

COLD WATER – COOL HEADS

Transitioning to the Sea in Spring

by Ernie Daruka

This past winter was overwhelming with the quantity and quality of snow for cross-country skiing. I love to ski the mountains in winter; they are so powerful that they demand respect. I've skied the White Mountains of NH, Adirondack, and Shawangunks of New York and felt their freedom and raw power.

Now that the Vernal Equinox is past, I'm yearning for some paddle time on the equally powerful and beautiful sea. Just as the winds rule the mountains, so they do the sea. So dressing right physically and staying focused mentally are the price of admission for survival and enjoyment on the Sound this time of year.

Here is what I do for the transition to the water season: First, I choose a location I know intimately. One of my favorites is South Pine Creek along the Fairfield coast. It's an easy put-in, over a sandy dike off the end of Old Dam road in Fairfield. The creek lets you get your paddling kinks out before dropping you into the Sound. It's sheltered and with the right tide has a little current to play with.

Second, I carefully inspect my trusted hard gear- my Wind Swift paddle and old reliable Anas Acuta kayak. After boat and paddle are proven seaworthy then, third I put together my personal paddling suit.

Just as everyone has their opinions on kayaks and paddling technique, so I have my opinion on what I will and will not wear. I am not a fan of dry suits; I cannot tolerate those latex neck, wrist or ankle gaskets! I go with layering instead. I start with a Patagonia / Lotus Design long sleeve "Water Heater" top, polypropylene / Lycra bottoms and a farmer-john style, PolarTec or 3mm neoprene wet suit. Over this I wear a Rapidstyle PolarTec pullover with a rubberized outside layer. On my head I wear a Patagonia "Water Heater" balaclava that tucks nicely under my pullover collar. My hands are covered with Bare neoprene mittens; they have a hole cut out above the palm, so I can slip my hands out quickly to do any dexterous finger work but still stay warm when slipped back in the mitten. On my feet my prized wet suit booties by Everett- these puppies are about 5mm thick, lined and warm, warm, warm! Of course, my life vest and spray skirt and a pair of sunglasses.

That's it, a combo of neoprene, PolarTec, and polypro that is not as water tight as a dry suit, but it is something I have found with experience that works for me.

With my suit of many layers I am protected from cold shock should I go over, and then it takes a cool head to set up for a roll. I am still in the learning curve with my bombproof roll so if I have to bail out I can try a paddle-float rescue, if not I'm close enough to a familiar shore to swim to, and rethink the situation. These are all acceptable risks to me; I realize I'm paddling solo through very cold water but having confidence, experience and judgement let me enjoy the coastal Sound this time of year. Spring is the most deceiving and frustrating time for dressing. It can get hot and the water is still frigid.

To me sea kayaking is a solitary, rewarding, thought-clearing mission of my own choosing. I pick a bright sunny day and only stay on the water a couple of hours. I feel like a polar bear out of hibernation and hungry for some fun. Respect is always a wise way to approach the sea, so lacking the polar bear's coat and fat layer, I have to use my brain to keep me warm in the saltwater cooler.

Know your equipment and yourself, be dressed for the water, stretch out and be aware of the elements, stay focused on what is happening, and drink plenty of water. Keep thinking and ease into the paddling season. You'll be in the groove and surfing, just like old times. ■

Clark Bowlen testing his dry suit and undergarmets in the 38 degree water. - photo Tom Maziarz



DEP's paddlesports course

by Jay Babina

Dick Gamble and myself attended the premiere showing of the CT Dept. of Environmental Protection's Paddlesport Safety Course on April 5th in Lyme. In attendance were paddlers, instructors, store owners, police from water patrols, members from other paddling clubs and Coast Guard Aux. Inspired by the concern for water sports safety and the growing number of paddlesports deaths in CT, the DEP decided that they would create an educational program to indoctrinate the beginning paddler into these sports. It's a big agenda to fill and I commend them for making a good step in the right direction and I know that it will evolve into an even more streamlined presentation than it is today.

As paddlers, we all know that this is a skills oriented sport and the learning never stops. We also know that it's a long gradual learning process to get to where we are today. It not only took practice and experience, but it took time to refine what we are doing as well. This is what I find is the conflict in trying to create instant safety on the water in paddlesports. Safety in paddlesports comes from a union of knowledge and skills coupled with awareness. We can give people the knowledge but the skills take quite a while to develop. And... some people never develop the sense of awareness or totally disregard it because their ego takes control. This is why people who actually know better occasionally die wearing the best safety gear! Paddlers who get dragged out of the water with hypothermia often know they were under dressed for the water but just figured they wouldn't capsize. This is our good friend the ego at the helm.

I strongly feel that the skills and experience part of paddling is the greatest part of safety and this is what makes paddlesports unique to all

other types of boating. It's also what makes it impossible to instantly bestow these attributes on a new paddler with any type of course.

This does not negate what the DEP is doing. It's just putting the reality of safety in perspective from an experienced paddler.

The DEP course was presented as a projected Power Point presentation with cartoons, illustrations and graphics along with a dialog by the presenter that enhanced the images. They did a lot of work on this and tried to cover as much ground as possible about canoeing, sea kayaking and white water. For most people in this club, you would find it extremely basic and it makes me feel good because we've been driving home safety issues since the inception of ConnYak. It actually seems like the course is geared more towards people who haven't decided what boat to buy rather than their intended audience of the paddler who's ready to go. Quite a bit of the presentation is about choosing a boat with illustrations of canoe and kayak styles etc. There's a concentration on white water and they go into advanced classes which I would have dropped - leave this for the serious instruction. They lost their intended audience here by even addressing upper class white water. This is far beyond the scope of that type of instruction. Anything above class II, they should recommend to go with a guide and get real instruction! Advanced white water and surf paddling is only as safe as the skills of the paddler. Even then, there can be some big surprises.

They did do a good job discussing basic white water features and dangers, hypothermia, cold shock, back up gear, basic weather problems etc. They need to show a typical channel situation. (We all know what that is) A few in the audience questioned the concentration on white water and I have to admit, most of the fatalities occur in white water with canoes and kayaks so their focus was actually on target. The innocent looking stream is more dangerous than it seems.

I think the presentation could be enhanced overall by basically warning people more about not-so-obvious dangers like exhaustion and wind and more examples of how to do things properly rather than a cartoon of people screwing up or doing foolish things. There was no photo or mention of a roll. No mention of the No.1 mandatory kayak skill - the wet exit. No reentries shown. No drysuit or wetsuit. No illustration of a kayaker getting in with a bridged paddle across the back of the cockpit. There should also be a dominate slide emphatically stating to take lessons and advance their skills with as much paddling education as possible from paddle sports instructors.

Distribution / implementation

The DEP wasn't quite sure how to go about this and welcomed suggestions. The idea of turning

it into a video was mentioned so it could go out unattended to libraries, stores, public TV, wherever. They seemed to like it being presented with a narrator who could answer questions and are seeking people as presenters. This is for free (community service). The comments also revolved around CD's etc. Also mentioned was having regular scheduled presentations at the DEP headquarters and community buildings supported with posters and brochures detailing dates and locations.

The crew at DEP seemed very humble about their program and welcomed all input and quite admittedly stated that they were learning what to show as well. This was actually the purpose of the presentation - to get feedback from the paddling community.

I give them an A+ because any attempt to educate the new paddler is a good one, and also because the best you could do in a few hours is probably just what they are doing - especially considering they're trying to address all paddle sports at once.

I give them a AAA+ because they are not trying to force this down anyone's throat with a mandatory anything. Nothing will cause a greater rebellion and opposition by retailers and paddlers than mandates and would ultimately destroy the efforts and good intent that has been put in on this program. Mandates would also incite criticism and non-support from the "real" instructional institutions. The idea is about lives and if they save one, they have done their job!

Spray skirt / wet exit

At one time or another, the horrifying thought of having to wet exit and finding your grab loop is under the skirt or missing is one that has passed through the minds of all kayakers. Here's an interesting tip from the book "Deep Trouble".

If the situation ever arises where the grab loop is not available, grab the skirt on either side of your waist and pull the skirt off from the side. I tried it, and even with my clumsy winter mitts and my tight neoprene skirt, I was easily able to grab the skirt material on the side of me and with a quick yank, it comes right off, whereas trying to fight it from the front is almost impossible to grab let alone release without the grab loop. It a great reassuring tip to remember. -JB

1st roll video premiere & connyak meeting

FRIDAY, MAY 11, 7:30 - ESSEX TOWN HALL

At our last meeting until the fall we will show the self-instruction rolling video by Jay Babina. Discussions about our summer picnic, paddles and general topics as well.

COMPARATIVE KAYAK CONSTRUCTION

by Brooks Martyn

Transporting and paddling a home built kayak has several unexpected benefits beyond owning a beautiful and unique craft. Since building my Outer Island I have had pretty young girls pull alongside me on the highway, give the thumbs up sign, and blow me a kiss (unfortunately they all pull away and are soon lost in traffic). On more than one occasion elderly gentlemen have silently inspected my boat, shook my hand, and said, "I'm a retired cabinetmaker". Bystanders at launch sites as well as CONNYAK members will frequently ask how they can build their own boat.

Home built kayaks fall into three general construction categories; stitch-n-glue (plywood), strip built and skin over frame. Recently there has appeared a hybrid method, usually a stitch-n-glue hull with a strip built deck. Within the two categories the methods of construction vary radically. There are two major stitch-n-glue kit manufacturers, Chesapeake Light Craft and Pygmy Boats Inc. - both offer a variety of attractive designs. These are strong, light boats, in no way inferior to any other type of kayak. A boat of this type can be built from one of the excellent kits in under 100 hours and for less than \$900 using ordinary shop tools. CLC uses a shear clamp (wood strip) to join the deck and hull, no construction forms, and scarf joints to join the panels. Pygmy uses no shear clamp, temporary construction forms, and butt joints to join panels. Both manufacturers use fiberglass externally on the hull while CLC uses fiberglass tape along the internal seams for strength and Pygmy glasses the entire internal surface of the boat. The decks of CLC boats are of single piece, bent plywood while Pygmy boats feature a multi-piece cambered design. There are also several designers offering strip built boats within our area which allows you to try a boat. Jason Design (Jay Babina), Guillemot Kayaks (Nick Schade), Shearwater Kayaks (Eric Shade) and Laughing Loon (Rob Macks) all offer plans. Newfound Boat Works sells kits for these boats. A strip built boat requires more tools, much more time, more skill, and a bit more money to build. I have built two strippers, Jay's Outer Island and Rob's Panache. The former took me 7 months to complete and the latter took one year. Both cost about \$1000 for materials. Jay's boat is a low volume hull which I find perfect for day tripping. The Panache is a large volume hull with large deck hatches and a big cockpit, ideal for extended camping trips. All strippers are exquisitely beautiful. The designers of these boats use very different assembly techniques. I feel that Jay's is the most straightforward and the easiest (this is a very, very relative term) to build. He employs a lot of the techniques used

in stitch-n-glue boats, no jigs to build, no subassemblies, and wood strips beveled on one edge. The boat is assembled on a simple strongback made of 16-foot 2x4's. I found the Panache more challenging; it required the construction of a telescoping strongback and several jigs on which to laminate hatch and cockpit parts. Rob and Nick both advocate using cove and bead wood strips; having built a stripper canoe using this technique as a warm up exercise for the kayaks I chose to go with Jay's beveled strips. It produced the same end result with less sawdust in my workshop. Nick Schade uses an even different method to assemble the forms which slides the forms over a central tube which is mounted on a strongback. Jay uses an internal stem at the ends of the boat, the other two designers interlock the strips from alternating sides and apply an external stem. Again, same end result. I find Jay's way easier. The four boats that I have built came with excellent plans and explicit instructions, Rob Macks' being the most elaborate. All offer construction tips, photographs, and assembly techniques. The designers have been an e-mail or a phone call away and were willing to answer my dumb (usually the answer was in the book) questions. What did I find the most difficult part of the projects? Hatches, hands down. Hulls are easy (remember the earlier caveat), decks require a bit more care, hatches are my nemesis. Jay's plans did not show a spacer ring under the deck to allow for the compressed gasket on the flush hatches: I had to grind out the lip and install one on the finished, varnished boat. When I rotated the hatch comings to the vertical position on Rob's Panache, the complex geometric shape of the pieces changed and none of the other laminated pieces fit. It took me two months, three times the material, and new as-installed jigs to get everything together. The hatches on my CLC Patuxent 17 leaked like a sieve until I installed stiffeners to the cover, blocks to push down on it, and a third strap. It is very important to paddle a demonstrator before building any boat. Are you comfortable in it and with it? Is it a design that compliments the type of paddling you do? My Patuxent was light, accelerated like a rocket, but had virtually no initial stability. The Outer Island is superb boat in every way. I will offer the Panache for sale without ever having paddled it. There are two must-read books for any prospective builder. Kayak Craft by Ted Moores, The Strip-Built Sea Kayak, by Nick Schade, and a video by Homegrown Boats "Building A Fine Woodstrip Kayak". A final warning. Building kayaks is addictive! Good luck!

Wood Boat Gathering

Bluff Point State Park

Skin, Strip, Stitch etc. Saturday June 23

non-builders - glass and plastic Paddlers welcome



If you want to run a paddle contact the newsletter. If plans change and you can't make it everyone will do just fine with out you. Don't feel it's a big obligation.

Paddlesports Weekend

North Cove Outfitters - May 5, 6
Camp Hazen - Chester, Ct
Info - 860-388-6585

2001 Downriver Classic Canoe/Kayak Race

Quinnipiac River Watershed Association
Sunday, May 20.

Classes for short (-13'4") and long kayaks -everyone is welcome to participate. Come explore a beautiful 5 mile stretch of the Quinnipiac gorge with your fellow paddlers. Registration 9 - 10:30, staggered starts begin at 11. \$7. fee, includes cookout at race end. You can paddle this event just for fun. Contact QRWA at (203) 237-2237 or Connyak paddler Marty Mador at (203) 281-4326.

Lost Drysuit - Drove off from the Creek with my drysuit on top of the car. Retraced the path next day - nothing. If anyone hears anything please contact Jay - Thank you.
203-481-3221



CONNYAK TRIP RATINGS

Any trip can change dramatically due to conditions - as in all sea kayaking. (I) is generally longer and more off shore with greater chance of rough conditions.

(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.

CONNYAK MESSAGE SYSTEM (203) 603-4615

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



PADDLES

BRANFORD HARBOR (N)

SATURDAY, MAY 12TH

Out the Bfd. River, across the harbor and head toward E. Haven- 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)

SELDON ISLAND CAMP & PADDLE

Sat. & Sun. May 19 & 20 - CT River (N)

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)

BLUFF POINT (N)

SATURDAY, MAY 26

There are large pond and protected bay as well as two islands right off shore in the Groton Harbor.

DIRECTIONS -

I-95 to exit 88 in Groton. Head towards water (south) thru two lights to the junction of Rt. 1. Right on Rt. 1. Left at first light (Depot Road). Continue on to Bluff Point State Park..

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

tuesday Night paddlers

contact bill 860-535-4474

or.. russ 860-621-0796

Mystic Area evening paddles - calm conditions.

June 2nd Narragansett Bay, RI (I)

August 25th Jamestown Circumnavigation (Advanced)

August 25th Narragansett Bay (Intermediate)

September 8th - Barn Island to Fisher's Island to Watch Hill (Intermediate/Advanced)

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

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.

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

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

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

Open deck kayak - Heritage Shearwater, 18' 45 lbs, 2 hatches, 1 yr. old. \$1700. 203-335-6289

2 Walden Vista Expedition 12.5' kayaks (lime, grape) with bulkheads and spray skirts. 42lbs. Used 4 days. \$600 ea. (203)389-1230 email en-sign@southernct.edu

Perception Carolina, 14'7"X 25" kayak- Poly, SeatPad/Back rest, Front & Rear Bulkheads. - \$600. (860)-667-2616 or E-Mail ckayakdon@yahoo.com

Like new Romany 16, tan over tan, with skeg, neospray skirt, aqua bound paddle. \$2100. 203-281-1529

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

P&H Sirius with skeg - excellent condition. \$1650 Call 860-767-0696.

2000 Necky Looksha Sport - expedition 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-NM, 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 \$240. . oldphoto@connix.com / (203) 281-0066

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

Borel Ellesmere Yellow over Yellow, Kevlar, day hatch, skeg \$2195.@mindspring.com tel- 203-481-1881.

Heritage Nomad 16' fiberglass open-deck kayak. 42 lbs., Ex cond:\$1350. Mens 3 mm farmer-john wetsuit, small \$20.Jeff 860-267-9563 - jbrooks@wesleyan.edu.

Panache wood stripper, 18'4"x22 1/2", unused. Large volume boat, big cockpit,\$2600. Stripper canoe, 18', Light fast, excellent condition. \$650. (860) 653-5899.

Ocean Kayak-17'9"—Valley Aquila - Blue and white 1800 - 203 226-6926 —pascale@earthlink.net

Old town Canoe. Otca 17'. Wood Canvas, 1968, redone, gorgeous. asking \$2,500.00 Rich 203-458-3666, or RichBECsl@aol.com

For sale: 13' Mad River Compatriot; light green with wood trim, 42 lbs., mint condition., includes floatation bags (never used) and some simple roof racks. \$500, Clark 203/271-2484

INSTRUCTION

Greenland style paddling and rolling. BCU Coach and ACA Certified. fernusen@aol.com for private or groups.

Urban Eskimo Kayaking
Indoor Pool Sessions at the Sheehan High School, Wallingford.

Skills Workshop: May 5.

Safety & Rescue , May 6, May 12. Eskimo Rolling May 13.

To register please contact: Wallingford Rec Dept. 203 - 294 - 2120.

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



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