

ConnYak

CONNECTICUT SEA KAYAKERS

Spring 2008

Maytagged by the Tide (and I'm not washing clothes!)

by Joy McNeil

Just a little story about our trip to Florida. Den and I went down to Englewood, Florida for a few weeks this winter. Our condo was on a small key, with direct access to Lemon Bay on one side and access to the Gulf via a walk across the street on the other. We made almost daily paddles out the gulf and down to a nice state park (Stump Pass) for some play time. On this particular day, we had a low tide and between 3 and 4 foot waves, quickly breaking on shore. At the tide line, there was a quick drop off, which made getting out even trickier. Den offered to give me a hand launching, but I wanted to try to launch by myself (bozo move on my part). I got into the boat near the water line and then used my knuckles to move down into the surf zone. The beach faces directly west and the waves were coming in on an angle from the right, with a strong NW wind to boot. I got the bow into the surf and tried to push off. The bow was immediately pushed to the left and I was spun around so that I was facing backwards, toward the condos. The next wave smacked me over, and I decided that it was time for an ejection. I got about half way out when the next wave crashed in, taking the kayak back toward the surf. As I wasn't quite out, my right knee was twisted somewhat and I made a better effort to eject. I was now out of the kayak, but I was between the kayak and the shore. The next thing I know, the kayak is being picked up and thrown by the surf, knocking me down as I was trying to get up and out of the water. I sort of got myself together a little, but the receding surf then took the boat and me back out. I was somewhat underwater when I felt the boat again being thrown against me. This time, experience helped (duh) and I was able to duck down into the water and throw the kayak over my head. Now I was on the correct side of the kayak and was finally able to crawl back up the beach and grab the kayak. My nice new yellow ConnYak hat was missing (probably in Cuba by now) and sunglasses were nowhere to be seen. Den came running. He had been in his boat on shore getting ready to try launching. He helped grab the kayak and found my glasses tangled up in my decklines. I walked back to the condo and got another hat. We then emptied the water out of the boat (when I looked at lunch, I had about 2 inches of sand in the cockpit) and I got back in and Den helped me launch. It took some effort to paddle through the surf, but this time I made it. He then proceeded to try the launch. He disappeared from view, but was then able to punch through, with only minor damage to his chest and sunglasses. The whole time, there were two elderly



gentlemen sitting a few feet away in their beach chairs. I'm sure they were talking about the two idiots in kayaks for the rest of the day. Aside from this launch, we had a really wonderful time. We saw manatees, a shark and a loggerhead turtle. We paddled with huge schools of fish and surfed with dolphins right next to us. We learned a lot more about waves and surf. And, at the next surf launch, if someone offers to lend me a hand, I'll be sure to take it!



Joy in waves — right side up! Picture by Dennis McNeil



Haddam Meadows

By Jim Hegg



Sometimes you need to give something back to the river...

If you are like me you are always looking for new places to paddle, especially places fairly close to home. While it is always interesting to read articles about member's trips to other areas of the country we have some really good paddling right here in the state.

The launching guide we have access to is very informative and helpful up until you put your paddle in the water. What then? Is it best to head up river or down? Which way along the coast is most scenic and are there any good places to eat lunch or swim? I would like to see members write articles about their favorite or often paddled stretches of water that are listed in our launch guide. I think it would be very helpful to both old and new members to have this information and will also give Pete articles for the newsletter. It would also let even novices who don't feel they can write articles about technique, gear or safety become involved. I will try to get the ball rolling with a scouting report for the Haddam Meadows launch site on the CT River.

At Haddam Meadows I usually drive past the state launch site and stop at one of the next two pull-offs. Each one will hold five or six cars and I often will have it all to myself. There are a couple picnic tables on the grass and a short walk down a low bluff to the water. I like to put in here because it is not as hectic as the main boat ramp and I don't have to move my truck after I unload. Once in the water I most often head upstream. There is a large sand bar in this area so if it is low tide you have to paddle out and around it before you can head north. About half a mile upstream there is an island in the middle of the river. On the west side you will many times see power boats rafted together spending the weekend and they also seem to take over the sandy beach in that area. On the east side of the island there are some beach areas

starting about half way up. Many times we will stop in this area on our return trip and practice rolling and rescues since the river has a nice sandy bottom here. There is another sand bar on the northern tip of the island that you must watch out for at low tide.

As you continue up the river there are not many places to stop on the west bank. There is one little area about 1 1/2 miles up but many times there are fishermen here since it is a short walk down from the road. From there on up houses line the shore. On the east bank starting at the two-mile mark there are sandy beaching areas, their size is determined by the tide but all will accommodate at least a few kayaks. It is about 2 1/2 miles to the Higganum Bridge and the bend in the river. As you continue up the river you will come to Hurd Park on the right

If you decide to paddle down river instead, you will pass the site of the old nuclear power station on your left. Just past this site and parallel to the red nun you will find a large sand bar that is above water at low tide. This is another area we sometimes stop at to practice rolling and rescues. East of this sand bar is the opening for the old discharge canal for the power plant. If you paddle up this channel you will probably come across many fishermen and see quite a bit of wild life. You will eventually have to turn around since this is a dead end. As you continue down the Connecticut River you will come to the Salmon River launch site on the left. We have never found a good place to stop on the Salmon but have eaten our lunch at the picnic area owned by SunRise Resort. No one has chased us off but no one has seen us either. If you continue up the Salmon from here it can get very shallow and rocky. I would only use a roto-molded boat up to the dam.

I go to Haddam Meadows quite often, as it is the closest access I have to a nice area of the CT River. On Thursday mornings there is usually a club flying remote control airplanes in the field to the left as you enter the park and it is fun to watch them send the planes out over the river. I have also seen seaplanes practice landings along this stretch of the river.

Anyone living in central CT would enjoy a paddle launching from Haddam Meadows.



Pictures by Jim Hegg



Paddling (a corner of) Cape Cod

by Peter Kaverud

Although potentially accurate, "Paddling Cape Cod" is certainly not specific. Paddling The Cape can include a wide variety of conditions from fresh flat water to challenging conditions in large ocean surf with substantial tidal currents. The Cape provides a great variety of locations making it possible to choose a venue based on external factors such as personal preference, weather and water temperature.

Locals divide the Cape into three sections: the Upper, the Middle and the Lower Cape. We are part timers on the "Upper Cape" which is the southern section closest to the canal. Three main playgrounds are close at hand: large fresh water ponds, the chop of Buzzards Bay and the more open conditions of Nantucket Sound.

Fresh water on the Cape: there are many fresh water kettle-ponds, such as John's Pond. (You can use the public boat ramp or public and private beaches for access.) John's Pond is roughly three quarters of a mile across and one and a quarter mile long. It was formed along with the other Cape Cod kettle-ponds when glaciers retreating at the end of the last ice age left huge blocks of ice behind forming depressions in the otherwise raising landmass. The Cape Cod kettle ponds frequently have clean water and can be deep. The ponds provide great opportunities to practice rolling techniques, to paddle for exercise and to introduce new paddlers to the sport. Our friends and family plan for neophyte paddlers has grown in the past years and few complaints have been heard. Other uses for this body of water include rinsing sea-water from kayaks and gear after having been out on the ocean. You can also watch the ospreys demonstrate their skills! The osprey will strike, pick up a large fish and cleverly reorient it in their talons shortly after take-off from the surface of the water such that the wind resistance is minimized for the trip back to the nesting site.

Buzzards Bay is protected from direct hits from the Atlantic. This limits the size of the surf and typically provides for slightly warmer water than Nantucket Sound on the south side or Cape Cod Bay on the north side of The Cape. Tidal currents in Buzzards Bay are also less of a concern than in some other locations. However the water does tend to get a bit choppy with steep waves and a short wave period common. Although there are several spots to launch a kayak and find a place to park, I like West Falmouth harbor. Here, a large natural harbor basin is protected on most sides by land. The harbor basin ($\frac{3}{4}$ mile x $\frac{1}{2}$ mile) is also popular with new kayakers and when the bay is too rough it is the site for sailing competition for the traditional Cat-Boats in the area.

One reason for my being partial to West Falmouth is that this has been the origin of many great short sailing trips on B.B.

I have found a paddle from West Falmouth up towards the Cape



Cod Canal just the ticket when conditions are too challenging in the more open conditions of Nantucket Sound. Even a relatively cold, rainy summer day on this stretch can be registered in the memory bank with fondness.

Nantucket Sound (Mashpee/Falmouth area) Whites-Landing off route 28 in Waquoit is a good place to launch a kayak even if it takes a bit of a paddle to get to the ocean. While most places on "The Cape" can be crowded in the summer, there is a good size parking-lot near Whites-Landing. The parking lot is also close enough to the ramp to make it practical to carry a boat from the water to your vehicle. From Whites-Landing it is a short paddle south down the Childs River and a sharp port turn up the Seapit River, round the northern tip of Washburn Island to enter Waquoit Bay. Then, paddle southwest through this big shallow protected bay to the narrow canal that separates Washburn Island from Dead Neck.

The paddle from the launch to the opening in to the Nantucket Sound is a perfect stretch for a warm-up. Take a short break on the beach where the bay enters the ocean, to check your gear one more time and perhaps look out on the ocean to assess the conditions before continuing. A chart or map will show that the jetties on either side of the Waquoit Bay opening into the ocean protrude some distance out into the sound. The current along the coast often exceeds two knots and you also have to contend with the current entering or exiting the bay between the jetties. There are also some large gaps in the jetties that allow the current along the coast to cross and enter the canal. When the tidal current is strong you are almost ferrying your way between the jetties, and though it is no "Scylla and Charybdis", Odysseus would approve.

When paddling along the coast outside Falmouth, it is important to consider the tidal currents not only for the sake of drift compensation but for the effect the current will have on the sea state. Often the swells will roll in from the east and if you paddle in ebb current (running in the same direction) the waves will generally be pleasant and manageable. Ebb current flows to the west, opposite compared to Long Island Sound. Study the Eldridge book as high water on this stretch is at about the same time as in Boston.

There are many potential destinations along the coast. To the west there are the ponds of Falmouth connected to the ocean and to the east there is Popponesset Bay. So whether you are new to kayaking or a seasoned paddler looking for a challenge, come on up and paddle the Cape or at least a corner of the Cape. See you on the water!



Last words...

by Pete Smith

Marcus Demuth talk on Circumnavigating Ireland

Marcus Demuth accepted an invitation to talk to ConnYak members about his solo Circumnavigation of Ireland in April.

Marcus is engaging, and a genuine character. I found him to be down-to-earth, and remarkably humble about his impressive exploits. Having read Chris Duff's book about his previous circumnavigation of Ireland and hearing him speak about it twice, it was interesting to notice the differences in the way these two adventurers tell their stories. Where Chris would dwell on the emotional aspects of the journey, Marcus describes it as though it was a routine experience. When he described having to exit his kayak in the water next to the rocks and then drag the loaded boat out of the water and up the cliff (apparently more than once), it appeared to be an afterthought to help explain why he was cold and wet.

I'd like to think that I took something away from hearing a world class kayaker like Marcus. Frankly, circumnavigating small countries is not high on my list of things to do, but I am inspired by the skill and the spirit of someone who has.

Share with your friends!

This issue of ConnYak featured articles from members about paddling both far and near. Hopefully they will inspire you to share your favorite experiences with us. Many ConnYak members do most of their paddling right here in Connecticut, and it isn't all about fun and pain in rough water. Kayaking can be a path to meditation, exercise, solitude, or excitement. Years ago I lived on the Connecticut river just opposite Haddam Meadows and paddled that area just about every evening, weather permitting. Every time I went out the river showed a different character. At times I imagined feeling a bond with people who lived their lives in close rhythms with nature, chilled by cold rain or warmed by a friendly sun, or struggling to get home against contrary winds. Being on the water in a small craft is a special place for all of us, and I invite you to use this forum to share your experiences and enthusiasm with us.

Check <connyak.org> for the bulletin board, events, classified, and more.

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