

# CONN YAK



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

November 1996

Over the last few months Connecticut folks had a great opportunity to paddle with top-notch kayakers, thanks to Terry Harlow's energy, ingenuity, and desire to expose us to the best. Terry traveled coast to coast and abroad amassing willing instructors via Paddle Plus, and on his own, encouraging them to come here to challenge us with new skills. With the likes of Kevin Mansell and many others, we all have a marvelous chance to become sponges in their midst, absorb all we can, avoid complacency, and become better paddlers. Kudos to Terry.

Four of us stood in a little circle on the beach describing our goals for the day with Kevin Mansell. We decided later, in the gloaming, that we achieved those goals for exposure to moving water skills and greater stroke finesse. The journey toward these goals turned out to be more fun and a lot more humbling than we

planned. We departed from Groton and paddled to Fisher's Island where we had lunch and later proceeded to the Race, an area west of Fishers known for strong currents and turbid water.

Little did we realize we would first have some Navy-Seal like training. We scaled and rappelled a perpendicular precipice. Pete rappelled right past

## KEVIN MANSELL MOVING WATER

his boat. We sprinted long distances (about quarter mile) and towed what began to feel like an elephant through the absolutely raging Race off of Fishers Island. We also learned some new survival skills such as paddling during a power nap and how to use the spray skirt loop to suck out the sea's nourishing electrolytes. (paddling with the spray skirt grab loop held in our mouths - an exercise in balance)

Nineteen nineties Seal training also includes some touchy-feely experiences. Kevin is a believer in sensing the elements, - so for one exercise we all closed our eyes and just bobbed and listened to the sounds of the wind, water, and shore. Then, we paddled with our eyes closed, an amusing activity as we ended up sprayed in every direction. Except for Kevin, who perhaps wanted to be alone. With our new skills we headed for the moving water where we were encouraged to think (uh-oh) about where the water is going, how fast, and why the water is moving in that particular place. Kevin then happily

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swamped his boat so we would think a bit more about what the tide was doing and what it is like to rescue someone in real turbulent situations. We now realize how strenuous it is to play tug boat against a powerful force. However, we learned ways to make the transit easier. Transit. We (I) learned a new word that day too.

Before we actually caught on to effective towing, Pete's tow line snapped when his load (me) became too much for his shock cord. Another time, that same load, now towed by John Tobiason, caught a nice wave and slapped him a high-five as the boat sailed on by. John misbehaved one too many times so Kevin relieved him of his paddle. He managed alright and never once complained. We all practiced surfing with our hands in some of the smaller waves. Later were allowed to have our paddles back.

We all immensely enjoyed Kevin's tricks and antics to loosen up a group. For every skill we reviewed there was some fun to be had, like draw-stroke races, timing strokes over five minutes and pretending to be Duracell bunnies to distract us during the haul back to the launch.

Mansell's goal whenever he paddles is to be safe and to have fun. Simple. ...Of course, we felt safe, but we also laughed a lot, at ourselves and with each other. We all left at day's end feeling satisfied.

*- Peggy Thompson*

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**Kevin Mansell is a BCU Senior Instructor Inland, Advanced Proficiency Sea, Level 5. Three Artic expeditions: 1983 West Coast of Svalbard for 2 months, reached 80° north; 1986 Northern Norway, Tromsø to Nordkapp -1 month expedition. 1993 west coast of Greenland, Sisimiut to Illusiat - 1 month expedition.**

**Author of "The Channel Islands: A Sea Kayaking Guide" Kevin is also chairman of the Jersey Canoe Club and on the national coaching committee of the BCU.**

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**Kevin Mansell is the founder and editor of Sea Paddler Magazine.**

*left - John prepares to scale up a wall from his boat.*

*below - the "power nap" ... Peggy paddling with her head on the deck.*



**John Tobiason, Peggy Thompson, Pete Thompson, and Kevin Mansell.**

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## EAST RIVER PADDLE

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 16  
GUILFORD/MADISON

The East River runs inland from the launch ramp in Madison. This is a wildlife area which offers a lot of variety (if we don't scare them away with our laughing). We will have lunch under the third bridge as usual. It's about a 1 1/4 hr. paddle each way.

### DIRECTIONS -

Rt. 95 - Exit 59 Goose Lane-Guilford  
End of exit head south (towards water) 50 yards to light.

Take a left on Rt. 1 - proceed 1/4 mile under RR bridge. Continue until you go over a small bridge (Neck river) take your 1st right on Neck Rd. (bear right) Follow Neck rd. to the end and you'll be forced left on to Ridgewood Ave. Continue on to the Madison Boat Launch.

Launch time 10:30 a.m. (In the water)

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**Note: All paddlers on ConnYak trips must wear the appropriate CG approved Personal Flotation Device and wear a spray skirt. The boat and equipment must meet CG requirements, including an appropriate signaling device. All paddlers are responsible for their own safety, including dressing for immersion.**

**(always carry extra dry clothes)**

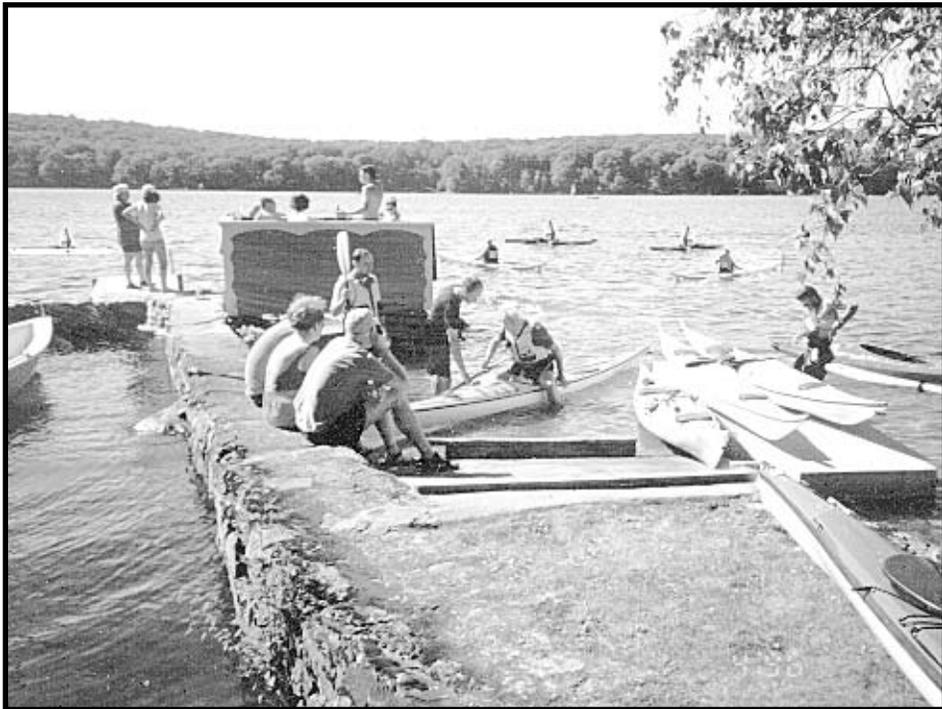
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Photos and stories are needed for the newsletter. Any photos of your paddling exploits ...wether it's a group paddling in a quiet pond or the conquering of treacherous seas. Your stories need not be great adventures or distant travel locations. Send materials to:

Jay Babina  
C/O Jason Design Associates  
230 East Main Street  
Branford, CT 06405  
(203) 481-6815  
*(all materials will be returned)*

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## REMEMBER SUMMER?



Special thanks to Linda Ivany and Mike Falconari for throwing a real nice paddling party at Linda's Parents cottage on West Hill Pond. We're also very grateful for the hospitality shown by Linda's family.

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## PADDLERS ENDURE STRONG WINDS AND RAIN

On a rainy Tuesday night, Oct 8th John Heath gave his slide show and lecture on Greenland and the early kayaking culture. He spoke a lot about the way the seal hunters worked, their way of life as well as Greenland society today. There were slides and discussion of the various skin boats, their construction and the way the paddlers used them. The CT River Museum was a beautiful and fitting place to have this great presentation. This was about as close as you're going to get to a Greenland Kayaker without getting on a plane.

### **John Heath / Greenland Trivia**

Greenland paddlers never used (had) a compass. If fogged in, they relied on the sounds of surf and birds as well as experience with the flow of currents in their area. Often mountain peaks could be seen above fog banks. However,

they would paddle in if a fog bank was approaching.

On 1899, New Year's Eve, one Greenland Hunter encountered a strong snow storm. With no visibility and a tough sea, he drifted all night and finally ended up 30 miles up the coast at the next village. When he finally got out, he discovered that he was at the village where his parents lived.

A source for drinking water for the Greenland paddler was the Ice Floes. As the snow and ice melt and form puddles on top of these floating ice mounds, it ages and the salt settles to the bottom, leaving salt-free water on top. They also melted snow.

Greenlanders were able to paddle in extremely strong winds and rough seas with the narrow paddles. The conditions could change very quickly due to weather patterns being hidden by the close mountains. The conditions could be so rough that a hunter might never come back.

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## TOM BERG SLIDE SHOW

Friday November 8th • Wallingford Park  
and Recreation, 701 Center Street, Wallingford •  
Admission is FREE

The Sea Kayaking Co. of Wallingford is sponsoring a slide show and talk featuring Tom Berg on paddling the Maine Islands. Tom Berg is a registered Maine Guide as well as a high ranking BCU Instructor who has been running guide training and proficiency courses for many years. Tom is the owner of Maine Island Kayak which operates from Peaks Island. He has spent many years exploring the coast of Maine.

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### DIRECTIONS -

From Hartford - I 91 to exit 14 - Center St.  
right at the end of exit. on the left - about  
1 1/4 miles

From New Haven - I 91 to exit 14. Left at  
the ramp, left at 2nd light.

**R.S.V.P. requested...**  
**call Cheri Perry at 265-4147**

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## ROLLING LESSONS

SUNDAY, NOV. 10 - WALLINGFORD

Mike Falconari - 269-0359  
or Wallingford Park & Rec. 294-2121  
Fee is \$25. for non-residents.

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## NEXT CONNYAK MEETING

WED. NOVEMBER 20 - 7:30 PM  
MANCHESTER COMM. COLLEGE

Videos by Terry Harlow and travel  
slides by others.

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## TO JOIN CONNYAK...

ConnYak is a non profit club that is open to all paddlers interested in sea kayaking. The club networks members, trips, launch sites, education and safety.

Meetings are usually on the 3rd Wednesday of each month. Yearly dues are \$30. Direct membership inquiries to: Stan Kegeles  
P.O. Box 2006 Branford, CT 06405

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## CLASSIFIED

Women's Med. Kokatat Gortex dry suit. Used once last year. \$400.  
203-481-6815

P & H Sirius, low volume Yellow/White - \$1460. 860-659-1223.

Wilderness Systems Shenai - 17'4" x 22" Kevlar 44 lb. -white/white, 1 year old. like new \$1650. Lendl  
Powermaster paddle - 216 cm. \$50.  
860-767-0610 Fax 860-767-0617

Betsey Bay Recluse - white/white \$1200. P & H Sirius, low volume Yellow/White w/skeg 5 mo old.- \$1800. - 860-721-1593

ConnYak ads (WANTED & FOR SALE) are free in the newsletter.



# ConnYak

CONNECTICUT SEA KAYAKERS

c/o Stan Kegeles  
P.O. Box 2006  
Branford, CT 06405