

## KAYAK *LEANED* TURNS

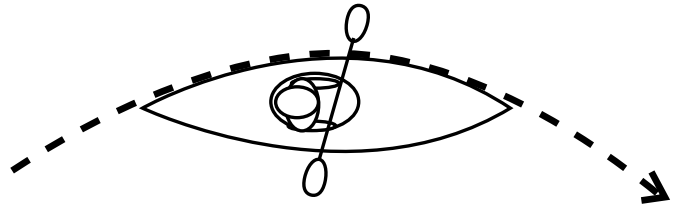
by Jay Babina

When you walk down a sidewalk and navigate your way around a puddle and get back on course, you're actually doing the same thing you do in a kayak - you're correcting. As subtle as it seems, you're able to steer your body with gentle and almost subconscious moves. In the kayak we also correct our course with constant subtle leans of the hull. Most beginners don't have an understanding of how boat leaning works and usually have not developed it into a subconscious correcting mechanism. Even paddlers who have been paddling for years still sometimes wait until they're falling far off course or colliding into another paddler to finally make some kind of course correction. It's usually a plowing stern rudder which halts their forward progress and angles the kayak one way or another. It's not only extreme and crude but totally inefficient and unnecessary.

Basically, you want to train yourself to correct your course with the gentle leaning of the hull. It's the most efficient, easy to do method, requires the least amount of energy and doesn't stop your forward motion. As sea kayakers we're forced to constantly correct since there's always small currents, tidal movement and some wind even on the calmest of days. Most experienced kayakers do it subconsciously and are able to paddle along with-

out the use of rudders or extreme paddle moves. You certainly can enhance your correcting moves with paddle sweeps and rudders but for the most part, the leaning of the hull is an effective steering device that's easy to learn yet often misunderstood.

Part of this misunderstanding is from the fact that books and most instruction often refer to "raising you knee" to tilt the boat. First of all: You can't tilt your boat by raising your knee. Try it! Sit there in you kayak and raise your knee as hard as you can. You can't budge the kayak with your knee. It's the pelvis that tilts the kayak. In doing so, the knee goes up and accentuates the whole process and locks your body into the kayak. This confusion of words has left many paddlers not only frustrated but defeated with the entire process. I came to this realization when I tried to teach a woman to raise her knee to tilt the boat. It was all wrong and only confused her and set her back.

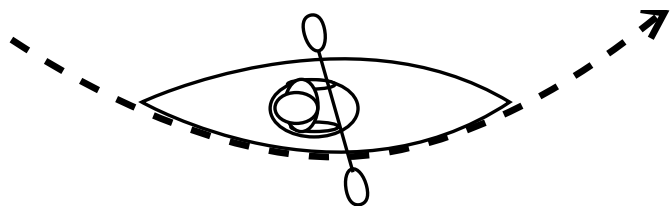


If you look at the drawing above, the concept of leaning and steering should start to become clear. If the paddler leans the boat towards the left, the left edge of the kayak digs into the water and causes the kayak to travel along the curved path that is actually the left side of the kayak. The kayak starts to turn to the right. As it's leaned to the left, the raised right side actually gives up or loses some of its "hold" or "grip" on the water which also aids in the turning process.

photo - Jim Mathews



With the water level up over 7 feet, we paddled over picnic tables for our lunch stop along the CT River in Hartford.



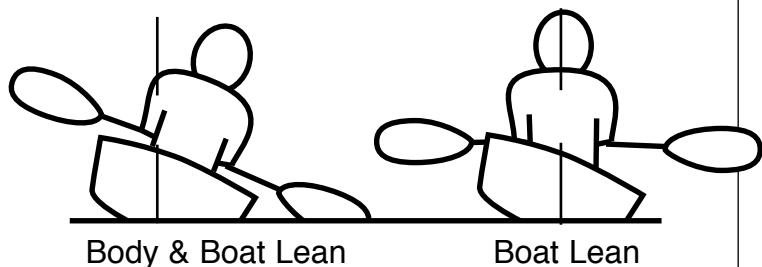
And... if the kayaker leans to the right, as above, the boat starts to go to the left.

Just like in my drawing, short wide kayaks respond more to leans than long narrow kayaks since the curve that digs into the water or becomes the traveling path is more extreme on the short wide kayak. Hard chine kayaks or kayaks with a strong angle on the bottom sides will correct or steer stronger with leans than totally round smooth ones. However we're only looking for subtle course correcting here and nothing extreme - so, all kayaks will respond to course correcting with even the gentlest of leaning, and this is what you're trying to achieve.

Give it a try! As you paddle along, gently lean you boat to one side and another and watch the kayak change course toward the opposite side of the lean. The whole idea of this kind of course correcting is something that is constantly going on while you paddle. With these subtle moves, you can effortlessly paddle along and control you boat with no energy expended and eventually it will become a subconscious act.

### BOAT TILTING BODY LANGUAGE

There's really no need to get overly analytical about leaning your kayak with all that confusing "knee lifting" stuff. Your body will actually do it correctly on it's own. As a paddler, you know if you lean too far one way or another, you may capsize. The ideal way to lean your boat is to do it with your hips and not tilt your body too far to the right or left, keeping your head centered over the kayak.



As you tilt the kayak, your hips will go up on one side forcing your knee up on the same side which will not only add to the effectiveness of the total body movement but will also stabilize your body position by locking it under the deck. Your knee or thighs pressing into the bracing actually allows your hips to do the work and keeps you locked in for a more effective use of all your muscles in unison. Here's truly a time when having a nice fit in your boat with good thigh braces make leaning the boat an effortless motion. In actuality, your lean will be a bit of a combination between a strict boat lean and a

bit of body lean as well. When I'm tired or lazy, I often lean my body slightly to correct whereas a strict boat lean with your body centered over the kayak takes more torso muscle and energy. If I need more correction, I'll tilt the kayak more extremely with my torso keeping my head centered over the center line of the kayak as shown in the drawing. You can tilt the kayak to extremes this way and never have fear of going over. Once you learn to roll and have confidence in your bracing, the whole idea of steering with these methods will become a less fearful event. If you tilt as you use a paddle stroke on the same side of the lean, it feels very secure because the paddle stroke acts as a brace. Usually a bit of a lean during one stroke is all that's needed to correct your course. You'll also develop an understanding of how much secondary stability your kayak has or how far it can be leaned without going over. However, for the normal correction that's needed in everyday paddling, the slightest boat lean will do the job. Once you learn to adapt this into your paddling style, you're actually be making minute corrections rather than waiting for a drastic correction to be needed where you may be forced to help it along with a sweep stroke or a rudder.

I can't overemphasize how little boat tilt is needed for course correction. You obviously don't see kayaks constantly tilting one way and another during a paddle. But what you may notice is that some paddlers have no trouble going where they want with no apparent effort. This is the freedom that you're trying for. It's the freedom to correct without even thinking about your paddle stroke and putting out no extra energy in the process. It's a method that's always in use and you'll adapt it to the subtle course corrections you need as you paddle along. You'll see that this effortless course correction mechanism has been there all along only waiting for you to discover it and use it!



### If it's Connyak's First Trip of the Season There's going to be strong winds

by Jim Mathews

What are the odds that if the first trip of the season is moved inland to sheltered waters that the wild winds of the past two years will follow us and create a minor bit of havoc once again. The odds are pretty good!

Sixteen club paddlers from all over the state converged in Hartford to launch for what was billed as our first novice trip under the new guidelines indicating level of difficulty. The guidelines warn that conditions can vary because of weather conditions and they definitely did. For starters, the Connecticut River was well above flood stage in Hartford which meant that the launch could not be done from the dock under the Charter Oak bridge. So, the alternative was to launch from the parking lot which meant that for some it was over the sidewalk, for others

over a paved path or a grassy slope. As we paddled out into the river, we had to negotiate around some of the trees which were now planted in water some 20 to thirty feet from the existing shoreline. Once launched, the flood stage of the river revealed some wild whirl pools and eddy currents which sent one paddler over into the river. Quickly rescued, the group moved on up stream and very quickly discovered that making headway in the strong southbound current in the center of the river was quite difficult or almost impossible while along the shore line it was quite easy. We arrived at the North Meadows Park for lunch and found that we had to paddle our way over submerged picnic tables, parking lots, through playground equipment and sign posts to find the grassy knoll which was a perfect place to land.

Once back on the water, we found the wind was howling and we continued upstream to the railway bridge where we turned around to find a river with strong down stream current and strong upstream wind setting up a massive set of waves easily resembling a whitewater river. In fact there were some places the waves may have been three feet tall and other areas had standing waves which resembled little walls that had to be punched through to get by. The wind was wild, setting up the situation for another to flip over.

It turned out to be a wonderful if not challenging day and gave everybody a chance to practice their skills including, setting of ferries, bracing and discovering the effects of currents and winds. Everyone actually had a great time riding the waves on the free ride back with the current.

It points out that our grading system for trips could be more specific in terms of specifying what the conditions might be and what the effects of those conditions might have on the

## KAYAK DEMO DAY

### North Cove Outfitters

Sat. & Sun. May 1st & 2nd.  
Held at Camp Hazen in Chester  
Call for further info. 860-388-6585

## RESCUE PRACTICE / INSTRUCTION

Sunday, May 21 - Great Island - Old Lyme

Open to all ConnYak members. An informal practice / instruction session led by Jeff Dickson. Probably Great Island. If interested, please contact Jeff by phone - 860/693-8793 - fairly cold though not frigid water is expected. Further information will also be posted on the bulletin board at [www.connyak.org](http://www.connyak.org). Non-participant paddlers are also welcome to watch.

## tuesday Night paddlers

The Tues. Night Paddlers is a group of Recreational Boat paddlers who meet to paddle in the evenings in calm conditions. May has four paddles in the Mystic Area. Call Bill 860-535-4473 or Russ 860-621-0796 for Info and a full schedule.

## Derek is Coming!

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. At this time we are planning on holding the lessons 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. You must provide your own kayak (no rec. kayaks, kleppers etc.) and equipment, Derek will provide the expertise. 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)

## CONNYPAC 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 flotation 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.



## UPCOMING TRIPS / EVENTS

May - the water is still ice cold for a swim.

### BRANFORD HARBOR (N)

SATURDAY, MAY 13TH

Can be an exciting paddle if the wind is up like last year. Out the harbor around to Granite Bay. If the wind is excessive we go up river.

**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)**

### SELDON ISLAND CAMP & PADDLE

Sat. & Sun. May 20 & 21 - CT River

Non campers will be paddling along for a lunch paddle and later returning to the launch area.

This is island camping ...so you must bring your water. Call to reserve a camp site if you're planning to camp - 860-278-7440.

**Directions:** Exit 7 off of Route 9. At the end of the mile long exit ramp turn left on to Route 154. 1/2 mile turn rt. on to route 82. Go over the bridge (CT River) - Airport and Goodspeed is on the right. Launch is behind the Goodspeed.

**In the water by 10:00 a.m. (pack a lunch)**

### June

3 - 5 Sat. - Mon. Camping & Day

Trippers Kennebec, Maine Area - dry or wet suit

Clark Bowlen 860.623.6587

cbowlen@snet.net- intermediate,

10 Sat. Narragansett Bay wsmith16@snet.net (I)

17 Sat. - CT River Harbor Park (N)

Mattabessett River into wildlife refuge

### July

12 - 15 Wed. - Sat. Tall Ships

New London - We'll do a trip.

23 Sunday - Antique Boat Parade

Mystic (N)

30 Sunday Annual ConnYak Picnic

Brodie Park, West Hill Pond (--N)

### August

12 Rescue Instruction Day - Essex -(N)

19, 20 Sat., Sun. Derek Hutchinson

On-the-water classes Great Island - Lyme

## CONNYPAC MESSAGE SYSTEM (203) 603-4615

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



# CLASSIFIED

Wilderness Systems Alto with rudder. Yellow. 2 years old, excellent condition. Includes spray 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

Wilderness Systems Pamlico: 14'9", red. Double or single seat kayak, skirt. \$600. 860-684-6168 or lynes@uconnvm.uconn.edu

Aqueterra Sea Lion, granite, 2 hatches, rudder. 2 yr old. Mint condition. Paid \$1,500 will sell for \$850.00 Call 203 847 2090.

Ocean Kayak Frenzy with backrest-1 year old-new \$450-sell \$325 and Ocean Kayak Yak-Board with backrest-new \$350-sell \$250. 203-235-6721 after 6

Current Designs Slipstream 16' X 22", Glass, one year old. Day hatch, skeg. Green over white. Includes neoprene 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

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.

Feathercraft K1 Expedition Single (foldable kayak) 15'11"x25", sacrifice \$3000.00. 203-772-3174.

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

Riot Sledge Hammer Surf Kayak- yellow -great condition. Carve, surf and spin with ease also good for river. 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, Caribou/S - Kevlar, all-white, almost new, Compass, Skeg, \$2600, Futura II - Excellent, White, Fbg, sit-on-top, fast, highly rated, \$950, 914 698 8354

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

Wilderness Systems Sealution - poly - red, with rudder, spray skirt, cockpit cover 2 years old, excel. \$800.00 obo. Call 203-263-2548 wanthy@wtco.net.

Please contact the Newsletter when items are sold.

## KAYAK SKILLS & ROLLING

Wallingford Sheehan High School  
All classes 12:00 - 4:00

**Skills:** May 13 **Safety & Rescue:** May 14 & 21

**Rolling:** May 20

**Urban Eskimo Kayaking - Mike Falconeri**

Mike - 203-284-9212 or Nancy- 860-228-0105

## 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 with 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**



c/o Ed Milnes  
35 Hampton Park  
Branford, CT 06405