

# CONN YAK

CONNECTICUT SEA KAYAKERS

November 2002

A summer-like day in early April was all that it took to lure Bill Whitcomb and me to enjoy a paddle among the Thimble Islands. What a day; bright sunshine, temperature in the 60's, gentle breeze blowing in from Long Island Sound, with water temperature in the low 40's! Bill and I donned our dry suits, PFDs, and spray skirts, secured our water bottles, paddle floats, and bilge pumps, and set off for a delightful afternoon paddle.

It felt as if our cut-down North Bay "cheater boats" were flying across the gently rippled surface. Unsuspecting, we headed East, out through the large opening between the mainland and the closest islands. We had only gone a short

distance out into the Sound when my anxiety level maxed out. What had been a breeze inside the wind shadow of the islands was now a hefty wind blowing across the Sound against the outgoing tide. The result was steep and confused sometimes breaking waves. Paddling into them was fun, but to stay near the islands it was necessary to head in a southerly direction, which put us into quartering seas, which was not as much fun. I thought of Dick Gamble's profound words, "If you want to learn to paddle in waves, you have to paddle in waves," but with each stroke I was having less and less fun. Meanwhile, Bill was whooping it up, having a great time.

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## A NEAR-DISASTER AT THE THIMBLE ISLANDS

By Brooks Martyn

By now we had Outer Island in sight and I could see large waves crashing on its sea wall, which did nothing to minimize my apprehension. I called Bill over for a raft-up and informed him that I was going back inside. As I headed for the cut between the two nearest islands the water became even more treacherous

and confused; with the wind blowing in and the tide rushing out through the shallow cut there were rows and rows of steep, closely spaced standing waves, some of which were breaking or at odd angles to the other waves. When I was about halfway through the cut, Bill called out, "You're doing fine, I'm going to go back outside and play. Wait for me when you get inside." To which I replied, in the bravest voice that I could muster, "Bill, stay with me. Please don't leave me."

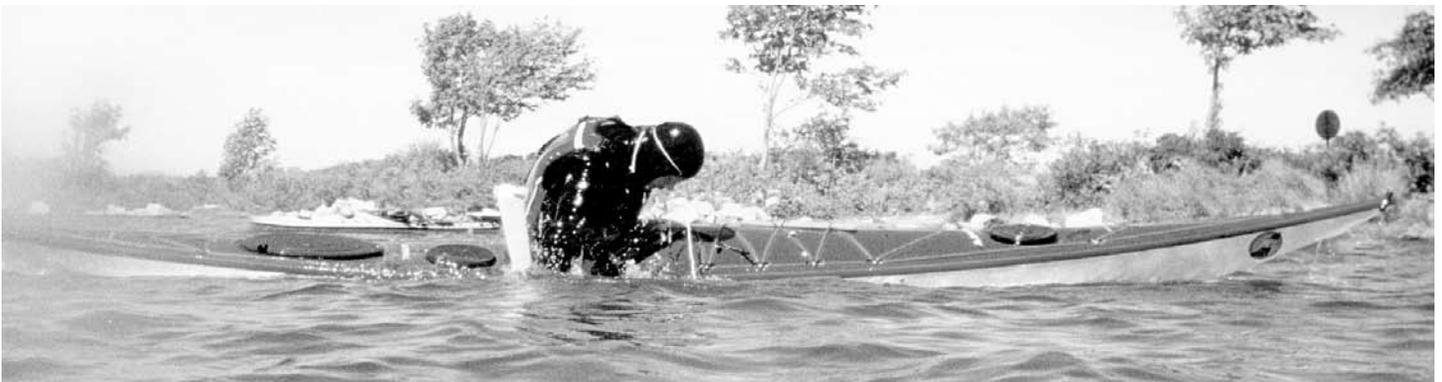
Three braces and two paddle strokes later my boat surfed down one wave, broached slightly, and was hit at an angle by another wave. Instantly I was

upside down in the frigid, confused water. I calmly set up for a roll and was almost up when another wave knocked me back over. Now here's where calm, deliberate actions started to come apart a bit. I opted to bail out of the boat, but my fingers could not feel the pull strap through my neoprene mittens nor could I see it in the murky water. Somehow I got the spray skirt loose, only to find that the tiny cockpit of the cheater boat with all its foam padding, and filled by my bulky dry suit, did not make for easy exiting.

When my head finally popped to the surface I peered at the world through a tiny slit between my hat brim and my PFD. The first thing I saw was my paddle, water bottle, and neoprene hood floating away in the current. The first thing I heard was the sweetest sound in the world, "Brooks, are you OK? I'm right here!" I grabbed my boat and told Bill to get the paddle (we never did find the hood or the water bottle). We then rafted up, bow to stern, and I did a "British" reentry between the boats with my feet hooked over the decks. It was quick and easy. My whole time in the water was not more than a few minutes and even though the water was ice-cold, I never felt really chilled. We paddled around for a while longer in the lee of the islands, did some rolling and paddle brace practice, and headed back to the launch ramp.

It wasn't until I awoke at 2:30 A.M. that night that the terror hit my stomach and the "what ifs" began.

*continued...*



Greenland Natinoni Champion Greg Stamer rolling with the paddle behind his back at our demonstration day. - Photo - Tom Maziarz

Here are the lessons that I learned and ones that the wise would be well advised to heed:

- A paddle partner is your number one safety factor. Had I been alone this story might have had a much different ending.
- Make it a habit to hold onto your paddle when you wet exit. Carry a spare paddle and/or a paddle leash. Mine floated out of reach in seconds. I did not have a spare. A paddle float self-rescue was not an option in this case, given the loss of the paddle and the roughness of the water.
- Practice assisted and self rescues, playing both roles. Doing it in a heated pool or in calm water is not the same as doing it in rough, cold water. A sloppy panic stricken roll in cold water may fail.
- At least once, do a wet exit wearing heavy gloves and bulky immersion clothing.
- There is one last "what if" for which I have yet to devise an answer. What if my partner, who was behind me by several boat lengths, had been the one to capsize and had called out for me to come back and rescue him? I was neither emotionally nor technically prepared to turn my boat around in that confused, violent water.

The Thimble Islands are an idyllic place to play, but they can become treacherous very quickly as weather and tide conditions change especially in early spring and fall winds. My "what if" nightmare ends with the vision of the numerous people that I have observed leaving the launch ramp at Stony Creek in their small recreational kayaks, with no spray skirt, their PFD shoved into the bottom of the boat, and wearing street clothes or spandex tights. Bill and I were pretty well prepared and trained to care for ourselves that day. The angels must be watching over the others (for a while).

-BM



## Two Kayakers die on Martha's Vinyard

Two men were found drowned Tuesday morning Oct., 15 after apparently falling from their kayak during a fishing trip on Sengakontacket Pond. Both men were on one sit-on-top kayak. Neither man was wearing a life jacket reports the Coast Guard Officials.

We can also assume that neither man had any cold water apparel on. There was quite a few discussions on this unfortunate tragedy on our bulletin board if you want to read the comments.

## Cool Paddling Fashions

The water temperature starts dropping very quickly in November and the wind changes to offshore. The wind also increases dramatically and the sea conditions reflect these changes by becoming much more challenging, unpredictable and often dangerous.

It's time to ask yourself some real questions about your paddling ability and preparations for these changes. How long can you swim in the water comfortably with the apparel you paddle in? Can you get back in your boat without going into Cold Shock or Hypothermia? What's the air temperature and wind chill factor? Remember, even if you get back into your boat after a capsize, you're not instantaneously warm again. People do suffer Hypothermia in wet clothes.

The ability to roll lures many paddlers into a false sense of security and bravery. If you capsize without a hood on, the ice cold water on your head and in your ears can be a shocking event as noted in Brooks Martyn's article this month.

There is safety in numbers. If you paddle alone, use caution and don't go out beyond your ability. Always carry extra dry clothes and a towel and warming agents like heat packs and hot soup, juice or decaf. tea.

The best cold water protection you can get is the Gortex Dry Suit. It's a pricey item, but it's a lot like buying a good parachute for the skydiver. All paddlers eventually get one if they want to paddle in the colder temperatures and have any sensibility about their well-being.

The wetsuit will do for a while but you'll quickly tire of the discomfort, and the "real" protection if offers can't even come close to the drysuit.

If you're new to the sport, please read "The Farmer John Fallacy" on our website - under Paddlers Info. - JB

## Please return library books

Many people have club library books and videos sitting on a shelf somewhere and forgot about them. We have a sign out library protocol but in the absence of the librarian many items were taken out on a trust basis. People have been asking for various items that are out there somewhere. There used to be (3) 1st Roll videos and none are back for over 6 months. Also missing is the Doug VanDoren Greenland paddling video along with quite a few books. I've been looking for "KayakCraft" by Ted Moores for over a year. Please check your bookshelves for items.

If you have library items, please contact the club and we can pass it back to the library or mail it back to:

John Sweeton, 492 Camp St., Plainville, CT 06062  
jesweeton@loureiro.com

The US postal Service has a category (book rate) for books and videos which is quite inexpensive.

## Oct. ConnYak Meeting

Club Treasurer Dick Gamble presented a financial report - "our club is in good financial shape". The financial report is available to any member upon request.

We will be ordering more T-shirts, Hats and possibly Mock T's. (long sleeve shirts) We will have a new color T-shirt on the next order.

Preparations for the winter pool sessions are done and we will have the Wallingford pool each Sunday in Jan. and the first two in Feb. (details to come)

ConnYak is printing a "Paddlers Etiquette" single sheet publication and "campaign". You will receive one along with your newsletter. The information has to do with our relationship with the boating community, sharing launch sites, staying out of channels and respecting wildlife habitat.

We are looking for speakers for the winter. We discussed the idea of a paddle stroke clinic/lecture with Olympic gold medal winner Greg Barton. (in the summer) If you have any ideas for presentations, please contact the club or attend our Nov. meeting.

We discussed the library book and video delinquency problem and are working on possible solutions.

## Night paddling with kayak Lights

by Dominic Settle

I remember the first time I paddled after dark. We had gone on a late afternoon paddle shortly after daylight savings time ended and did not anticipate how much earlier the sun set. While we enjoyed a beautiful sunset, finding our way back without any lights wasn't fun. It was impossible to see each other if we got separated. Since then I've paddled at night many times and have come to enjoy it a lot. After that first experience I did some research on lighting. The legal requirements for kayaks can be summarized as follows:

1) You must have appropriate emergency signals for the dark. Smoke and dye don't work, flares and strobes do.

2) Power-driven vessels are required to display appropriate red, green, and white lights. Non-powered vessels are required to have white light that you can signal your position with. The light does not have to be on at all times.

Many people that paddle at night have found that in addition to the legal requirements having some kind of marker light to be particularly useful, particularly when paddling with others or in an area with a lot of boat traffic. This light should be bright enough to be seen easily but not so bright that it impairs anyone's night vision. I've looked at the lights used by a number of other paddlers over the last few years, have observed the visibility of other boats on the water, and have read the results of a kayak visibility test done some time ago in New York City that involved the Coast Guard and ferries.

The visibility test tried various types and colors of lights on kayaks at night, and also included some flashing lights. They discovered that kayaks with the red, green and white lights like on larger boats were the easiest to see and avoid, and attributed this to the way these lights made kayaks appear more like other boats. Other lights and white lights alone were not as useful, in part because of the sheer number of lights around New York City. I've watched boats come and go in Milford harbor and have also noticed that the consistency of lights makes boats easier to spot and shows which way the boats are pointed, even at anchor.

In addition to the small xenon flashlight and strobe I carry at all times to avoid collisions, I carry a set of red and green lights on the bow of my kayak and a white light on the back of my PFD whenever I paddle at night. These marker lights are waterproof LEDs that shine in all directions but are much dimmer than your typical flashlight. They are quite visible at short distances but not so bright that they harm my night vision or the night vision of others near me. I also carry one of these lights on the front of my PFD for viewing charts and my compass. Some people may think the red and green marker lights are overkill, but I want other boats to be able to see me and be able to tell which way I'm heading. The marker lights work well and make me easy to spot, even in a crowd.

Regular lights can be found at most marine outlets. Good LED marker lights are harder to find. LED lights cost a more but don't use batteries as quickly and are less likely to leave you in the dark. The marker lights I use are from Tektite. I have Tektite's MARK III LED (one with a single white LED, the other with two LEDs) and their red/green Navlite (2 LEDs). They sell marker lights with 1, 2, and 4 LED's. The difference in brightness between the 1 and 2 LED lights is not very noticeable. Both use regular AA batteries and are waterproof to 1,000 feet. Battery life is 40 to 100 hours. Tektite makes a number of other lights and strobes as well.

Their website is [http://www.tek-tite.com/Marker\\_Lights/marker\\_lights.html](http://www.tek-tite.com/Marker_Lights/marker_lights.html).  
-DS

## CONNYAK PICNIC - A+

"Fun! Ideal! Nice People! Perfect Day!  
Great Food! Perfect Location! "

We definitely found a new home for our picnics. Pataconk Reservoir in Chester turned out to be absolutely ideal, cost us nothing and has the added advantage of being flexible as far as a rain date. A random count of about 75 people arrived and enjoyed the vast array of food that everyone brought, not to mention the great beach and water for paddling. We're very lucky to have such a large group of friends as paddling partners to share this sport and other activities. Our annual picnic always turns out to be a real nice gathering and reunion of friends you don't always see.

## EVENTS



Note: November paddles are intercoastal, but dressing for the water conditions is a must. Extreme wind may change itinerary and / or cancel the paddle. Postings will be on the bulletin board. Rain predicted paddles will often roll over to the following day. Launch times are in-the-water, ready to paddle times. Please leave enough time to park, unload, dress and launch.

## BLACK HALL RIVER

Sat., Nov. 9 Great Island Launch site  
Paddle - 12 noon launch  
Pack snacks etc.

## THIMBLE ISLANDS

Sat., Nov. 16 Stony Creek  
Paddle - 10:30 am launch  
Morning paddle - back for lunch

## EAST RIVER - MADISON / GUILFORD

Sat., Nov. 23 Guilford Launch site  
Lunch Paddle - 10:30 am launch

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

## CONNYAK MEETING

Wednesday, Nov. 20 - 7:00  
WALLINGFORD PARK AND RECREATION  
(ALL MEETINGS ARE NOW AT 7:00)

## DIRECTIONS TO WALLINGFORD 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.

## Cold Water Clinic

Outdoor Sports - Wilton  
Sat. November 9, 10 - 3  
Lectures and a hot tub with ice water to try  
out apparel. Sale Pricing  
Information email [boats@outdoorsports.com](mailto:boats@outdoorsports.com)  
800 782-2193

# CLASSIFIED

Dry-tops. Stohlquist. One new, one used. \$100 & \$65. Both mens medium. Tom 413-593-6167.

Old Town Castine Kayak 14' beginners kayak. red, 2 hatches, 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

Valley Skerray XL, Fiberglass, Turquoise over white, with skeg, two hatches, chimp pump, and compass. \$1795. Contact (203) 840-0156.

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

Old Town Nantucket - 1 year old - \$500.00 yellow poly, rudder, thigh braces, adjustable hip pads Pete 860-749-0471

Impex Montauk, Fiberglass, \$1800 includes Skirt and compass. Call Bill - 860-535-4473

NORDKAPP HM good condition. Day hatch, rear oval hatch, canvas storage bag, compass. Orang / white \$1600 860-633 7254.

North Shore Freewater Trek fiberglass sea kayak.. 16 ft 22 in, 45 lbs. Great for small to medium paddler. \$1000. (203) 853-2909 or email sryan@lww.com.

Two Werner paddles for sale; one left hand control San Juan and one right hand control Camano . Both in Fiberglass . \$175.00 each . Call 203 226 9674 days or 203 454 2278 eves .

Wilderness Systems Shenai, Red over white, Kevlar. Very light, fast boat. \$1400.00. Phone 203-270-9134

Perception Pirouette White Water kayak: Float bags, \$450 B/O. 860-613-0622 or Bkahuna@snet.net

Stearns Self Bailing inflatable kayak; life jacket, pump, paddle and storage bag. New for \$479. Asking \$300. 203-878-8336, elizmont36@aol.com.

16' x 22" Yellow/White Dagger 'Meridian SK' f/g kayak with skeg, 2 hatches, Nexus Type 85 Compass, spray skirt, f/g paddle, Milford, CT \$1850 203.877.8493 'clayluce@hotmail.com'

VCP Nordkapp HMC Golden Yellow deck/White hull, oval stern hatch, \$1000.00 also Dagger Outburst Surf/playboat, red, bow & stern airbags, \$700.00. Call Don 860-643-1609, Email:nordkappdg@aol.com.

GPS -Garmin eTrex Vista (eTrex best model) 24MB open memory, barometric altimeter, electroic compass, basemap with Nav Aids. incl. instruction video. \$300. (203) 265-0169 lathrop@cttel.net

Necky Kayook single kayak with spray skirt and paddle. Neoprene hatch covers . \$450.00 203-544-0555 ext.15

Dagger Animis white water kayak. Great beginner boat. \$350.00 \$450.00 203-544-0555 ext.15

Tandem wooden kayak. 18 feet long. \$750.00 \$450.00 203-544-0555 ext.15

## 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**

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

### T-shirts for Articles

Authors of articles for the newsletter get a free T-shirt. If you have written an article and haven't recieved you T-shirt, please speak up at one of the paddles. The club officers usually have them at the paddles.

**Check the bulletin board fo impromptu trips listed by members - www.connyak.org**

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

Please contact the Newsletter when items are sold.



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