

# CONN YAK

CONNECTICUT SEA KAYAKERS

April 2002

## 140 Miles on the Connecticut River

By David Cornell and Suzanne Klupacs

This past September Suzanne and I finally realized one of our Kayaking goals and set out to paddle the "lower Connecticut watershed" from the Vermont boarder to Long Island Sound. We had put in our vacation requests almost a year prior to the trip and when the day finally came it seemed a long time coming.

We spent some time researching the trip and was surprised at how little info is out there on such a major body of water. I think that is because that it is only navigable in portions by power boats and these areas are small enough that local boaters get to know their portion of the river. The AMC publishes a river guide that has brief descriptions of each section of the river and tells two very important things about the river. 1) Mileage and land marks which is very helpful in planning the trip, and 2) the phone numbers of the power companies. The phone numbers are important because they will give you a ride around the two damns, and in general will make a

short detour to allow you to pick up some supplies or take out food.

**Day 1)** We were dropped off by my friend Kevin at the Vernon damn just over the Vermont line. We had stopped about a mile up the road at the only restaurant in the area (a combination gas station, convenience food store and lunch counter) and had one of the best breakfasts I have had in a long time. We then went to the launch site and started packing up. After spending way too much time getting our gear together we finally got on the river at about 11:00. Southern Vermont and Northern Massachusetts is beautiful. The river in this area is wide and shallow and surrounded by fields and forest. This was the peaceful beauty that kayaking is all about for me.

We met a couple of canoers heading for Munn's Ferry which is about 13 miles from Vernon Damn. The Power Company maintains a first come first served free camping site there for boaters and provides firewood and drinking water. We considered staying there but continued on the 21.5 miles to Barton's Cove where we would stay the night at the State Park. This time of year the water flow is very low and the wind direction plays more of a factor than the current, which was almost nonexistent above the Holyoke Damn.

We got to Barton's cove an hour before sundown and made camp. We had the place to our selves. The campground closed on Labor day and were told by campers we met at the front gate that "probably" no-one would give us a hard time for staying over night.

**Day 2)** We awoke to find the river several feet below is level the night before. There is a Hydroelectric storage facility not far from there where they pump water from the river up to a holding lake along a nearby ridge. They release the water and generate electricity at peak times and pump the water up at night.

### Gail Ferris Talk

(slide show) 7 pm

Friday, April 12 - Essex Town Hall

*Gail has traveled throughout the Artic for years with an avid interest in the kayak cultures of the north. Gail will present a talk and slide show on "Comparison of Traditional Kayak and Paddle Design in Greenland, Eastern Canadian Arctic and Aleut Designs". Gail will also display an Aleut Kayak she had built as well.*

We slogged through the 60 feet of river muck until we hit deep enough water to head off across the cove to the boat landing. We checked out a migratory eagle's nest that is empty this time of year. The eagles come down in the winter and fish at the open water below the Damn.

The Power Company gave us a ride around the damn. I had to wince a little as we loaded my spotless brand new Romany on to the hard steel rack on top of the power company truck, noting the layer of white fiberglass powder on the leading edge of the steel rack. This was the first of many scars on this trip. He dropped us off down river along the bank where we had to carry our boats and gear down a steep 40-foot bank. After loading and unloading our gear we were in the water by about 11:00 again. I had definitely underestimated the time it would take us to strike camp and get in the water.

The weather for all but the last day was nothing less than perfect. Cool dry air and warm sun. Perfect paddling and sleeping weather. No bugs either.

We paddled most of the day through beautiful stretches of river alone except for each other. We stopped along the river and took a swim in the clear clean water and ate lunch sunning on the undisturbed



sandy bank. All this peace and serenity was soon to change. In the late afternoon we approached North Hampton and ran into the powerboat party scene about 1 mile upstream from the Rt. 9 bridge. We came around a bend in the river onto about 40 powerboats with stereos blaring, blenders mixing, and jet ski's sloaming between the anchored boats at full speed.

We had already done about 20 miles and were about of gas but could not stop here. We summoned our last bit of strength and paddled hard to get out of this area before we were run over by these lunatics. As we left the party spot we came around the corner and found a beautiful Island with wide sandy shores. We landed as soon as we could and watched the 40-foot Bayliners zip past at 50 miles an hour and thanked God that we got of the river before "they" started to head back to their slips before dark. It was Sunday night and right at dusk the river slipped back to the quiet peaceful mood we had become accustomed to as we watched a lone Hot air Balloon float by.

**Day 3)** In the morning we awoke to a rowing team gliding past. We finally broke camp early and got going at a reasonable hour. It was a good thing too because we had a long day ahead of us.

About 2 miles below Oxbow marina are fossilized dinosaur tracks. Which can be very clearly seen about 50 feet in from the river. On the West bank there is a section of continuous smooth rock. This is the place to land. The paths will lead to the tracks. They look like giant bird tracks with each foot about 14 inches or more long.

We paddled to the canoe club before the Holyoke damn and got a ride around from the Power Company. We made a short detour and got some take out food. It is amazing how good food tastes when you are outside. Each bite of that Boston Chicken was such a treat.

As we passed through Springfield we got caught in an incredible lightning storm. Luckily we were right down town and watched the incredible show from under Memorial Bridge. There were several strikes per minute and they seemed to dance around us.

After the storm we found an Island right beside Riverside Park. We had been very concerned where we would spend the night. The banks along Springfield are not the nicest areas and were very glad to find a place off shore to camp. We fell asleep with the lights from Ferris wheel and Roller coasters in the distance.

**Day 4)** Today was the day we had to portage the Enfield Damn. I did not know what to expect except the guide said we could expect fast water, and deadly current below the damn. Luckily the water was low and we were able to guide ourselves to the landing spot on the West side of the river. The Damn was built to stop the British from sailing up stream to Springfield, which at the time was a center for arms manufacturing. Is not really much of a damn, just an old collection of logs and rocks that can only be seen when the water is very low.

We continued onto the Farmington River and paddled against a 5 mile an hour current as the power generation station at rainbow reservoir let go a torrent of water. We finally made it to Bart's where we had lunch and were picked up by a friend that lived about a 100 yards down the street. We had showers got supplies and watched the news.

**Day 5)** We had another beautiful day. The river was so quiet. No planes, boats, nothing. it seemed like the world stopped.

I figured this would be the least scenic portion of the river, but I was wrong. Except for the mile or so around Hartford the river looked very rural, and the Hartford skyline was a nice change of pace.

As we continued on towards Middletown the silence was broken only by a remote controlled plane other than that we were the only ones on the river.

I took a hose shower on a dock in Middletown and we camped along the shore near a make shift memorial.

**Day 6)** We had a short paddle to Seldon's Island and were looking forward to an easy day. We had pushed hard the three previous days and could use the rest.

The river changes in character below Middletown. Its much bigger water. I felt very small and was happy that it was a week day with almost no power boaters.

We reached Seldon's Island around 2:00 set up camp and enjoyed the best day of our trip. The weather was warm and sunny. We considered pushing on to finish the trip because the weather was supposed to change but decided to enjoy the day

**Day 7)** We woke up to a cold rain. We packed up and ate in the rain hurrying to get in the boats so we could warm up. We rode the tide out to Great Island. The GPS told me that we were paddling at about 6 mph with the tide helping. We reached Great Island in no time and filmed our end of the trip video in the cold rain as the bat-

teries on the camcorder ran down.

We called Suzanne's friend Missy to come and get us and waited the hour till she arrived in a Handicapped porta-potty, the only shelter around.

We paddled the 140 mile (as the river runs) in a little less than 7 days, averaging about 20 miles per day. The one challenge along the trip was getting drinking water. Above Middletown there are very few marinas, stores or other facilities along the river. We used about 1.5 gallons per person per day for cooking and drinking.

The trip was a great experience and even though we were never far from civilization it seemed like we really got away from it all.



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### PHONE MESSAGE SERVICE DROPPED

When in doubt about a paddle, check the bulletin board. Our usage showed that it was totally impractical to keep the message service. Last minute cancellations, date or time changes due to weather etc. will be posted on the bulletin board the afternoon before the paddle. (connak.org). If a paddler wants to paddle anyhow, they can post their intentions on the board.

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**Nova Scotia Trip** - May 18 - Registration deadline. The trip will occur in July or August, depending on the preferences of participants. It's a good deal- \$500 for 5 days, 2 guides, kayaks, and food. Still a few openings left.

martyrbw@aol.com or (860)653-5899.

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### SELDON ISLAND CAMP - MAY 18-19

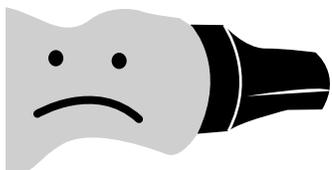
Contact Dave Hiscocks to get on the list, so we don't overpower this campsite. 10 or 12 tents is about all it can accommodate. e-mail: dhhiscox@aol.com or 860 633-7254

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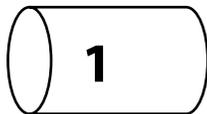
### GPS CLASS, APRIL 13 - ESSEX

ConnYak member Paul Donoski setup a GPS class with instructor Adam Bolonsky. Adam has considerable experience in teaching the subject, so it promises to be a day well spent. The class, which will be limited to 10 people, will be held on Saturday, April 13th, at Dick Gamble's house on South Cove, Essex and will cost \$35. Contact Paul directly at paul.donoski@applicamail.com After the class, if time and the water level permits, the group will go for a paddle on the river.

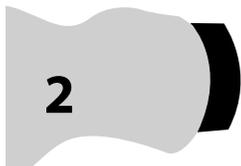
# Drysuit seal replacement



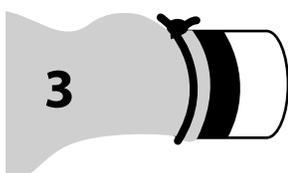
*It happens to every drusuit: the unexpected rip of a seal. You can tape them back together with duct tape on both sides at the paddle site. Here's how you install a new one.*



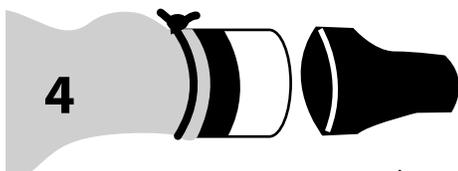
1. You need a tube, bottle etc. that fits snugly into the opening where the seal attaches to the fabric. You can enlarge a bottle with cardboard and duct tape to get a good fit. There's some buckets circulating around the club for the neck (same installation procedure).



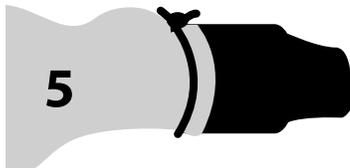
2. Cut off the ripped seal, leaving the part of the suit where the factory seal is glued and sewn to the fabric. Your new seal gets glued right over the old factory seal edge.



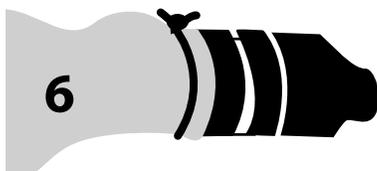
3. Slide your tube into the factory edge and put elastics or bungee around the suit to keep it in place. Slide some wax paper under the cut off edge to keep glue from sticking to the tube or... you can wax your tube/duct tape with auto wax.



4. Clean the suit edge and new seal edge (side with stripes is the inside) with alcahol and give it a light sanding to roughen the surface. Don't have your tube sticking out too far because the small end of the seal should not be stretched over it - it could cause the new seal to walk or slide itself out of position. (it's happened)

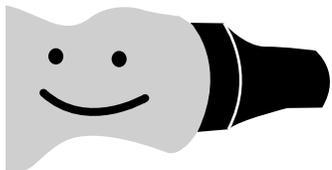


5. Slide the seal on, over the factory rubber area. You can put elastic bands around the new seal to keep it from sliding (optional)



6. Roll back the new seal so the 3/4" edge that was over the old suit is now facing up.

Apply Aquaseal to both faces (new seal and old suit rubber) and roll the new seal right in place over the rubber part of the old seal. You can use a throw-away plastic knife to apply the glue. Pat down all around and wait overnight to use.



Use tight latex gloves -Aquaseal is sticky stuff. Sometimes the procedure goes like clockwork other times things slide around out of control. Take your time and it will work.

A PDF file of this for future reference is on our website.

**Group Trips Needed** - If you want to list a paddle for the season contact the club or newsletter. We need more paddles to alleviate our overcrowding. To list it does not mean you're responsible or even the leader (unless you want to). We need paddlers who want to share a paddle with friends at a favorite location. You don't even have to arrive is something comes up. This year we will be leaving weeks open for individuals.

**Launch site directions** - Keep the directions page you received. Launch directions will no longer be written in the newsletter. If you loose your Launch Directions Page, you can download one from our site at [www.connyak.org](http://www.connyak.org)

We will write up any unusual locations that arrive during the season and add them to the web page.

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

## EVENTS



### Gail Ferris Talk

(slide show) 7 pm

Friday, April 12 - Essex Town Hall

**BRANFORD RIVER / HARBOR** N/I Lunch  
OUT TO THE SOUND (OPEN WATER)  
SAT APRIL 13 - 10AM IN THE WATER.

**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.

**MYSTIC** N/I  
SUN. APRIL 14 - 10 AM IN THE WATER

#### **Directions - 2 launch sites**

Go past Mystic Seaport on the right. Take your first right on Isham Street. Launch is at the end of the street. Street parking is available. Worst case: Drop off the boat and gear and park in the Mystic Lot which is free.

#### **Or... Under I-95 Bridge Launch**

Eastbound on I95 -- Take exit 89 and go across Allyn Street onto Sandy Hollow Road -- when you come to High Street, go left a short distance to the first right turn onto side street with a boat launch sign (don't know the name) -- continue to a left turn onto River Road -- continue on River Road and just after you go under I95, the boat launch is on your right.

### BARN ISLAND - STONNINGTON

SAT APRIL 27 & SUN APRIL 28 (N/I)  
10 AM IN THE WATER - LUNCH

**Directions** - I-95 to exit 91 in Stonnington. At the end of the exit ramp, continue straight across on to Rt 234 E. (the road in front of the ramp). Take your 3rd right (.4 m) on to Farmholme Rd. and continue until you hit Rt 1. Take a rt. and a left at the light. Take your first immediate rt. (launch sign) off that to the Barn Island Launch.

**Note: Spring trips are always Novice/Intermediate due to winds that could arrive in March and April - plus the water is still very cold.**

# CLASSIFIED

Derek Hutchinson Toksook paddle new 230 w/90 degree feather (can be changed). New \$330 now \$275 or best offer. 860-561-4415 work 860-635-1979 email: bobyak2@aol.com

Prijon Sea Gull 16' 6" x 24" Fiber glass touring kayak. Compass and deck-mounted bilge pump, Rudder.\$1,350.00 / OBO. 860.767.1728. Email: Kayaker@KayakForFun.com

Dry-suit, Kokatat "Meridian" men's medium. \$150. Dry-tops. Stohlquist. One new, one used.\$100 & \$65. Both mens medium. Tom 413-593-6167.

Old Town Castine Kayak 14 foot beginners kayak. red, 2 hatches, with paddle and skirt. \$600. 860-985-6893

Valley Skerray, Fiberglass, Blue over White, with skeg and Chimp Pump. Great condition! \$1700 203-854-9713 brianenichols@aol.com

Wilderness Systems Sealution, Fiberglass with rudder, 16'8", aqua / white. \$1500, (860) 873-1884

Aquaterra Double - Gemini, poly, tandem, wide beam, great for the kids or lake. Asking \$600.00 or best offer. Call 860-388-2464 Sharon.

Please contact the Newsletter when items are sold.

## Fundraiser Sea Kayak Paddle Sat - May 18

On Saturday, May 18, 2002 there will be a fundraiser paddle at Hole in the Wall Beach in East Lyme, CT. Money raised from this event will go to the Tommy Fund, an organization based out of Yale New Haven Children's Hospital to benefit children with cancer. Experienced paddlers will be launching at 10:00am; beginning paddlers are encouraged to launch at 10:30am and wear appropriate cold water clothing.

Hole in the Wall Beach has a protected launch, open beach, and ample parking. A \$5.00 donation to the Tommy Fund is requested the day of the event.

**Directions:** I-95 to exit 72 (Rocky Neck State Park in East Lyme). Left at light on route 156 East. Travel 2.7 miles and take a right on Baptist Lane (McDonalds across the street). Large dirt parking lot with kayak launch on the other side of the very obvious hole in the wall.



## INSTRUCTION

Urban Eskimo Kayaking Classes  
Mike Falconeri 203-284-9212  
www.uekayaking.com

## GREENLAND STYLE INSTRUCTION

Instructors: Fern Usen, BCU Coach and ACA Certified and Donald White.  
Call 860-643-8303 email: fernusen@aol.com

## 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:

ConnYak, P.O. Box 197, Ellington, CT 06029

E-MAIL: [CONNYAK@CONNYAK.ORG](mailto:CONNYAK@CONNYAK.ORG)

WEBSITE / BULLETIN BOARD: [WWW.CONNYAK.ORG](http://WWW.CONNYAK.ORG)

Send newsletter articles or classifieds to:

Jay Babina e-mail: [jbabina@snet.net](mailto:jbabina@snet.net)

7 Jeffrey Lane, Branford, CT 06405

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CONNECTICUT SEA KAYAKERS

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