

## Wednesday Lake Practice

Cedar Lake - Chester, CT

Rte 9, take Exit 6. Head West on Rte 148 and follow signs.

Every Wednesday evening, paddlers gather at Cedar Lake and practice or just paddle around and chat. This is a golden opportunity for new paddlers to see some of the skills that advanced paddlers use as well as trying some of them yourself. There's always someone to give advice and help others but these gatherings are just fun gatherings and usually finish when paddlers get cold, tired or hungry. Paddlers arrive around 5 and stay into dark. At the conclusion which is around 6:30 or so, most paddlers gather and share snack food which they bring. It's important to remember that most paddlers take years to develop good skills, however, having a good time while you do that is just as important.

## Rescue Clinic

Probably, Sunday Aug 9 ?

Tentative plans are to do something that ties in with the Stamford meetup group at the Norwalk Islands, but preferably on the mainland where everyone can attend. This is another golden opportunity for new paddlers to see and try various kayak rescues.

Stay tuned for details.



## About ConnYak Paddles

All open water paddles are (N/I) Novice/Intermediate because the sea conditions can drastically change in an hour. Novice paddles are inter-coastal and river paddles. Advanced paddles will always be marked on the listing and encompass offshore crossings, and usually rougher conditions and longer distances.

Any paddle can change dramatically which is the nature of our sport and something we should always be aware of. Although paddlers will always help one another, ultimately, you are always responsible for your own safety when paddling on any trip.

If you're a new kayaker, please try paddling for a few hours before attempting a ConnYak trip even on a novice paddle. You should know that you can paddle comfortably for a few hours. Always carry food, water and extra dry clothes. A PFD is mandatory and a spray skirt is recommended.

Please fee free to post any paddle you wish on our bulletin board. Paddlers who post paddles want to share an event and claim no responsibility for leadership or safety. ConnYak relies on the involvement of it's members to make the club an active and sharing community. The club can only be as active as it's members.

Please check your label for your dues date. Expired memberships have a red mark.

## To Join ConnYak

Please go to our website at:

[www.connyak.org](http://www.connyak.org)

Go to "Join Us". You can fill out the membership application that you can download and print.

We are a non-profit club and the \$15 dues allows us to provide the paddling opportunities / website / library / pool sessions / picnic and other benefits that ConnYak members use.

Please mail your \$15 check made to: ConnYak, PO BOX 571, Plantsville, CT 06479

*Non-Members are totally welcome to join us on our paddles. Paddles are listed under events on our home page and on the bulletin board as well. We hope to see you on the water.*



## Thank You

**If you have been a member and continue to support us, we sincerely appreciate your involvement.**

*Don't forget our extensive library of books and videos - all available to members Free. Books are brought to meetings and paddles per request. Visit the library on our web site for info and library list.*

# CONN YAK



CONNECTICUT SEA KAYAKERS

Summer 2009

## THE ZIPPER

By Dennis McNeil



Just off the Great Island boat ramp in Old Lyme is an area called the "zipper." It is actually a line of sand bars, formed by the conflict between the tides and the outgoing Connecticut River. At low tide, you can walk on the sand bars, while at high tide, they disappear.

The magic usually happens an hour or two after low tide, when the incoming tide conflicts most with the outgoing river. Water and waves coming from different directions meet over the sandbars, forming a line of clashing waves and foam which "zip" generally from East to West. The strength of the clash depends on wind strength and direction, as well as water flow. Wind from the South or East is helpful for wave formation, while wind from the North flattens the water. A calm day may see only very small waves, but a good flow with a South wind may push waves in the one, two or rarely, three foot range. The fun occurs right over the bars, where you can be hit by waves from two directions at once. Approaching the bars from the South might get you a nice little surf ride. While the waves are not always large, several veteran paddlers have flipped into a close inspection of the sandy bottom.

The zipper is a great place for those who want to learn paddling in waves. If you don't have a good low brace, be prepared to develop one fast. The strongest action is in a small, distinct area where paddlers can enter/

## Lessons from a Kayak Festival

by Brian Cooper

Normally I am a learn-by-doing person. I taught myself how to knit and crochet by reading a book and practicing with needles and hooks. I have taken a few great courses in my time and have thoroughly enjoyed myself and considered the money well spent. My scuba course-my sailing course-my fly fishing course at Orvis on the Battenkill River. Now I can add my first kayak festival to my list of great times.

This spring my wife and I went to Charleston SC for the East Coast Kayak Festival. The festival ran Friday, Saturday and Sunday. We decided to take a course on Monday after the festival - a full day course taught by Ben Lawry, Sea Kayak Surfing. So, that gave us four days of kayaking fun and learning.

There were classroom presentations, demos, courses by H2O Outfitters and Master Classes which were taught by a variety of instructors. There were also morning tours, sunset tours, breakfasts, and dinners to enjoy. We camped at the festival site, James Island County Park. I can say that Charleston really has their act together when it comes to their county park system-including the online registration system for registering for the festival and the courses.

With so many courses to choose from-and the possibility of doing too much-we opted to take two Master courses each day. We signed up for breakfast when we registered and added dinners when we arrived. This gave us time to relax between courses and walk around the lake to take in the festival. Of all the courses that were on our "dream list" only one was full. Our goal was to take courses from different instructors and hopefully learn something from each. And that is just what happened.

*Continued...*



Tom Nickels teaches a roll using the center section of his three piece kayak.

exit as they wish, go back to shore for a rest, or even hang just outside to watch others.

If you want to try the zipper, watch the wind and tides, find some partners (not an area to go alone) and be prepared to get wet. To find

it, paddle SSW out of the launch and look for a white line about 1/2 mile out. If you stand at the top of the boat launch driveway and see a white line out there, you are in for some fun.



ConnYak

CONNECTICUT SEA KAYAKERS

PO BOX 571, Plantsville, CT 06479



## Kayak Festival Continued...

Our instructors included, Tom Nickels, Dubside, Jeff Cooper, Marsha Henson, Ronnie Kemp, Karen Knight, Ben Lawry, Cathy Piffath, Allison Sigethy, Mike Gray. We enjoyed all of the courses. Ben's surfing class was our highlight of the trip. At the festival, my most memorable course was Greenland Sculling Rolls with Dubside. Not because I could actually do any of the rolls but because I saw one of the masters, I learned what I needed to practice, and I did manage to recover after each failed attempt at a sculling roll and come up with a layback roll so that I never came out of my boat. Of course I was exhausted after the two hour



Judy and Brian heading out for Surf Class.

## 2 Lakes to paddle by Brian Cooper

### Rainbow Reservoir Windsor CT

The Rainbow Dam forms the 240 acre Rainbow Reservoir on the Farmington River. Water flows through the Tariffville Gorge and empties into the lake. The state boat launch is about a half mile from the dam. It is an easy 4 mile paddle up the river before the current and shallow water limit further travel. Across from the boat ramp the lake is about 800 feet wide. Motors are allowed up to 35 HP. During the summer, water skiers and PWC's are usually present along with fishermen. There is plenty of water for everyone and kayakers can easily paddle near the shore to avoid any boats.

The shoreline is forested with only a few houses. Across from the launch is Northwest Park, a Windsor town park with extensive hiking trails. Upriver are abandoned bridge abutments and some islands that can be explored. Because of the dam releases the water level can vary. I came to the launch one day and the lake was dry – drained down for

work on the dam. It was like looking into the Grand Canyon.

Close to home, Rainbow Reservoir offers a quick evening paddle after work. In the early spring I use it to test out new equipment and practice rolls and rescues. Later in the summer it provides a place to paddle hard for exercise or to just enjoy a slow evening meander. I think our most interesting paddle was one



course. For Judy, her favorite course was Essential Rescue Skills with Mike Gray. Mike taught many rescues that were the standard rescue but with an abnormal variation such as the kayaker who had one too many beers the night before and too many ginger cookies for lunch. He showed how to get them to shore but not have them puke on the bow of your boat.

The courses were only part of the experience. Meeting other kayakers in the courses, in the classes, at meals, or just walking around, gave us the opportunity to share our joy of kayaking with each other. I encourage you to look into going to a festival if you have never been to one. I think you will have a most enjoyable time.

## Congamond Lake

Suffield CT and Southwick MA

Congamond Lake is a 465 acre lake composed of South Pond, Middle Pond and North Pond. There are two boat launches on Middle Pond, which at times is staffed to collect a \$5 per boat launching fee. There is a pull off on the road between South and Middle Pond where you can park and launch your kayak. Middle Pond is heavily populated with beach front cottages and houses. There are no restrictions on boats. A few large pontoon party boats ply the water during the summer. The South and North Ponds are less populated and culverts limit the passage to smaller boats. No PWC's are allowed on the North Pond. The North Pond is populated near the south end but the northern portion is vacant. This is the perfect place to stop during a moonlight paddle.

We usually launch from Middle Pond about an hour before sunset and enjoy the South and Middle ponds. As darkness approaches we paddle into North Pond. We raft up and enjoy shrimp, cheese, crackers, fruit and of course the appropriate beverages of choice.



autumn after recent flooding. The shore was lined with pumpkins that had floated from farmer's fields and were now stranded about 20 feet up the shore. Many were floating in the water and Judy and I enjoyed some water polo with our GP's and a pumpkin. The challenge was to get the pumpkin to move some distance without smashing it.

*"Do nothing and gain everything ..."*  
- Deepak Chopra

Throughout our winter meetings there was voiced concern because our membership has been down from previous years. However there seems to be no shortage of paddlers arriving at ConnYak paddles including some new faces. Since our club encourages an open policy where paddlers can paddle with us regardless of whether they are a member or not, it seems that the paying membership has whittled down to those who truly wish to support our club. We had four paddles so far that were designated for the novice to advanced paddlers and a picnic. It seems with no special efforts, quite a few of our paddles find us in rivers and along shore on calm days.

Like all organizations, many well laid plans never materialize when there is nobody willing to do it. I don't think there will be any shortage of paddles that a new kayaker can attend. Throughout the summer the wind generally calms down and those seeking more challenging water will have to hunt for it. There's no reason beginner paddlers can't paddle along on any paddle and keep out of trouble by staying outside any rough areas. Most of our paddles have loads of optional routes where almost any paddler can be accommodated. Plus we not only have the Wednesday practice sessions but other practice dates posted by paddlers.

The desire for the club to grow has a price tag. It needs people to often do things they may not want to do. This is actually contrary to the foundation of the club where people joined to do what they like to do - paddle. I think everyone can be accommodated if acceptance and consideration is given to all who show up to paddle.

If there's an occasional day when the wind is howling and the seas are up, it will be obvious to everyone and obvious decisions will be made by those who arrived. Advanced paddlers may choose to go out and beginners will just have to except the reality of the situation or drive to a protected area. Sometimes by doing nothing different, all the self-manifested problems just disappear and correct themselves. - JB

**Any paddler can post a paddle on our bulletin board. You do not have to have any qualifications other than the desire to share the event!**

**89%** of recreational boaters who drowned each year were not wearing a lifejacket.

## CLASSIFIEDS

Looking for a used boat or selling merchandise? Post it on our classified section on the web.

## The Advanced Rescuer

By Jay Babina

When a new paddler attends a demonstration on rescues, they are usually left with the immediate realization that most of the rescues are easy and fairly logical. There's a satisfying reassurance that if they have to be rescued, it will all go easily. The unfortunate truth is that most demonstrations are done by people that are good at it and that includes the very important person who is acting out the part of the victim. The victim is never panic-stricken, choking on water, separated from their paddle, sea sick or in poor physical shape. They usually jump up on the back of the kayak like an Olympian and slide into the cockpit with a positive smile. These are the same paddlers who practice all the time, love being in the water, know how to roll and enjoy putting on a show. Right after the demo, they are probably heading to Yoga class.

Then it comes time for the beginner to try some of these rescue techniques. The smooth refined performance is dramatically changed to several clumsy unsuccessful struggles to climb up on the back deck of the kayak. Instructors usually try this way and that way and finally suggest a sling or whatever they can think of to make it work.

Instead of the low British style kayak that they were supposed to have, they arrived with their boat which is often 1 step up from the recreational boat with a high round back deck and the notorious high stiff seat back that rises above the coaming. They took up kayaking to get in shape and can never imagine being in the water in the first place. Actually, they want get this learning experience over so they can forget about it and go on with their enjoyment of paddling.

It often seems like we are still involved in a fairly primitive sport. In spite of advancements like GPS technology, our rescue techniques still rely on the same methods that were invented many years ago and are dependant on a lot of skills, strength and agility. The sport seems to be wide open for innovation with some of these techniques rather than passing along the same tried and proven methods that are actually out of reach for a lot of paddlers. When someone buys a beginner kayak, they don't think about rescues, capsizes or the fact that they may never be able to get back into their own boat unless they are in great shape.

There's no doubt that paddlers who develop their paddling skills and work on rescues, indirectly develop their rescuee skills as well. They know what to do if they should ever find

themselves in the water and they know how to execute their end of the assisted ritual. This is actually a subliminal value of practicing rescues. There's also the confidence building experience of swimming next to your boat and knowing that you will be back out of the water as you have done many times before.

For many years myself and other paddling friends have done rescue duty at beginner demo events put on by stores. It's a great experience and it's interesting how many on-the-spot variations take place. I've seen beginners on their hands and knees crawling along the back deck to re-enter, and even jumping up on the rescue kayak trying to get into the cockpit. They know only one thing - I want out of the cold water now! I don't care what instructions you give them, some of these newbies are operating on panic and instinct which is a very powerful force.

Even on the instructional end of rescuing another paddler, the greatest hurdle is getting them to get themselves up on the boat. Many times they try to launch themselves up from a vertical position next to the kayak. I think this is the most common mistake that inevitably leads to repetitive failure and eventual exhaustion. A very athletic person can pull themselves up from a vertical position next to the boat and often this method is demonstrated unintentionally.

It's important to stress the importance of starting from the swimming position with their entire body on the surface. If they reach up high to hold a high kayak, they will end up vertical very quickly. It's best to have them actually kick and float while just grasping the lowest thing on the boat they can find with one hand which sometimes is the coaming or a deck line. I always tell them to do a big scissors kick as they do a bit of a pushup and pull themselves forward holding the coaming with one hand. That little difference in technique can make an enormous difference.

For many paddlers especially those who are not in the greatest shape, this part of the learning experience may be more important than the intricacies of rescuing another paddler. I have seen absolute beginners rescue another paddler with no training whatsoever. However, far too often, new paddlers often struggle unsuccessfully to get up on their kayak during an assisted rescue. There are times when all the variations don't work and the sling will have to be the solution. In that case, at least the informed paddler knows what needs to be done and can be better prepared to help themselves with their rescue.

Learning what to do when you are in the water may be some of our most undervalued skills. Being a knowledgeable rescuee not only allows us to be able to be rescued easily but instills confidence on the water.