

CONN YAK

CONNECTICUT SEA KAYAKERS

April 2004

Yoga and Kayaking

by Jay Babina

I can still remember Paul Donoski laughing hysterically when I announced that I was taking Yoga over two years ago. Well... "he who laughs last, laughs best". Do you remember Paul's Yoga Sling Reentry at the rescue clinic last year? The one where he flopped back into the water twice! Perhaps a little additional flexibility might have helped.

Yoga can be anything from mild to brutal depending on what level class you're in or who your instructor is. I entered an on-going advanced beginner class and made the fatal mistake of letting my competitive ego get in the way. I didn't want to be better than anyone, I just wanted to be able to keep up with the class. Big mistake!

The next day I felt like I had the flu. Every muscle and tendon in my body ached. One of the many lessons you learn in Yoga is to be yourself and honor your limitations. It took me about 6 months to learn to not compare myself and totally get into my own body and mind in the sessions through the breathing and the meditative state you go into. You not only develop flexibility, but strength and cardio fitness as well. Many guys think it's like going to ballet class but very few of the "pumping iron" guys at my gym take the Yoga class because it can be totally demeaning at first.

Most people gravitate to things they do well and it's no surprise that 75% of Yoga practitioners are women - and there's some unbelievably strong and flexible women at the classes. It's predominately flexibility but what makes it different from a stretching class is that it incorporates meditating and disciplined breathing. Flexibility is not a prerequisite but a goal that you are working towards improving, no matter

what condition your body is in.

A relaxed mind = a relaxed body; a simple equation that is overlooked in conventional exercise. A calm breath = a relaxed mind and body. The originators of this old practice understood this and it became a semi-spiritual mind and body experience / transformation. You just can't do Yoga and think about your problems. Plus you're encouraged to focus on your breath as you do the various positions which adds to the meditative state you go into.

You know that elated and relaxed feeling after a paddle on the water? It's the same with Yoga. It's a physical and mental release as well as a totally rejuvenating experience.

A typical class starts with a several minute meditation. Then it goes to all kinds of gentle stretching. Then it advances to a more strenuous and aerobic routine (sun salutations) and then we do balance poses and ab exercises and a final cool down and

meditative relaxing pose to finish a 1 1/2 hr. class. Pose (or Asana - the Indian word) is the term for the positions you do in Yoga. All the poses are held for so many breaths. Sometimes you are holding a pose which seems fairly simple and in a minute or so, your limbs are screaming for mercy. Most of the class is fairly wrung-out at the end.

However, I don't want to discourage anyone, because you are never pushed or prodded to do any more than you want - plus entry level classes are very gentle. Some people will actually stop and sit and rest if needed. (not me!) I can now keep up easily and have improved with my flexibility noticeably. Ironically, my greatest gains are endurance and not flexibility. I've taken a lot of years distorting my inflexible body into what it is today and there's no reason to assume that it's going to drastically change overnight.

I lucked out and have a great instructor - Gina McDonald at Stony Creek Yoga. She's unbelievably strong and fit and

Continued...



Kara Lynch paddling off of Mystic during the summer.

Photo: Tom Maziarz

Yoga...continued

has great kindness, understanding and dedication to the practice. And, she encourages patience and acceptance of who you are. These philosophies are in all Yoga practice, but some are just more into it than others.

In kayaking, I noticed a great improvement in my rolling in my first year of Yoga. Mostly in hand rolls where twisting my self up to the surface helps a lot. I also notice the simple things like paddling and looking back. I'm able to twist much more fully and easily. I never have back aches and I know Yoga has seeped into my non-paddling life as well.

All Yoga classes hit every part of the body which means the back, hamstrings, calves, shoulders and spine are all benefiting. This is going to result in not only your comfort in the kayak but in the conditioning of these areas as well. You also develop better breathing and aerobic conditioning. Many people who exercise regularly are incorporating yoga into their schedule and it's becoming more and more popular as an essential additive to all sports activities.

Flexibility or the lack of it, is something you are born with. You can improve what you have and keep it as you age with Yoga practice. However, Yoga is not going to convert your body into something it was not meant to be.

Yoga is available everywhere. Most libraries and community centers have classes as well as independent Yoga studios and health clubs. Classes are far better than home, video or book practice because you'll learn more and have a more enjoyable time as well. Plus, you'll never do at home what you do in a class. Everyone in the videos seem to be able to put their chin to their knees. By going to a class you be in with real people with varying degrees of flexibility and fitness.

Now if I can only get Paul to come to one of my classes. I already introduced him to the instructor and asked if she would make him suffer like I did. She just laughed and shook her head in disbelief. I guess I haven't quite spiritually arrived yet.



Wildlife viewing Reminder

by Wayne Smith

With the paddling season almost upon us, it's a good idea to remember a few things about watching wildlife. It's a lot of fun to watch animals in their natural setting, especially ones that are rare, or just starting to come back. But we have to be careful to allow them to come back.

Seals are very wary of humans, and will slide into the water en masse if you approach them. It's not a good idea to make them do that if they're hauled out (And the Coast Guard will take exception to it if they see you do it), because they can be injured sliding off the rocks in a panic, or trample pups in their defensive reaction to you.

Most animals that get habituated to humans don't fare well. We're just simply a bad influence, despite our best intentions. Most animals fear us naturally, and for good reason. So when you're paddling around wildlife, try to stay away far enough that you don't disturb the animals. If they approach you, then you should slowly move away. With seals, this actually creates a great photo

opportunity: Paddle backwards as you move away, and seals will follow you, thinking they're behind you. It's an old inuit hunting trick, and it works every bit as well for modern paddler's cameras as it does for inuit harpoons.

Nesting birds should be given a wide berth as well. Especially terns. Terns will attack you if you get too close to their nests (Remember Alfred Hitchcock's movie "The Birds"?). Swans, as most ConnYak'ers know, are territorial, too. Osprey and eagles also require a good distance from their nests, as humans upset them. There are also shoreline nesting areas that are roped off by the DEP in season. Respect them.

Your best methods of watching wildlife from your kayak are staying still, and using binoculars or telephoto cameras from a distance. You will be able to see their natural behavior, rather than their defensive reaction to you, and you'll increase the chance that they'll still be here to watch in the future.

Take lots of good pictures!

DEP to temporarily close the Barn Island State Boat Launch in Stonington for renovations

(DEP) will be temporarily closing the Barn Island State Boat Launch in Stonington for rehabilitation and expansion of the ramp surface. The closure will be effective **March 22 through August 1, 2004** while the DEP upgrades and enhances the State boat launch. The \$700,000. renovation project is funded by the Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Fund that supports projects that enhance boating access.

Renovations to the Barn Island State Boat Launch will include:

- A new, wider ramp of pre-cast concrete;
- **Gravel landing area – creating a gravel area to the west of the launch ramp for use by kayaks, canoes, windsurfers, etc.**
- Floating docks – constructing two concrete bulkheads with aluminum gangways each leading to 8' wide x 80' long, handicapped accessible floating docks;
- Dredging in the immediate vicinity of the proposed ramp and floating docks;
- Rock removal of the submerged rock hazard adjacent to the ramp;
- Parking area – redesigning, reconstructing, and paving the parking area.

While the renovations are taking place, the public can utilize the following boat launches to access Long Island Sound: Bayberry Lane State Boat Launch in Groton, K.E. Streeter State Boat Launch on the Thames River in Groton and the Thames River State Boat Launch in New London. For additional state owned boat launches visit the DEP website at: www.dep.state.ct.us/rec/boating/guide.htm.

The Empire State Building was built in one year.

SPRING FASHIONS

- WHAT TO WEAR TO BE COOL -

by Jay Babina

One of the most challenging times of year as far as apparel is the spring. On the bulletin board there was a new drysuit owner asking about what to wear under it which brought up some points that should be understood.

We can never forget that we are dressing for the water. With the occasional 70 degree day that appears in April, it's easy to lose sight of the fact that the water can still produce cold shock upon an immersion. This is the part that many of the recreational boat paddlers who are out paddling in their street clothes don't realize. Cold Shock can put your body in to extreme shock, producing a rapid heart rate, gasping reflex, extreme pain, paralysis as well as panic. Hypothermia soon follows if nothing worse has happened. It's quite different from just taking a swim in very cold water. People don't swim in frigid water 800 yards off shore in currents, waves and far from any possible help or the ability to get out of the water when they want to. Even on those frozen fin swims, people jump in the water, stand there thigh deep for a few minutes and then head to a warm blanket or get into dry clothes.

Learning to be comfortable in your drysuit takes a little experience. In a few paddles you'll learn how much or little you need to maintain comfort while paddling and still have enough on to swim for 20 minutes or so without going into any major stress. I practice rolling, so I really do know how cold that water is. I also know that a wet exit is going to be quite cold even with the dry suit on. I do think I can get back into my boat with a number of options, long before any cold water danger starts to occur. Every paddler seems to walk that balancing line between comfort and safety.

When paddlers compare notes on what each other is wearing under their suits, almost everyone is the same. In dead of winter, it's usually one wicking polypro (or similar) layer and one or two polartec outer layers. In the spring it's the wicking layer and one light polartec layer. Even that can get fairly warm if the sun is out and many paddlers will put on a fresh

dry under-layer at lunch time. In warmer air temps, paddlers will often wear a light wicking layer and a heavier poly layer and avoid the Polartec. Summer in Maine it's often one thin polypro layer although the water is still equally cold as in our early spring.

To cool down, removing your hat is the easiest first move. Then wetting the suit either by splashing yourself or a quick scull. A roll is fine with a hood but not everyone (even rollers), want to get their head wet until quitting time.

When you start out paddling in a drysuit, don't charge right out at full speed. If you let your body warm up gradually, you won't overheat. If you head right out at a fairly good pace, you are guaranteed an overheating situation in about 15 minutes. If you gently warm your body up aerobically, you'll be able to pick up the pace and maintain an even temperature. If the day chills out, you can adjust your warmth by picking up the pace or slowing down if that's the case - or putting on a warmer hat.

We're all different and drysuit season makes us pay close attention to our bodies much more so than during the free-spirited T-shirt weather.

I know that I don't like lunch paddles in the very cold weather because I start to chill out in a half hour of no activity. However, some people can lay on the beach in the snow, have lunch and feel absolutely nothing.

The only way to really know what your drysuit is going to do for you is to try it out. Take a plunge in the water. You can just lay in the water after a paddle within easy reach of your car and test out the reality of what you're wearing.

The drysuit is only a tool and just like all tools it's up to us to learn how to use it well. It's an individualistic issue because it encompasses our body, the wind chill, the water temperature, the paddling conditions as well as the confidence we have in our paddling skills.

Spring is a wonderful time of year and it certainly makes us want to throw the drysuit in the closet and forget it - unfortunately, it often arrives a little too quickly.

*Watch the bulletin board for
impromptu paddles posted by
members.
www.connyak.org*

EVENTS



1ST 04 PADDLE

**BLUFF POINT - SAT APRIL 24
IN THE WATER AT 10:00**

Pack a lunch. Wear protective clothing - wetsuits or drysuits. Destination picked according to conditions. Most likely we will stop on Bluff Point for lunch. (N) Novice - Advanced

SELDEN ISLAND CAMPING

Dave Hiscocks has reserved the Seldon Island campsite for the weekends of May 15th/16th and 22th/23th. He will be at the 15th/16th only. Contact Dave to reserve a spot for the 15-16th.

860-278-7440 Non-campers will paddle from the Goodspeed Launch that day as well.

At the meeting...

Our March meeting featured kayak photography. Many members brought along their cameras and waterproof housings and we all had an informative interchange about equipment. Some of the members brought prints of some of their photos. Dave Granger showed some of his shots via his laptop computer and Joy McNeil showed her shots on the TV screen.

Digital is definitely where everyone is heading and the kayak cameras seemed to average in the \$250-350 range which would give you around 3 - 4 megapixel resolution. Almost everyone was in agreement that the clear plastic waterproof housings is the way to go. They average around \$150. Several people used Rain-X or similar auto windshield products to keep water off the lens areas. Carrying a dry piece of cloth for that seemed to be a necessity.

Check the type of batteries your new camera will use as far as prices and power capability. Smaller cameras can only incorporate a small battery.

New camera models reach the market each week and the quality is going up and prices are going down. However it's still the photographer who makes photography look good.

CLASSIFIED

Drysuit for Sale: The Barefoot Company drysuit, men's large, blue, used 3 times, cost \$400, asking \$250. Call Chris 860-989-1918.

NECKY LOOKSHA IV FOR SALE 17 'x 22" 62lbs, Almost New, \$900 mmarkb@msn.com

Current Designs Solstice GT 17'7", Neo skirt medium, Excellent cond. Low usage, Reduced to \$2400 860-875-7052

connYak paddling season - 04 trips needed -

As the season warms up and paddlers start going out regularly, the posting of trips on our bulletin board will probably begin. Those with enough advance planning will be listed in the newsletter as well. We do need a week before the incoming month to make our press deadline. The convenience of the ConnYak bulletin board certainly makes trip announcements very easy and spontaneous, especially since weather planning and personal commitments can be negotiated. It's important to remember that posting a

trip in the newsletter does not mean you can't alter your plans or not arrive. The paddlers who arrive will make a plan and enjoy the day.

Paddlers who post trips are offering to share their interest in paddling with fellow ConnYak members. As we discussed last Fall, posters of trips are offering to share their paddle and are not guides or responsible for anyone's safety. Every paddler is responsible for their own safety. It's up to every paddler to be alert and try to keep a cohesive group. Group rescues and safety only works if there is a group to begin with. If you want to paddle off on our own or depart, that's fine, just let someone know.

There will be a pre-paddle discussion about the trip route and other concerns before all paddles.

Sponsorship raffle tickets are ongoing for Cheri's trip to the Greenland Rolling Championships. Available at trips, meetings, events or by mail to me at PO Box 350, Moodus, CT 06469 (receipts will not be sent, to save on postage). Tickets are \$3.00 or 2 for \$5.00. - Joy McNeil

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 check to:

ConnYak c/o Wayne Smith
680 Browns Road, Storrs, CT 06268-2717
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.

ConnYak Over-Dues

On the newsletter you receive, your due-date is on your label. If you fall behind with your dues, you get two months of newsletters which are stamped "over due" and then get cut off the list of active members.

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



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