

CONN YAK

C O N N E C T I C U T S E A K A Y A K E R S

March 2004

Crossing to Block

Wayne Smith

Big crossings seem to be a rite of passage for many sea kayakers. There's something about going to a destination across lots of open water that is a landmark for a lot of people.

By "big" I'm saying longer than 5 miles. I've done crossings of 5 miles or less countless times, and island hops up in Maine further offshore than that. However, I've never completed a big crossing until last fall. I've always run into either the misfortune of being fogged in halfway across to my destination and having to turn back, or getting to the launch & finding the winds and/or seas to be unacceptable for the paddle, or whatever. As Gilda Radner used to say: "It's always something".

So when Mark Starr posted a paddle to Block Island, I was mildly interested. Not so much in the paddle itself, but more in the concept of finally doing "a big crossing". A crossing from Point Judith, RI to Block Island is 10 nautical miles of open ocean. This qualifies as "big". The plan came down to a one-way paddle, and take the ferry back to our cars, as we would be short on daylight in late October to do a round trip. The hazards along the way were well known: shallows where the water piles up & gets really rough, fishing boats, ferry traffic, freighters, the possibility of having to navigate all these things in sudden

fog or wind, and the fact that you are totally exposed with no bailout options other than yelling "MAYDAY" into the VHF radio.

So, 8 of us launched at 9:00 AM, and headed out of the Harbor of Refuge at Galilee, RI. It was warm, calm, and the seas were flat. Once we passed the breakwater, a mild headwind came up, and a light chop sprung up on the water. Considering we were all in drysuits, it felt good. The air was extremely clear, so we could see the island clearly all the way out.

The wind continued to slowly intensify as the day went on, and the temperature dropped. We paddled along, watching fishing trawlers ply their trade, and had to sprint across the path of a tug towing a barge. A large freighter passed several miles behind us, but there were almost no pleasure craft to be seen. This made our day much easier. We stopped several times for water & snacks (Carrot cake cliff bars with seawater on them are just yummy!), and about 3 miles from North Light, the group split into two. The faster group headed straight for the beach, and landed about 20 minutes ahead of the slower group. When all were on land, we had lunch behind a sand dune that afforded us somewhat of a windbreak. Doug Manfred showed off his new sea cag (Which looks amazingly like a gore-tex tuiliq), and then told us all how warm he was.

After lunch, we paddled to Old Harbor to pick up our ride back. It's about a 3 mile paddle, with rock gardens along the first half of the way. There was a small swell breaking in the rocks, which made for a few moments of fun playing in it. We paddled into a 12 - 15 knot headwind

Continued...



Doug Downey at the ConnYak pool sessions.

Our pool sessions produced a record turnout this year. However, with a bit of consideration from everyone, there was plenty of room and time for everyone to get their share of practice in.

Photo - Dave Grainger - with his Sony still / video camera in an underwater housing. This month's meeting - cameras.

the whole way, and made it into the harbor just as the 3:00 ferry was leaving. We landed, and took our time changing and packing up our gear, because we were catching the next ferry back to the mainland. On the way back, we had a champagne toast to another "milestone" paddle.

Total mileage for the trip was 13.26 nautical miles, 10 of which were an open crossing. We started out at a speed of 4.7 knots early, which slowly eroded to an average of 2.6 knots as the winds increased during the day. One of the group had mentioned that all winds seem to emanate from Block Island. She may be right....

At the meeting...

At the February ConnYak meeting, Ken Fink gave an informative presentation on the "Gulf of Maine Sea Kayak Symposium" which is scheduled for July 9 - 11 in Castine Maine.

Unlike the traditional symposium, the focus of this one is "Creating a Kayaking Community". It's also a non profit event.

The founders of this event want to include more clubs and paddlers who are not beginners, looking for their first boat but ones who have an interest in sharing knowledge, ideas and concerns about the paddling experience. In-the-water events are scheduled and many forum groups on different subjects will be available.

Ken also mentioned the possibility of moving the symposium location around the New England states in various years.

The document on the right was presented by Ken and reflects their philosophy and intentions.

Further Information can be found at:

www.kayaksymposium.org



PROPOSAL TO NEW ENGLAND REGIONAL PADDLING GROUPS AND CLUBS

Prepared by L. Kenneth Fink, Jr. for Gulf of Maine Sea Kayaking Association, June 9, 2003 In keeping with the stated purpose of the GOMSKA Symposium event in July—"Creating a Kayaking Community"—I am submitting this proposal to clarify the ideas discussed with Keith Attenboro regard-ing the inclusion and involvement of paddling groups and clubs throughout New England in the Sympos-ium to be held in July in Castine, Maine.

The purpose of the Gulf of Maine Sea Kayaking Association's Symposium is to create a kayaking com-munity. It is hoped that this community will extend to all the New England area. GOMSKA is a not-for-profit organization and was incorporated in 2002. The July symposium is our first event and the present Board (Bob Arledge, Tom Bergh, Ken Fink, Gloria Krellman, Sandy Martin, and Phil Wong) is committ-ed both philosophically and financially to establishing the event as a new departure from other sea kayak-ing promotional events with a prescribed commercial tone. We want to emphasize the skills, knowledge, experience, and judgement that embrace safety in paddling on the sea. Toward this end, we believe it is essential to involve the paddling groups and clubs throughout New England by providing a venue within which clubs can display their newsletters, schedules, instruction, and other activities as well as participate in paddling forums and discussions of environmental, legislative, and safety issues. Specifically, we propose the following:

1. GOMSKA will invite paddling groups and clubs to provide volunteers to assist in the setting up, conducting, and cleanup of the symposium under the direction of GOMSKA Board members and each volunteer will receive free registration, housing (shared dorm room), and meals for 3 days of participation as a volunteer;
2. GOMSKA will provide table/booth space for each participating group or club for the purpose of displaying club activities, newsletter, paddling trips and schedules, etc.;
3. GOMSKA, in discussion with paddling groups and clubs, schedule forums and discussions that the groups and clubs will organize and select the topics for presentation, discussion, and the free exchange of ideas;
4. GOMSKA will promote the inclusion of group and club representation on the GOMSKA Board of Directors;
5. GOMSKA hopes that such involvement of group and club members will include decisions on GOMSKA policies and the direction of future symposia; The proposals listed above capture the intent and spirit of what we hope will be a regional organization that can influence and guide the development of New England sea kayaking and will result in an informed growth of our activity with safe paddling as our result. We hope that the promotion by clubs and groups will result in sufficient numbers of participants that any profit from the event will support future events and significantly lower the cost for each participant in successive years and perhaps even provide a fund-ing source for worthwhile paddling projects and club support. As GOMSKA grows, it could form the ba-sis for a significant lobbying group for local, regional, and national issues related to sea kayaking in the broadest sense.

At this time, these are only ideas and it will grow and succeed only if these ideas have sufficient merit and value in the years to come. Our original group came together only because we believed it was worth the effort to initiate an event at which paddling education, increased knowledge of our paddling environment, and solutions to issues and problems unique to paddling, and a regional exchange and development of a kayaking community could be addressed. We welcome and encourage your participation and support.

A WINTER'S TALE

by Phil Babina

Being self employed and having no work for a month or more has it's advantages. It allows you time to paddle, except it seems to occur when the weather is at it's most undesirable -in the winter. I was thinking about summer and decided I wouldn't let the weather keep me captive and decided to go paddling. The sun was shining and it was a nice comfortable 26 degrees. I put on the dry suit, packed some extras, loaded the boat and headed down to the launch on the Housatonic River in Stratford. As I drove up to the launch, it started to cloud over and a few gentle snow flakes started to fall. One guy who I regularly see fishing at the launch site sticks his head out the window of his car as I arrive and says "it's too cold to paddle today, are you going to roll?" A few people sip coffee in the warmth of their cars and watch in disbelief as I unload the kayak.

The edge of the river is frozen for about 8 feet, however it's only a foot or so deep at that point, so I slide the boat down to the the water's edge and get in. One boot gets water in it in spite of my plastic liners. I wanted to throw a few items in the VCP hatches but found they were welded on because the rubber was so stiff. The breeze was noticeably stronger on the water, now blowing at about 18 mph, and the wind chill seems a hundred degrees colder than it was at my house. The only reason I didn't turn around and go home is because there's so much prep work in getting ready for a winter paddle.

I usually never paddle alone in the winter, except this time I was just dying to get in the water - probably just missing summer paddling. The current was incoming and the wind off the sound so I headed out to open water. The Housatonic at the mouth can really rip along at 6+ knots, so I paddled along the shore line which made it pretty easy to make progress - besides, I had no destination. I actually needed a full face mask, but after a while your skin just goes from pain to numb.

This is not a heroic story about fighting the elements but one that just reflects my dislike of winter. Paddling alone in winter is scary. Even though I don't go

far off shore, I'm always reminded of the danger of the cold water as I see ice freezing on the deck. When you're alone, there's no second chances.

I made it to the mouth of the river where 3 - 4 ft rollers are occasionally breaking over. I suddenly felt very alone and venerable so I turned back and headed into the wetlands where it's calm. It was beautiful. Ducks were sitting in there along with the Swans and the Sea Gulls sat on the shore's edge facing into the wind. The wind was whistling through the dry grass and there was a peace and tranquility. I just sat there quietly for about 15 minutes watching, observing and listening. That little break, made it all worth while. I finally gave up because my hands started to ache and my bladder gets real active in cold weather, especially when it knows there's a dry suit on with no relief zipper. A commercial fishing boat goes by and gives me a wave which is a nice feeling. The snow flakes started coming down a lot harder on my way back which was not only beautiful but seemed to make it even quieter.

When I got back to the launch, the gulls were standing there motionless and they seemed to be watching all of this with total disrespect along with the people sitting in their warm cars.

Once I got home I decided to try to wash the salt off the encrusted boat. I figured if the water is above freezing it will melt the boat ice and at least get the salt off.

Lessons learned: Don't do that.

Everything freezes on the boat and on the car which I tried to hose off as well. The hose nozzle itself freezes, my trunk with paddling gear gets frozen shut and I can't get the car into the garage without a running start since I created ice all over the driveway.

I always try to enter winter with a good attitude but this year it's tough. My winter paddling is out of desperation rather than looking forward to a winter experience. Winter paddling is definitely a challenge and I think most of it has nothing to do with the actual paddling. You just have to savor the quiet and beautiful part of it and figure it just comes with a much higher price than in summer. It certainly makes you appreciate the warm paddling season so much more when it finally does arrive.

EVENTS



MARCH MEETING

WED 17, 6:30, WALLINGFORD PARK & REC

KAYAK PHOTOGRAPHY SHOW & TELL

Bring your kayak camera or waterproof housing for a shared discussion about kayak photography. We can discuss good places to buy, prices, dissapointments, satisfactions as well as digital vs film issues. A great primer for those ready to purchase or upgrade to a waterproof digital.

We will also show the short Cheri Perry Greenland Sponsorship video.

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.

Iceland Expedition 2003:

A Slide Show & Talk by Chris Duff

AT THREE LOCATIONS

N. Cove Outfitters

1-860-388-6585

Tuesday, March 23 at 7:00 pm

the Old Saybrook Middle School

Admission \$5

All profits will be donated to
Save The Long Island Sound Fund.

Collinsville Canoe & Kayak

Thursday, March 25, 7:00 PM

Canton Community Center

40 Dyer Ave, Collinsville, CT

Admission FREE

(860) 693-6977

From Collinsville Canoe & Kayak turn left out our gate onto Route 179 north, continue straight (do not turn left to follow 179) .5 miles to your second left, Dyer Ave. Turn left onto Dyer Ave and the Community Center is .3 miles on the left side. Entrance is in back of building.

Wilton Outdoor Sports

Friday, March 26, 2004, 7:00 PM

Wilton Library

137 Old Ridgefield Rd, Wilton, CT

1-800-782-2193

Admission FREE

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

connYak paddling season - 04 trips needed -

Right now we have no paddles scheduled for 04. 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. It's up to every paddler to be alert and try to keep a cohesive group. There will be a pre-paddle discussion about the trip route and other concerns before all paddles.

Banff Film Festival

The Banff Film Festival is a series of award winning films on various outdoor sports activities.

Sat., Feb 28 - Old Saybrook

Sun., Feb 29- New London

Mon., March 1 - New Haven

Sponsored by North Cove Outfitters.

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



ConnYak

CONNECTICUT SEA KAYAKERS

680 Browns Road, Storrs, CT 06268-2717