's shape but maybe I'm being too much of a perfectionist. Skinning the boat was a chore that beckoned me like a room that you're in the process of painting. I may surprise myself and really enjoy paddling it which might motivate me to persue building another skin boat to greater perfection.

Now that the skin is done, I do feel proud of all the sewing and I feel good that the skin is so tight. There is a crude beauty in it and I hope I can get my coating color to look like seal skin.

I'm going to violate everyone's opinion and use colored epoxy as the coating. I conducted test patches and the epoxy does maintain a stiff flexibility contrary to assumed expectations. Since it's not thick and it's impregnated into the fabric, it doesn't get brittle. The cured test patches feel like wet cardboard yet is tremendously strong. Many builders use *Hypolon* that's used on inflatables or exotic urethanes. Some of these chemicals require an outside air source mask to be used safely - something I don't want to have any part of. They're so dangerous that they can only be shipped in quart containers and sell for over \$100 a gallon.

In June I'll be attending the Skin Boat Gathering held on Cape Cod with hopes of learning a lot from other builders who attend. I also want to see more completed skin boats and the size of the paddlers they fit. I know this will be my novelty boat to paddle although I may be in for a very pleasant surprise.

As I worked on it, I thought of the original Eskimos who did these things with animal hides, crude home made tools - motivated by the determination to have access to their food source.

- Jay Babina

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY CLUB?

Ed Milnes and myself with the help of others usually attend our table at the store sales events and have spoken to a few clubs about ConnYak. We usually answer questions about boat choices, rental boats, and "can I paddle with ConnYak"? After discussing our pre-requisite first lesson and basic equipment, we usually ask what they're paddling and find ourself qualifying the type of boat that's acceptable on our paddles.

With recreational boats being very affordable and very available, we find ourselves having to discourage a lot of people who would like to join us on a paddle with rec. boats.

To these paddlers, anything that you use a double bladed paddle with is a kayak and I'm sure they feel a bit of prejudice from us. Where we draw the line is in the ability to keep up with the group. I've personally seen little rec. boats out in 3 ft breaking waves with the paddlers having a fun filled time. But as far as the ability to make progress and really maintain control in rougher conditions, the rec. boat is exactly what it's called - a "recreational boat". Many paddlers have asked us "how long does it have to be"? We arbitrarily tell them "over 15 ft".

As a kayaking club, I believe we have to maintain a sense of standards that allow us to engage in our sport with full understanding of the reality of what we're doing. We paddle in conditions that can change dramatically and we must keep our group in tact at all times. We must be able to rescue or help one another and be able to make progress in wind and waves. Our boats should be sea worthy and allow us to use paddling techniques that are the norm for sea kayaking including self rescue, assisted rescue and rolling. And, we should promote high standards of safety and skill in ourselves and within the club.

It's unfortunate that we can't be everything to everyone. However, our club has caused many paddlers to advance to stages of development and personal satisfaction that they would not have found on their own. We have also caused an awareness that beginning paddlers have learned from by exposure to more experienced and skilled paddlers including kayak choices. These attributes are what make us ConnYak and a valuable asset to our membership, which includes the owners of recreational boats. However, we are a sea kayaking club.
- Jay Babina

KAYAKER DIES IN CHESTER

Saturday, April 22 - Two kayakers while crossing an 8 ft. dam on the Pataconk River in Chester got into trouble when one paddler capsized and was pulled under by the rushing current. A nearby resident called 911 after hearing the commotion between the paddlers on the river. Although the man was underwater for 10 minutes, the Chester Fire Dept. who arrived, resuscitated him at the scene. According to the report by the DEP, the attending medic said that the cold water of 49 degrees made the resuscitation possible by slowing down body functions and allowed the man to survive for such a long period of time without air.

The man whose name was not released, was taken to Yale-New Haven Hospital where he was listed in serious condition for quite some time and later died.

- *New Haven Register*

We extend our deepest sympathy to his wife and children - ConnYak

We post these articles not just as news, but to enhance our needed awareness as paddlers.

tuesday Night paddlers

The Tues. Night Paddlers is a group of Recreational Boat paddlers who meet to paddle in the evenings in calm conditions. Paddles are in the Mystic/Groton area. Call Bill 860-535-4473 or Russ 860-621-0796 for Info. and a full schedule.

CONNAYK NEEDS A FEW GOOD PEOPLE

We could use help with the stamping and labeling of the newsletter. We meet in Branford on the third week of the month at 4:30 and it usually takes about an hour. Call Jay - 203-481-3221 or jbabina@snet.net

Aug. 19 & 20 - Derek Hutchinson

The lessons with Derek Hutchinson at a cost of \$60.00, can be reserved for \$30.00 per person per day with the balance due (\$30.00) before the day of the lesson. Remember class size is limited. Most likely, the lessons will be in Old Lyme at the Great Island boat launch (Smiths Neck) with the actual class taking place at Griswold Point or in the bay on August 19th and 20th. For more information call Ed Milnes at 203-488-0894. (checks made payable to ConnYak can be mailed to: ConnYak C/O Ed Milnes, 35 Hampton Park Branford, CT 06405



Connyak t's Are (Almost) back in stock

We ordered more t-shirts this year but went with the very fashionable grey rather than the conservative blue shirts of the past. We needed a change as well as encouragement for members to keep their ConnYak T-shirt collections up to date.

They will sell for a whopping \$5. to members and are the best "Made in Mexico - printed in the USA" shirts money can buy and of course, that's at our cost. Non-members will have to pay \$17. to own one of these - if they can get one. They're pre-shrink and will be at all the paddles and events.

T-SHIRTS FOR ARTICLES

Tired of reading articles by the same people? The newsletter needs articles by you. We like to think of the newsletter as the voice of it's paddlers sharing their experiences, insights and opinions with their fellow paddlers. Take advantage of it!

Where did you paddle last weekend and what happened?

You don't have to be an expert at anything to share your paddling experiences. To inspire your creative juices, we're giving T-shirts to newsletter contributors (articles). That's a generous \$5. for a few hours of your work. What a deal! ...and, you get read by over 650 readers, shaping the world of kayaking for all time.

.... p l e a s e ?

CONNAYK TRIP RATINGS

Any trip can change dramatically due to conditions - as in all sea kayaking.

(N) Novice: Novice paddlers are expected to be able to keep up with the leisurely group pace or will be turned back.

(I) Intermediate: Fully capable of self rescue, confident paddling stroke and braces.

(A) Advanced: A dependable roll, able to rescue others, strong, experienced paddler.

Note: All paddlers are responsible for their own safety, including dressing for immersion. You must wear a CG approved PFD and a spray skirt. The boat and equipment must meet CG requirements, including an appropriate signaling device. Beginners must have taken a basic course and be proficient in performing a wet exit, paddle float re-entry and carry a pump. Kayaks without bulkheads should have floatation installed. (always carry extra dry clothes, food and water) Paddlers are expected to show a sense of awareness as far as staying with the group.



JUNE TRIPS

NARRANANSETT BAY - (I)

SATURDAY, JUNE 10

We will explore the west passage of Narragansett Bay below the Jamestown Bridge, with a lunch stop on either Dutch Island or Conanicut Island, depending on conditions. Launch will be from URI Bay Campus in Narragansett. **In the water promptly at 10:30.**

DIRECTIONS - From New Haven, take Rt 95 to RI exit 3 (Route 138). Follow Rt 138 east to the intersection with Rt 1. Go straight across Rt 1, and follow road to Rt 1A. Go straight across again, and boat launch is at end of road.

From Hartford, take Rt 2 east to Rt 395 North. Take exit 85 (Rt 138), follow signs to Rt 138 east. Follow Rt 138 east to intersection with Rt 1, and then as above.

Rain and/or small craft advisories postpone

Info: Wayne Smith (860) 875-0642 or email: wsmith16@snet.net
In the water by 10:30 a.m. (pack a lunch)

BRANFORD HARBOR (N)

SATURDAY, JUNE 10TH

Second Try - Out the harbor around to Granite Bay.

DIRECTIONS - I-95 to exit 54-Branford. South to Rt 1. Cross Rt 1 - through the light to the stop sign (library on the left). Take a Rt. proceed to the light. Left on Monroe St. Thru stop sign, over RR tracks (bridge) to next stop sign. Left on Harbor to stop sign. Left on Goodsell Point Rd. Launch site is on the left - 200 yards.

In the water by 10:30 a.m. (pack a lunch)

CONNECTICUT RIVER - (N)

Mattabessett River into wildlife refuge

SATURDAY, JUNE 17

We will paddle a ways up the Ct River and enter the Mattabessett River into the wildlife refuge for our lunch stop. This should be a calm water, sightseeing paddle. **In the water promptly at 10:30.**

DIRECTIONS - From Rt. 9 south: Bow St exit (12). left on Bow Lane, bear rt. onto Saybrook Rd. Continue straight (name changes several times) app. 1 mile, right on Union St at YMCA, pass under Rt. 9, left on Harbor Dr.

From Rt 9 north: DeKoven Dr exit (14). Left on DeKoven Dr., left on Union St (2 blocks) at Middletown Glass, pass under Rt. 9, left on Harbor Drive. or call Nora 860-342-1605.

Check the bulletin board for other impromptu trips listed by members - www.connyak.org



CLASSIFIED

Wilderness Systems Alto with rudder. Yellow Skirt and floatation bags. \$650/obo. Call (203) 457-9983.

Kayook plus with rudder. 8 months old, like new, \$900.00. 860-526-1410, 860-663-2069

Ocean Kayak Frenzy with backrest-1 year old \$325 and Ocean Kayak Yak-Board \$250. 203-235-6721 after 6

Current Designs Slipstream 16' X 22", Glass, one year old. Day hatch, skeg -spray skirt. \$2,000. Men's XL Gore-Tex drytop, one year old, \$250. Call 203-256-1913

Diriego, 17.5' Sea Kayak, hand made in Blue Hill Maine. Kevlar/Fiberglass w/wood trim & rudder. Like new condition, \$1,200.00 203-734-4452 or kck@ashcreek.net

Recreational Rowing Skull - 17' x 22" hand-crafted okume marine mahogany only 43 lbs, mahogany sliding seat, basswood skulls - \$1,300 (860) 873-3854.

Nautraid One Expedition (foldable) 15'3" red & black \$1800. or best offer. 860-521-6070

Arctic Hawk - Wilderness Systems, Kevlar- 38 lbs., tan w/green trim, mahogany inlay. \$1950. 860-450-1026

1999 Necky Looksha Sport, 14' 4" X 22.5" beam, poly, teal (green) rudder, like new, good novice or intermediate boat, \$850, Paul 860-669-8125

Wanted: Rack for a '96 4-door Jetta 1-860-3550.

Mariner II, 18' x 22" aqua over white glass, good condition \$1000 -Norwalk area - 203-852-8980.

Necky Santa Cruz, bulkheads, spray skirt, very stable, paid \$700. sell for \$495. 860-827-1111

Sealution, Wilderness System-fiberglass, orange on top with fixed compass - \$1200 Please call 860-693-0211.

NRS Black Rock dry pants, mens large. Never used. \$85. Call (860) 653-5899.

KLEPPER Aerius I folding Sea Kayak. Expedition hull, rudder. \$2400. 212-245-0025 or ABirdson@aol.com

Riot Sledge Hammer Surf Kayak- yellow Fern Usen 860-529-4612, or fernusen@aol.com

Wold Ski Custom Terminator, Surf Kayak, Kevlar, 29 lbs, green over yellow, will do fantastic things in the waves. \$500 W (860) 441-8416 H (860) 535-8416

Wanted- used Pungo (203) 481-1881

Extreme - new, Green & White, Fbg, Rudder, Compass, \$2300, Futura II - Excellent, White, Fbg, sit-on-top, fast, highly rated, \$950, 914 698 8354

16 1/2' Kevlar Menphremagog OC 1-34#. Excellent condition \$500. Call 860-666-2571

Kokatat nylon drysuit - women's \$150 203-248-6051 or hs15@connix.com

Necky Arluk 1.9 kevlar 17'x22" 45lbs new in 1996 ex. condition. call 203 656-0946. mmarkb@juno.com

Wilderness Systems Pamlico double-2 person \$500. Jim 203- 345-0090

Looksha Sport, rudder, skirt, compass. Rotomolded, gray. \$800 firm. Please call John 537-6679.

Please contact the Newsletter when items are sold.

CONNYPAK MESSAGE SYSTEM (203) 603-4615

Information regarding events, trip schedule updates, cancellations, changes etc. will be heard at this number.

PHOTOS WANTED

Photos for the web site needed. Send to Bobby Curtis, PO Box 108, Woodbury, CT 06798 Indicate if you if you want the photos returned wit a return address and they will be returned. All photos may or may not be used.

Send newsletter articles or classifieds to: Jay Babina e-mail: jbabina@snet.net 7 Jeffrey Lane, N. Branford, CT 06471 203-481-3221 Fax 203-481-1136

TO JOIN CONNYAK...

ConnYak is a non profit club that is open to all paddlers interested in sea kayaking from any location. ConnYak annual membership fee is \$15. Send inquiries to: Ed Milnes 35 Hampton Park, Branford, CT 06405

E-MAIL: CONNYAK@CONNYAK.ORG

WEBSITE / BULLETIN BOARD: WWW.CONNYAK.ORG



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