

# ConnYak

CONNECTICUT SEA KAYAKERS

WINTER 2008

## Overdressed New Year's Day Paddlers

The winter paddling season is upon us! This is a time when many kayakers reasonably choose to refrain from water sports until the time comes when the water doesn't actually hurt when it touches skin. However, some endure the discomforts for the unique rewards the winter environment offers. This January first a group of ConnYak kayakers participated in the annual New Year's Day pick-up paddle. Although not a "club event" per se, it is comprised of a group of our fun loving paddling friends. For those that participate, this paddle has become a ritual.

Claudine and I were up wa-ay too late on New Year's Eve to participate in any paddle, but we did manage to drag ourselves out for another party that afternoon. We met up with about thirty of our fellow kayakers later for a good-by celebration for the ever up-beat and enthusiastic Beth M. at the Fisherman restaurant in Groton. She'll be paddling in warmer waters, but I'm sure we will be meeting up with Beth in the future.



No Drysuit — but a really nice hat

Reports were that the day was a rousing success despite rain, wind, and cold. Stories abounded, and everyone looked flushed and happy.

One of the draws of this paddle is that there is a Polar Bear club type swim in Groton on the first of every year, so there is an extra built-in entertainment factor for the kayakers. Doug Downey provided the pictures of the swimmers.



30-knot winds, rainy, 36 degree water temps – maybe next year...



Water fight

Pictures by Doug Downey



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## Product Review –

By Bill Anthony

### DeLorme Earthmate GPS PN-20

DeLorme, the map company in Maine, known for their detailed Atlas & Gazetteer topographic maps of each state, introduced their new handheld GPS unit, the PN-20, early in 2007.

I had held off the purchase of a handheld GPS for a number of years because of a combination of price, mapping quality, and the ease of use. The few color screens available and the perceived need to pull out my reading glasses at each use were also a factor.

So what does DeLorme offer? Well, the price is still not a big break. They offer bundles ranging from \$369.95 to \$449.95 depending on the accessory options. The options range from the unit with their newly released Topo USA 7.0 software to the addition of a 1-GB SD card and reader plus a power travel kit. Since the unit takes standard SD cards up to 2-GB, which are available at Radio Shack for \$20.00 or so, the best bet is the unit plus the travel kit for \$409.00

The big pull is the mapping quality and variety. What DeLorme offers on top of their well-regarded Topo USA software with full U.S. and Canada topographic and street detail is the additional availability of:

- Any USGS 1:24,000 quad map
- All NOAA nautical charts
- High-resolution color aerial imagery of select cities
- Black-and-white aerial imagery and
- 10- meter color satellite imagery

This means you can view multiple layers, either images or maps, of the same GPS location. You can see this all in color through a transfective screen which is readable in bright sunlight. With the backlighting feature, shade or total darkness is not a problem. These additional maps are available as downloads accessible through a link in the desktop USA Topo 7.0 program. DeLorme offers \$100.00 worth of download dollars with your purchase. \$100.00 of USGS quads and the accompanying imagery covers 386 square miles. NOAA charts come separately on a chart-by-chart basis. For example I took the Long Island chart #12372, West Haven to Westerly plus all extensions and inserts for \$10.00. After the initial \$100.00 offering is used up, you can continue to download maps and charts on a pay as you go basis. Maps are generally .75 each with a \$10.00 minimum and charts are \$10.00 with a \$20.00 minimum.

The USA Topo 7.0 software, besides being in the complete mapping software also comes in three CD disks and provides selectivity by state and speed in downloading to the handheld PN-20. Downloading to the handheld can be done directly through the USB cable provided or by direct transfer to the SD card via a



reader or computer card port. The handheld's internal memory is 75MB and any number of 2 GB SD cards can be used for a library of large file map combinations. Using the USA Topo software, one can produce any number of routes, trails, tracks, drawings and waypoints for download to the handheld. And in reverse the tracking results of a trip can be uploaded to the desktop for storage, editing or map making. The 75 MB internal flash memory holds up to 10 tracks with 10,000 points per track and up to 1000 waypoints and 50 routes.

The PN-20 is comparable function-wise with most other similarly priced handheld units with a mapping function. The primary difference is that the PN-20 does not have a GOTO button/command. Instead you use the ROUTE command to set up your course through a waypoint or a

series of waypoints. A MEASURE DISTANCE command will give you a bearing and distance to any place you move the cursor. If you have a chart and a compass on your boat, then that data will get you there if you do not want to keep eyeballing the handheld screen.

The PN-20 is roughly 5 ¼" long, 2 ½" wide and 1 ½" thick with a rubberized easy grip surface. It weighs 7.04 ounces with 2 AA batteries. While waterproof to IPX-8 standards, I suggest using a clear-type waterproof case around salt water as the USB cable contact points can corrode. With the DeLorme Lithium-Ion rechargeable battery, my unit floated. There was some discussion on the web that it might not with regular alkaline batteries. The extra tall buttons make it easy to operate with gloves or in a soft case. Its size, shape and rubberized surface plus a lanyard make it easy to store securely in most PFD's or stay on your spray skirt or deck while paddling.

The big plus to the PN-20 is the variety and quality of the mapping software. Nautical charts are a big bonus. Using the USA Topo software on your computer you can print out any of the available map types in any zoom detail of your choosing, thus creating your own custom maps or charts with any amount of user added detail and information.

Is it accurate? It was right on the posted waterside coordinates next to the lighthouse at Mystic Seaport. Since its introduction





### DeLorme Earthmate Review, Continued

there have been three internal software updates to correct some bugs and improve usability. Is it easy to use? It seems no more or less so than other units. There are a lot of menus and the manual, like others, can be a little obtuse or assume too much from the reader. But both the Getting Started Guide and the User Manual are available to read as a PDF file on the DeLorme website so you can read ahead of buying. I don't need my reading glasses. The screen is bright and clear and the text is crisp. And, yes, I have used it. I am anxious to try it in the mangroves of the Florida Keys this coming February.

I suspect this is not to be only multiple map GPS unit that will hit the market. But I also suspect that with the direct Internet update connection which the USA Topo 7.0 software has and the seamless upgrade from the earlier 6.0 version that the PN-20 will be around without having to buy a new unit when new options hit the market.



## Emergency Communications

The December ConnYak meeting featured guest speaker Timothy Mulherin, the Commander of the Milford USCG Auxiliary flotilla. Tim spoke about emergency signaling devices with an emphasis on the usage of VHF marine radios. He provided clear guidelines for marine communications, explaining what to say and why certain verbal protocols are used. As he went over the subject he inserted stories from his own experience, which provided useful context for the rules.

Many of us who paddle with ConnYak, including myself, carry VHF marine radios, flares, and other required signaling devices. However, for myself I have found that years of paddling emergency equipment around hasn't magically made me an expert in the usage of this equipment. From Tim I learned a few things that I didn't know before that could be potentially important. Such as, why it's a good idea to fire a second aerial flare right after the first one (because the first one catches the eye and then the observer is more likely to see the launching location when the second one goes up). Or why it's important to repeat things three times, such as: Mayday, Mayday, Mayday (because potential recipients are very likely to have their radios on scan and might not pick up the first or second message).

Many kayakers place self-sufficiency on the water ahead of being able to call for help. However, following Tim's presentation my attitude about VHF radios has changed slightly. I have accepted the idea that carrying a VHF radio isn't just for emergencies; it is also part of being a good neighbor on the water, someone capable of knowing what is happening in the area and even assisting others. My submersible VHF radio is now a fixture in my PFD pocket rather than safe, dry, and relatively inaccessible inside the kayak. For more information, the web site address for the USCG Auxiliary is: <http://a0142403.uscgaux.info/>

Thanks to Timothy Mulherin for taking the time to come and talk to us!

## Cold Hands, Warm Heart

Despite my wishes, the winter paddling season is on us again. Recently, one of my non-kayaking co-workers asked me if I go paddling in the wintertime. I said, "yes, but I don't enjoy it."

Well, that's sort of a joke. Actually I do enjoy it – but it can be a mixed blessing at times. I enjoy it the most when it's not actually painful. One of the biggest problems can be keeping my hands warm and still able to grip the paddle shaft well. The thin neoprene gloves that I prefer for cool weather don't keep my hands warm enough in really cold weather. Various assorted fingers get numb and become less useful as a result. Losing the feeling a finger or two isn't too critical, but if the trend were allowed to continue it could negatively affect paddling technique.

Neoprene is great stuff, but the problem is that it actually works better in the water than in the air. When neoprene gets wet and is subjected to a breeze, the evaporative cooling can be significant. Several suggestions for this problem have been tendered:

1) Jay has recommended using Gortex overmitts designed for skiing. These apparently work great for him, but they can be hard to find. Most of the available ski gloves do not have removable liners, which is necessary since you will want to wear thin neoprene gloves inside of the overmitts. The second problem is that many of these mitts do not have a grippy enough palm to hold your paddle well. However, if you can find the right product, this can be a great solution. The overmitts that Jay originally purchased were discontinued, so I tried purchasing a cheap pair of ski gloves and ripping out the liner. Worn with thin neoprene gloves inside they work well at keeping my hands warm, but the palms of my gloves are just a bit on the slippery side.

2) Sheldon suggested painting the outside of neoprene gloves with Thompson's WaterSeal. He said this prevents the evaporative cooling, and keeps your hands warmer. I haven't tried this yet; it seems too simple. However, my experience has been that Sheldon often has simple and effective solutions.

3) Rusty uses pogies. I tried some nylon pogies years ago, and IMO they were a losing proposition. After inserting my left hand, I had to use my teeth on the other pogie to successfully insert my right hand. I felt that I couldn't take my hands out since it was too hard to reinsert them, and suddenly it seemed like I had a million reasons why I needed to take my hands off of the paddle shaft. It was way too fussy, so I permanently discarded the idea of using pogies – I thought. However, I recently purchased a pair of neoprene pogies. They have worked well at keeping my hands warm, and I can slip my hands in and out easily since the hand opening stays open.. In fact, my hands were actually *too hot* when I wore them with neoprene gloves underneath on a breezy day in the low thirties. I took off the gloves and paddled quite happily with bare hands in the pogies.

Using pogies with a Greenland style paddle could be problematic because of the shoulder on some paddles, and I imagine they would inhibit a hand-sliding technique.



## Events & News

### ConnYak Dues are due in January

As a member, we thank you for your support and hope you will continue with us. We do our best to provide all the things that paddlers ask for as well as try to improve our club as much as we can. If you have suggestions please contact us. Annual Dues are \$15 and can be paid by mailing your check to:

ConnYak  
PO BOX 571  
Plantsville CT 06479

Without your support, we could not have pool sessions, a newsletter, a web site, a library, a picnic and all the other things we do that costs us money. - Thank you.

### 2008 Paddling Schedule is done!

The 08 paddling schedule was approved at the January ConnYak meeting. The schedule fills two or more weekends each month with ConnYak paddles and leaves some weekends open for post-ing paddles on our web site bulletin board. A PFD and a spray skirt are always required equipment for a ConnYak paddle. In the Spring, be conscious of cold water conditions and dress appropriately. For comments about the schedule, please contact our newly-elected vice-president, Sheldon Penn.

### Pool Sessions

ConnYak pool sessions are now in progress. Every Sunday in January and the first two in February we are using the pool at the Sheehan High School in Wallingford. Pool time is 9 am to 1 pm. Lessons are not being officially taught by ConnYak, but there are plenty of paddlers to help anyone in need. Cheri and Turner offer professional lessons. They can be contacted on the ConnYak bulletin board at: <http://connyak.org/>  
ConnYak pays a fee towards the pool so club members can use it for only \$15.

### Connyak meetings

Our club meetings are on-going every third Wed. in the colder months at the Wallingford Park and Rec. January featured elections of officers, and a Kokatat demonstration on installing seals on a drysuit. Coming up will be a photo show and lecture by Sandy Noyse about Greenland. Watch the bulletin board for these announcements.

### ConnYak flat water paddles

The idea of having some flat water or more novice paddles has come up at meetings. If you would like to lead a paddle on a flat

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