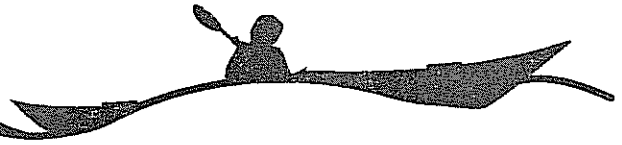


CONNAYAK



CONNECTICUT SEA KAYAKERS

August 1997

BLOCK ISLAND & BACK



(L to R) Rob Efron, Peter Hull, Jon Sweeton, Boris Tomicic, Dave Fuller, Dave Hiscocks, Phil Warner.

In gale force winds and a raging sea - oops! wrong story - "Conditions are favorable for a 5:12 AM launch" - under extremely placid conditions (did someone say glass?), seven paddlers left the beach immediately east of the Charlestown Breachway on an ebb tide (4 hours past high) and glided over to Block Island in a little over three hours. Halfway out we made radio contact with our escort "Patience" skippered by Captain Ric Walker (Sea Ventures Dive Charters -- 401-364-8712 and crew. He did not come too close because of the wake effect, but was ready to assist if necessary.

We made landfall at Payne's Dock

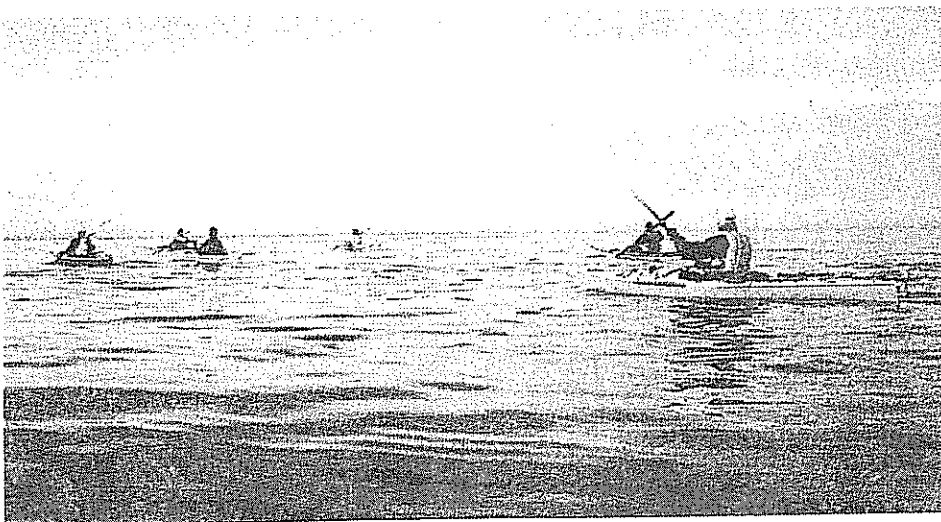
in the Great Salt Pond (southeast), found bathrooms and a phone, and walked into Old Harbor.

Since we had some time to kill until the outgoing tide, we decided to act as typical tourists. In Old harbor we did some shopping, checked out the ferry schedule, and hung out in the sun on the steps of the new Post Office. Coincidentally, most of us met up and decided to get some lunch at the National Inn. The porch dining area commanded a good view of the harbor and the Atlantic Ocean. During lunch we told tall tales, had good food, and rested for the paddle back.

By the time we made ready to catch

the ebb tide (1 hour past high), the weather had started to shift. Winds were beginning to build out of the southwest, and we encountered 1.5 to 2 foot chop. As we weathercocked our way back to the mainland - Hey! which stretch of land ahead is the breachway?! - we were pushed eastward. The GPS helped keep us on course until we could see the breachway about 4 miles from the coast.

Seven weary, but elated paddlers arrived back on the mainland about twelve hours after beginning their quest. Approximately 23 miles had passed beneath their hulls. The sun was still shining and plenty of light remained (about 2.5 hours) as we



packed up our gear and congratulated each other on the accomplishment.

I started planning to go to Block Island about two years ago. Weather conditions and tides limit chances to about 20% success rate. Weather (hurricanes) has postponed this trip twice. In consideration of safety, sev-



Arrival on Block Island.

eral criteria were prioritized as no-go conditions. First, the island should be visible - fog may burn off but sometimes does not. In fog and choppy conditions, a kayak is invisible to radar (for those boats that may be using it).

Secondly, the wind limit was 10 to 15 knots (southwest). After paddling into a headwind for three or more hours, exhaustion is a consideration, especially if you want to paddle back and not take the ferry. The ferry exists as a bail-out and will charge you per foot for the boat and the pedestrian fee (I suggest bringing foam blocks along and hitching a ride

with a car - for a consideration).

Third, the seas should not be bigger than 2 to 3 feet. Again, any bigger than this and you become invisible to power boats that may be in the same waters and not looking for kayakers.

Fourth, it is nice to paddle during daylight hours. To use the tides to full advantage, you will need approximately 12 to 14 hours of daylight. This means an early start, spring conditions (which can be cool but keep you from overheating), and morning temperatures in the 40s.

This will usually generate an offshore wind in the morning. As far as tides, it is most favorable to leave 4 hours after high tide from the mainland and 3 hours after high tide from Block Island. Our trip on May 24th left Block Island 1 hour after high tide, and we did encounter stronger eastern currents than if we had waited 2 hours. However, if we had waited, we would have lost a safety factor and possibly hit the beach in darkness.

The group made the decision to work with stronger tidal currents (flexibility is important). We were also hoping to beat building southwest winds.

As this was the first time paddling over, we considered a support boat very reassuring. Although we had excellent conditions, the boat may have become more important if conditions approached the limit of our no-go criteria or had changed substantially during the trip. The presence of the boat also allowed a lower skill level of paddler. This crossing should not be considered by anyone having questionable paddling skill.

*"We do this
for enjoyment
- common
sense
is critical"*

Because of the favorable conditions which we enjoyed on the trip: clear skies, calm seas, light winds, clear water, good forecast, and good company, this trip rates a "10". However this trip requires careful planning with built-in contingencies, chart, compass, spare paddle, first-aid kit, emergency repair kit, VHF radio, GPS, and a skilled group of paddlers (7 to 10) to really make it work.



- Philip Warner

EVENTS

MILFORD HARBOR / CHARLES ISLAND

SATURDAY, AUGUST 2

Possible paddle being planned but not solidified for printing time. Call Clay Luce for possible details. 203-877-8493

LINDA LEGG IN SEPTEMBER

DATE TO BE ANNOUNCED

Linda Legg, BCU Senior Coach will be giving workshops and a lecture/slide presentation in September.

PADDLE PARTY

SAT., AUGUST 9, 10:30 AM - ON WEST HILL LAKE - WINSTED

Mike Falconeri & Linda Ivany are having a paddle party at Linda's parent's cottage on W. Hill Lake. Bring Food, beverages and some extra food to share. Grills will be available for barbeque as well as various other food. Swim, paddle, wet exit etc.

DIRECTIONS -

N. on Rt. 8. Pine Woods Rd./ Motor Vehicle Dept. exit. Rt. at end of ramp. Left at stop sign. Rt on W. Hill Road. Go until 4-way stop sign. Left on Niles Road. Look for boat launch ramp on left. (at the far end of the lake) Proceed to launch ramp - parking is on the other side of the street. Cottage is about half way down the left side of the lake. Look for balloons & kayaks.



31 paddlers launch on the Clinton Beach paddle held in June.

CT RIVER - GILLETTE CASTLE TO GREAT ISLAND

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 6

Bring a lunch and spare dry clothing. Meet at 10 AM at the launch site on the East side of the Hadlyme Ferry Landing. (Below Gillette Castle) We'll shuttle some cars to Great Island. Trip is about 8 miles - should be done by 3:30. Call Doug Murray for info 860-521-8897. Rain cancels trip.

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. Beginners must have taken a basic course and be proficient in performing a wet exit. (always carry extra dry clothes)

WARM WATER OFFERS GREAT OPPORTUNITIES

On page 51, second column of the *Essential Sea Kayaker* by David Sideman, the word fun is used. In my entire collection of kayaking books this is the only place where the word appears. In this section of his book, David talks about playing with your boat and really exploring what it will and won't do for you. Sit on it - not in it, climb on it ...etc.

With the water temperature on our lakes and ponds as well as along the banks of the rivers at an all-time high, we have the best of times to play in our kayaks. This is the best way to practice, learn and have fun with no worry about all the cold water safety junk we usually have to think about.

Along the Connecticut and Housatonic River there's often 3 to 5 foot boat wakes rolling in at you

which give you a great opportunity to do all the things you wouldn't try in cold water, far off shore. You can also get some nice surf rides on the calmest of days.

One of the best ways to learn to paddle in rough water is to paddle in rough water. These large boat wakes offer a great fun opportunity to play in large waves while being right on shore.

Most of my kayak books are quite serious about the sport. I was always happy to see that one author at least acknowledged the fact that we do this for fun ...don't we? When we lose sight of this important quality, we've lost a lot. And... what better way to learn than to have fun playing in the warm water.

Jay Babina

CLASSIFIED

Wilderness System Sealution XL w/Werner paddle \$900. 1996 Necky Looksha, 1 mo. old \$1000. Accessories: nylon & neo spray skirts, Kayak sailing kit, kayak counsel, portage cart. Best offer on accessories. 860-346-6224

Necky Kyook, 3 yrs old, used little last 2 years- w/ rudder. \$750. 860-379-0454

Necky Narpa - Granite color, Deck lines, thigh braces, hip pads. Bending Branches paddle and spray skirt \$950. 860-623-6587

Kevlar Seda Gypsy (single Kayak) 15'3" x 24" - 36 lbs. Eddyline composite paddle. \$1500. 860-667-9305

Necky Double - roto-molded, Granite color excellent cond. \$850. (860) 659-1223

*Please contact the newsletter when items are sold.
ConnYak classifieds are free.*

AMERICARES - CIRCUMNAVIGATION OF MANHATTAN

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 6

Camp AmeriCares is a summer camp for children afflicted with or affected by life-threatening illnesses. The event is to raise money for the camp that supports these children. A \$250. sponsorship is requested for each paddler. (*You get people to pledge money for your participation*). The departure point is Chelsea Pier on the Hudson River. The route will be led by Eric Steller of International Sea Kayaking Expeditions and Manhattan Kayak Company.

For further information contact:
Diana Locke (203) 972-5500

CONNYPAC CLUB BOAT

During Stan's vacation the boat will be with Jay Babina through Aug. 24. Call 203-481-3221 for availability.

TO JOIN CONNYAK...

ConnYak is a non profit club that is open to all paddlers interested in sea kayaking from any location.

Meetings are usually on the 3rd Wednesday of each month. Yearly dues are \$30. which include Paddler Magazine subs. and membership in the ACA.

Send inquiries to:
Stan Kegeles
P.O. Box 2006
Branford, CT 06405

CONNYPAC WEB PAGE

Our Homepage is located at:
www.mindspring.com/~connyak
Webmaster - Fern Usen - 860-529-4612
E-mail Inukshuk@mindspring.com

Send newsletter articles and photos to:
Jay Babina c/o Jason Design Associates
230 East Main Street, Branford, CT 06405
203-481-6815 Fax 203-481-0786



ConnYak

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