

# CONNAYAK

CONNECTICUT SEA KAYAKERS

January 2001

## Paddling Northern British Columbia

Maite Barainca

The double waited on the rocky beach. Wide, long. Big. We had just flown in by seaplane from Prince Rupert, British Columbia to a remote island to the south. We were looking forward to a week of wilderness kayak camping but we were a bit anxious about paddling a double. After all, we're used to British singles and their narrow nimble ways. Bob and I had never paddled a double. I had been practicing by hitting him on the back of the head with a paddle at home.

Prince Rupert is a 45-minute flight north of Vancouver and an interesting experience in itself. The airport is on an otherwise undeveloped island and consists of a short paved runway and a small building. To get to town which is on a different island one must take the ferry. You begin to get the sense of remoteness in Prince Rupert - from town, the nearby shores look uninhabited, eagles swoop down and when the traffic dies down there isn't much background noise.

A couple of years ago we had rented kayaks and planned our own camping trip in Desolation Sound in B.C. This time, due to the remote location and difficulty getting our own gear to the area, we had decided to do a trip with an outfitter, Northern Lights Expeditions. So far they had impressed us with extensive written materials on what to bring, how to pack, and on the fauna and flora of the area. They also had provided us with Kokatat rain pants, tents and jacket and nylon dry bags. They seemed (and turned out to be) a first-rate operation.

But there was the double. No freedom to break away and explore, to lean the boat,

to move it with your hips.

There were 13 people on the trip plus three guides. While the guides were Canadian, with the exception of a man from Calgary, the "clients" were all American. A few had never paddled before and other than the two of us and a young whitewater paddler from Montana, none had paddled singles. They ranged from mid-20s to several people in their mid-60s.

The wind often howls in this area and the weather can change rapidly. At one camp, the temperature was 20 degrees warmer on the beach away from the wind. People would come bundled up in jackets from the windy beach and start shedding clothes. Two weeks earlier it had rained sideways for six days and the clients on that trip had grown restless and miserable. The guides hinted at taking some verbal abuse.

On our second day, it was decided that because of the possibility of strong winds the next day, we would move camp that night. It's not easy moving a large group, especially with many people inexperienced in loading a kayak. By the time everyone had taken down their tents (very nice 3-season ones by Mountain Hardware), it was almost 9:00 PM. The sun set around 10:00 PM so we had some daylight left. Once in the water, everyone seemed elated. Paddling at night was a different experience - especially here where there were no lights, no sounds, no other boats anywhere. We were one-half of the way to our destination, now in twilight, when behind us one of the guides, Mike, yelled, "Orca, Orca!" For a moment I thought he was joking. We were not ex-

pecting to see Orcas here. For that people go to the Inside Passage. But then I saw a fin in the distance. Then we saw 2 more fins, near the larger one. We watched them move on the surface, blowing. After a moment, we paddled towards them. But they soon submerged and were gone.

It was wonderful. An unexpected encounter in the dark. The lead guide, Scottie, thought they were transients - nonresident whales that have very different behavioral characteristics from the resident ones. We continued paddling to our next camp and set up the unfamiliar tent in the dark. I hit Bob on the back of the head with the tent poles. There was a pattern here.

Over the next days, Bob and I each got to paddle in one of the two singles and got used to the double. We got into the rhythm of being in the same boat. (But we won't be running out to buy one.) We saw eagles everywhere. Perhaps because of the eagles, the only other birds in abundance are ravens and loons. There are very few seagulls. We also saw seals, a rather large sea lion, river otters, Stellar jays, blue herons and Sandhill cranes.

Northern Lights prides itself on its excellent food and it was very good. However, for me it detracted from the wilderness experience. Too much time and effort centered around food. The guides spent many hours each day preparing it and it somehow became too big a part of the trip. Though certain people, especially those who had been on previous N.L. trips, seemed to love this aspect of the adventure and brought much wine along to complement the meals.

Overall, it was a good trip. The guides excellent, the people friendly. The men from two of the older couples hit it off right away and you could sense that a long-term friendship might be in the mak-

*continued*



Remember that glorious, 90 degree-day paddle at Napatree Point! Two more months and we're out of the woods. Photo: Tom Maziarz

ing. We paddled a lot, we heard the wings of birds over our tent and one night, we saw ribbons of white lights in the sky - the aurora borealis.

But going on a trip with an outfitter presents a dilemma. The group is bigger than one I would choose. Many people go on these trips who would never otherwise be in the wilderness. Personally I don't think that's a good thing. Instead of interacting and depending on others to plan an enjoyable and safe trip, you depend on the paid leaders. You cannot feel as truly connected to the environment when you are not making the decisions, deciding whether the winds and tides will allow a safe paddle. Outfitters separate you from the planning, the use of judgment, and the interdependence among the members of the trip. It is those things which make a true adventure.

## CONNYPAK OFFICERS 2001

The officers of ConnYak will continue with their services for 2001.

ConnYak officers are:

Ed Milnes - *President*

Phil Warner - *Vice President*

Dick Gamble - *Treasurer*

Jay Babina - *Secretary / Newsletter*

John Sweeton - *ConnYak Library*

ConnYak has every book and video on Kayaking and related outdoor topics in our Library for your borrowing - Free. You can pick them up at meetings or paddles. If you contact John in advance, he'll bring the book along to the next event he's attending. Normally, they're all there at meetings. Getting them back to the club is your responsibility and they should be returned in 1 month. You can bring them back or mail them back. The U.S. Postal service has a category called "Book Rate" which is very cheap - like a dollar for a video etc. Just ask for "Book Rate" when you bring it to the Post Office, however returning a video is a good excuse for attending a meeting or paddle. If John's not there, one of the officers will take it and network it back to the library.

Back in circulation is "Nanook of the North" a fantastic documentary donated by John Sweeton which chronicles the unbelievable life of the Eskimo. It's the first documentary ever made and an official resident in the Smithsonian Institute.

You can donate any book or video to the Library on a temporary basis and reclaim it for your bookshelf whenever you want.

Lost (or forgotten) is the book "Kayakcraft" by Ted Moores which is probably sitting in a pile on someone's shelf. If anyone has it please contact Jay.



## "PADDLING WITH THE BEST"

### 2 days with Derek

By Mel Tulin

"It's the little things in paddling that really count," said Derek Hutchinson as he transformed his kayaking students from frogs into princes and princesses. What a weekend it was! The weather was perfect - sunny, breezy, the temperature at the Pataconk Reservoir matched the temperature of the water which hovered around 74 degrees - just warm enough if you happened to forget one of the little things!

It was ConnYak's Derek Hutchinson Clinic in late summer and he was in rare form, which he always is - an incredibly knowledgeable and brilliant advisor as well as an astute critic that can pick up on any mistake.

Derek is considered the father of modern Sea Kayaking. He's the author of 7 books, crossed the North Sea by kayak, founder and head coach of the British Canoe Union, a notable kayak designer and introduced many of the rescue and safety techniques used in kayaking today.

"Mel, look what you're doing!" was uttered more than a few times during the weekend. "That's a slice! The deck is made for your map and nothing more. Keep your arm straight! Didn't we agree on how to hold our paddle for this stroke?" We had the opportunity and privilege of spending two days of kayaking lessons with Derek Hutchinson and it was well worth it! It was a weekend I will never forget!

Derek carefully guided us from using crude paddling strokes early in the morning hours to performing skilled water ballet techniques by late in the afternoon. The wind was blowing strong and frequently changing direction but Derek always managed to find the perfect calm spot on the reservoir. Each of Derek's instructions had a memorable picture associated with it. "Hold your paddle like a fairy holds her wand, not how a witch holds her broomstick! Be sure to balance that paddle on that imaginary can of coke on your bow! Make sure that your arm is straight and look back at your paddle! I can't hear that depth charge!" These were some of his calls throughout the day. Did you know that "your index finger is the same size as your nostril? But, when you do the high brace it is your thumb that should fit right in there? While doing a forward stroke, hold your paddle 9 inches from your ear when you begin."

We started the day with a lesson on land about paddles and how to hold them correctly. Even though we had different skill levels, one thing we all had in common was our love of the water and kayaking.

Derek began his magic by leading his troops across the lake - him paddling backwards faster than we could paddle forward. Later in the morning we would try our luck at paddling correctly back-

wards with our new-found skills. "Did you know that Captain Bligh was flogged because he could not keep the wake straight on his ship?" There would be many more student "floggings" before our lessons were over. Derek's teaching days were always intertwined with little stories and jokes from his past experiences. He readily admitted that no skill learned today was going to be perfected today. Paddling backwards was not an easy task, but Derek could do it with speed and accuracy. Practice certainly makes perfect, so we all knew what we had to do.

By the end of the morning, we had all attempted using our bodies, knees, and paddles to maneuver our kayaks. Each stroke that we learned was broken down into individual steps, each building upon each other. We learned how to raft together and take turns standing on the decks of our kayaks. Most of us were a bit timid at first, but responded with much enthusiasm as we finished the task. We learned how to get perpendicular to our partners, trying to tip our kayaks as far over as we could, before taking the real plunge. It really helped to see how far we could test ourselves. Many of us made significant improvements during the morning.

We had a nice leisure lunch on the beach with Derek showing us how to eat "Ms. Pim's" cookies in just one bite, breaking down the steps just as he taught us how to kayak! He graced us with more stories, tips, suggestions, and opinions for us to digest along with our food and cookies.

The afternoon was saved for practicing our water ballet techniques in a sheltered cove across the reservoir. As we began using our newly acquired skills, I started to realize that it's not the destination that's important, but the way you get there that really counts. We practiced sweeps and sculling, high braces and low braces, forward and backward extended paddle turns, draw strikes, telemark turns and more. When an unfortunate soul decided to take an unexpected dip, Derek was there, before I even heard a splash, to guide us through a new rescue procedure each time. We learned the t-rescue, using one other kayak and the h-rescue, which uses two other kayaks. "That was beautiful! Great job! Look at that!" were just some of the calls from our renowned teacher as we began to put it all together and actually look skilled! "And to think I knew you when...!" indicated that we actually did have some talent.

But the coup de grace was when a man in a red canoe paddled up to this little island in the middle of the lake and sat on a picnic table, looking enthralled with our class and Derek. He pulled out his camera and started snapping away. We found out later that he is an amateur photographer who takes pictures as a hobby. So, Derek decided to "strut his stuff" and show off for the camera. It was like watching a wa-

ter ballet show. One of his favorite strokes is a high brace forward turn with his paddle behind his head. As he neared the photographer, he tipped his hat in salute. It was the perfect ending to a perfect day. So, Derek, we would all like to tip our hats to you for two wonderful days of lessons where you carefully and caringly transformed us from frogs on land to princes and princesses in the water. It was a weekend that I will remember forever.

After the lessons, we were privileged to extend our time with Derek by joining him at Lenny and Joe's in Westbrook for a fried clam dinner. He reminisced about more of his tales and talked in great detail about his first book that he hand-wrote. While his daughter posed to hold each correct paddling stroke, he sketched all of his own pictures for the book. And now, 25 years later, the same instructional techniques and style still remain the same.

Just to sit with Derek and listen to his extraordinary stories was so incredible! As we were driving home later that night, my husband, with a big grin on his face, looked at me and said, "Paddling with the best.....it just doesn't get much better!" After searching the Internet and being successful, two original copies of Derek's book, *Sea Canoeing*, published in 1976, arrived from Edinburgh, Scotland. Next time we see Derek, we have the perfect book for him to autograph for both of us!



"and he was in rare form"

*If we have the interest, we could easily get Derek back next year.*  
- ConnYak

## Freezing Aquaseal

At the last meeting, we demonstrated replacing a drysuit seal using Aquaseal as the adhesive. Aquaseal is one of those sealants that's guaranteed to harden in the tube the next time you want to use it no matter how carefully you replace the cap. I think, once oxygen enters the molecules, it spreads through the tube just like it does with a tube of household caulk.

However, we can outsmart the marketers. Freezing Aquaseal stops the hardening action, and with a quick nuke in the microwave, or a soak in hot water, you're back in business.

Now if we could only find a kayaking store that actually has it in stock along with drysuit seals. - JB

## A Winter Project for Your Soul

Need a winter project to keep paddling in your soul? How about making a paddle. I just finished a one day Greenland paddle making course at Mystic Seaport. It was great! On the theory that there is safety in numbers, I enrolled in the one Saturday (8 - 5) session with Bill Karpowicz, another ConnYak member. You can be sure that neither of us lists woodworking skills on our resumes, but it didn't matter. Most of the classes have not had many woodworkers in them (they are already making their own paddles I suppose) and often the participants are not even kayakers (yet!). This is not a course in power tools; most of the day was spent pushing a wood plane and of course, sanding. But I came away with a paddle - designed and shaped by me and made to fit me.

The instructor, Mark Starr, showed us a variety of paddles he has made and used. He also told us about the design and use of the Greenland paddle. However he paddles with both, so the Euro-blade paddlers don't have to feel that this experience cuts them out. A paddler who has never used a Greenland paddle may want to make one just to have one to try.

Or perhaps, like Bill, they want a storm paddle that will fit on the boat deck. You might even consider one just to fill that spot over the mantel with something you made - although I recommend getting out there often and using it the way they are intended.

Let me finish by summarizing the experience: You are in Mystic Seaport as a participant not a spectator, in a great old woodworking shop, looking out over the Mystic river, learning woodworking skills as you hand shape a paddle for your own use. This is a day for me that goes down in the record book as one worth repeating. The cost for the course was \$110.

For more information on this course browse to [www.mysticseaport.org](http://www.mysticseaport.org) and follow the education link to the Boat Shop Courses.

- Don Milnes

## WINTER POOL SESSIONS

SUNDAYS: JAN. 7, 14, 21, 28, FEB. 4, 11

The fee is \$10 for each session payable at the door by cash or check made to ConnYak. Please bring cash in an envelope with your name on it.

**Directions:** Exit 15 Rt. 91. Rt 68 W. past intersections of Rt 15 & Rt 150. Take fourth left on to Hope Hill Road which is at the light. Sheehan High School is 1/4 mile on the Rt.

## T's for articles

T-shirts for newsletter contributions. Mention size when you submit articles.



## connYak Meeting

Wed. January 17 - 7:00

WALLINGFORD PARK AND RECREATION

Election or affirmation of officers, General Business, Video Tsumi Rangers (new video, never shown at ConnYak meetings)

### DIRECTIONS TO PARK & REC.

Exit 15 (Rt 68) off I-91 in Wallingford. West on Rt. 68. (toward Wallingford) Approx. 3/4 mile take a right at the Fire Station (Barnes Road at the light). Take your first Rt. off Barnes on to Fairfield Blvd. Wallingford Park & Rec. is the 2nd building on the left up the hill.

Check the bulletin board for other impromptu trips listed by members - [www.connyak.org](http://www.connyak.org)

## CLARK BOWLEN TRIPS

(These are free trips run by ConnYak member Clark Bowlen)

**Sea Kayak playboating in Maine, Friday-Sunday, June 16-18, 2001.**

Trip will focus on playing in the tidal "falls" of the central Maine coast. We'll start with a practice session at Basin Cove Falls (class 1+). We'll graduate to Little Hellgate (class 2) and Sheepsfoot Falls (class 2+). Trip will be geared to intermediate sea kayakers with confident self-rescues. Limited to 12 people, plus leader. Register with leader, Clark Bowlen-- [cbowlen@snet.net](mailto:cbowlen@snet.net), (860) 623-6587

**Cobscook Bay Encampment, Monday July 9 to Friday July 13, 2001**

We will sea kayak from a shore-side campsite at Cobscook Bay State Park, and paddle off the Canadian islands of Campobello and Deer Island. This is some of the most interesting tidal water on the Atlantic coast. Tidal range exceeds 15 feet. A low-key, share-the-chores and decisions trip predicated on intermediate sea kayaking skills. Come for as many or as few days as you wish. Wet or dry suit mandatory. For information, registration contact Clark Bowlen - [cbowlen@snet.net](mailto:cbowlen@snet.net), (860) 623-6587.

## CONNYAK MESSAGE SYSTEM (203) 603-4615

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



# CLASSIFIED

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, Kevlar/Fiberglass w/wood trim & rudder. \$1,200.00 203-734-4452 kck@ashcreek.net

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

Solstice GT, Current Designs. Fiberglass, red over white. Used 2 seasons. (203) 855-9707, \$1700.

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

Touring/Surfing Sea Kayak: Sun Maximum Velocity 13' x, 25" in Xytec \$675. Surf kayakers@aol.com

Daggar Meridian Kevlar 43 lbs. 16' x 22". Yellow / white \$1600. (860) 388-4991, dmiller04@snet.net

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

THULE Complete Roof Rack 444 (for VW Golf & Jetta) Used for 1 yr. Asking 110.00 kfduffy2000@aol.com

DRYTOP - BomberGear breathable drytop (S)-(New ) \$150. 860-643-8303 - fernusen@aol.com

Wilderness Systems Tchaika, fiberglass w/rudder, neoprene sprayskirt yellow/white used 4 times. \$1,500 (203)483-7705.

P&H Sirius(s) Chinese Red / White, skeg - \$1650, 1997 in excellent condition. Call 860 767 0696.

Sealution, kevlar, yellow on white, compass, rudder \$1400 firm sd.a@att.net or 914 698 8354, Rye, NY

Yellow Perception Keowee 2 with spray skirt for \$499. 860 434-9785 or ckayakers@worldnet.att.net

2000 Necky Looksha Sport - expedition - front/rear bulkheads & rudder 14' 4" x 22.5" red polymer \$850 1-860-434-0221 or dwc@99main.com

Necky Looksha kayak-poly. 17 ft. two neoprene hatches, bulkheads, rudder, skirt. \$700. 914-967-3164

Necky Tesla-MM, Used Once. 17', Kevlar, Mango / white, blue trim, large cockpit, rudder, Ckpt. cover. Two Werner paddles. \$2,500. 1-860-526-3344

Two piece 220 cm Lendal crankshaft paddle : Carbon 1F Archipelago blades New \$340 - slightly used at \$240. . oldphoto@connix.com / (203) 281-0066

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

Sealution, kevlar, yellow on white, compass, rudder \$1400 firm sd.a@att.net or 914 698 8354, Rye, NY

Borel Ellesmere, used one season, Yellow over Yellow, Kevlar, day hatch, drop-down skeg, \$2700 new \$2195. E-mail ckayaker01@mindspring.com tel 203-481-1881.

## INSTRUCTION

Greenland style paddling and rolling. BCU Coach and ACA Certified Greenland Style instructor Fern Usen can be contacted at fernusen@aol.com for private or groups.

Urban Eskimo Kayaking  
Mike Falconeri / Nancy Lovelace  
Skills, Safety & Rescue, Rolling  
Various classes:  
Sheehan High School pool in Wallingford  
Call for specifics - Nancy at 860 228 0105

Send newsletter articles or classifieds to:  
Jay Babina e-mail: jbabina@snet.net  
7 Jeffrey Lane, Branford, CT 06405  
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. Membership includes monthly newsletter, paddles, functions etc.  
Send inquiries to: Ed Milnes  
35 Hampton Park, Branford, CT 06405

**E-MAIL: CONNYAK@CONNYAK.ORG**

**WEBSITE / BULLETIN BOARD: WWW.CONNYAK.ORG**

**Please contact the Newsletter when items are sold.**



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