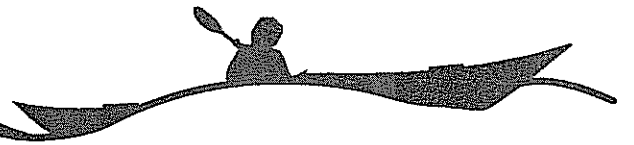


CONN YAK



CONNECTICUT SEA KAYAKERS

January 1997

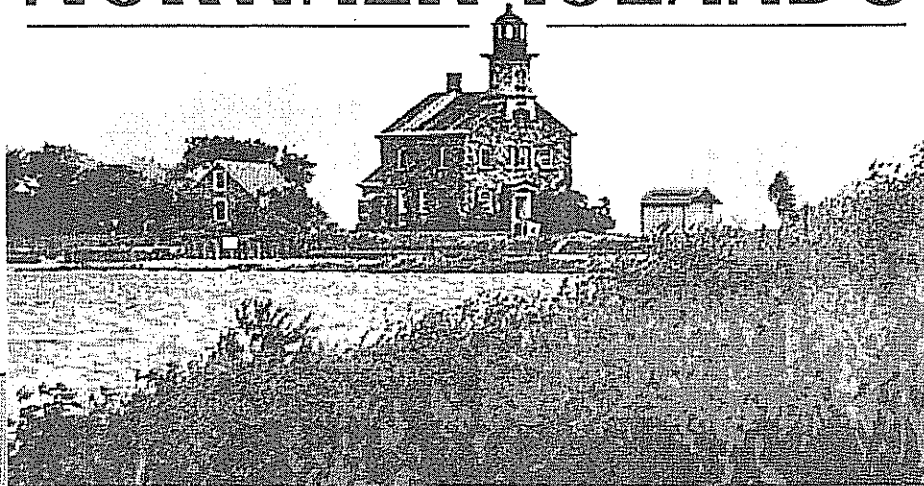
I admit it, I'm spoiled. Working in Norwalk, has made it easy to paddle one of the nicest areas in this part of the state. The Norwalk Islands are a group of mostly wooded and mostly uninhabited islands, five miles long and up to a mile off of the Connecticut shore. Although fast powerboat traffic makes the surrounding area a nightmare on summer weekends, these islands are blessed with enough shallow water, sand bars, and rocks to keep the powerboat interference to a minimum. Four of the smallest islands have a total of six summer homes, and most of these are clustered together, so a visiting kayaker will see more cor-

morants, egrets, and deer than people. The local plants include wild strawberries, blackberries, poison ivy, pumpkins, and even cactus. A winter visitor might even spot the harbor seals that sometime visit Long Island Sound.

These islands were used by local Native Americans as a summer camp

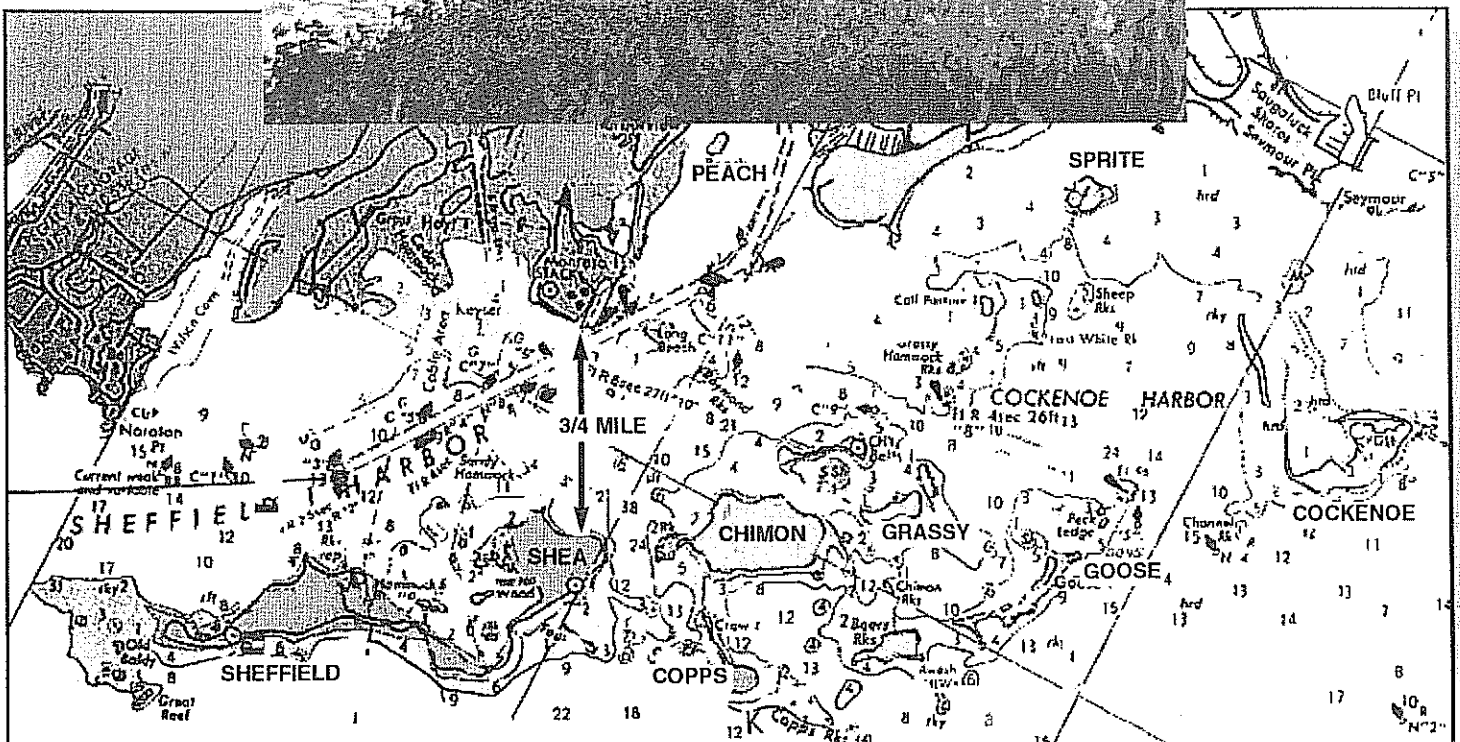
because of the cooling sea breeze, abundant fishing and shellfish, and freshwater springs on the larger islands. Even today, the local oyster fishery is one of the largest in the northeast. The tidal currents are gentle and the prevailing breeze is from the southwest. On a clear day the Manhattan skyline just peeks above the horizon.

— Paddling the — NORWALK ISLANDS



From east to west, we start at Cockenoe Island. A Westport town park, which is large, wooded and has a protected lagoon and salt pond. A line of rocks on the east side has surprised many unsuspecting boaters. I've been told, but not confirmed, that Westport allows

Sheffield Lighthouse



continued from page 1

anyone to camp here.

Goose Island is a small, brushy island where you'll find a small stone storage shed that was used for various research projects. At one time the rats on the island were used to test a serum against yellow fever, and then later the rats were killed in the 1960's to allow terns to nest on the island.

Grassy Island is small, wooded, and has the remains of a shed/treehouse type affair. You can camp here but there are more pleasant places.

70 acre Chimon Island is part of the Connecticut Coastal National Wildlife Refuge. Its large size and dense, thorny brush make it an ideal nesting area for several species of shore birds. This island was once farmland, and from the water you can still see the ruins of farmhouses. The public is allowed use of the nice wide beach on the western side, but is not allowed inland out of consideration for the birds. Some people resent not being allowed inland, but this restriction is a small price to pay to save the island from development. Before the island was purchased for the refuge in 1984, a developer had targeted Chimon for a luxury condominium development that would have destroyed the habitat and eliminated any public access at all.

A jump across middle passage brings you to Shea Island. It was formerly named Ram Island for the livestock that was pastured there. This is a Norwalk Town Park and camping is permitted. Ram Island Bay is shallow and surrounded by salt marsh, with a sandpit on the south connecting Shea Island to Sheffield Island.

Most of Sheffield Island is part of the same Wildlife Refuge and access is restricted to the shore only. Visible and accessible is the ruin of the Island Club near a jetty on the north side. Popular with celebrities of the 1930's, the club burned down mysteriously shortly after the owner threw a huge party and invited his girlfriend, but not his wife. His wife showed up anyway.... The golf course, tennis courts, and stables have long since reverted to forest.

In the 1960's, a group of hippies tried to establish a minimal commune deep in the woods, and traces can still be unearthed by a wanderer willing to brave the dense thorn bushes and enter the restricted part of the refuge.

The western end of Sheffield is owned by the Norwalk Seaport Association, and is open in summer to the public. There is an old abandoned lighthouse here that the Association is restoring. Winter trespassing visitors find this an ideal lunch stop.

To the north is privately owned Tavern Island, with a house that was built by the famous showman Billy Rose. Lillian Hellman was a guest there when she wrote THE LITTLE FOXES in 1938.

There are several other islands and exposed sandbars that make for great exploring and gunkholing. Your year round companions will be the oyster boats from Norwalk. Please give them plenty of room to swing on their trawls.

The main entrance channel can be pretty crowded during the warm weather, SO STAY OUT OF IT. When on the river, stay in the shallows on the west side of the river and travel down to the light tower at the mouth of the river. Jump across the channel at this point when there is a break in the traffic.

LAUNCHING

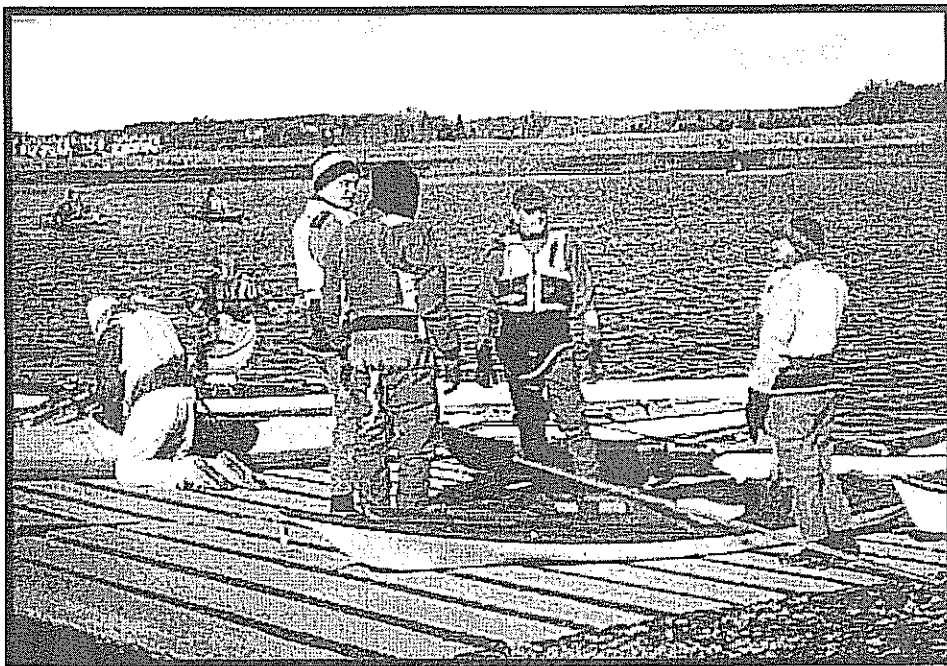
Calf Pasture Beach in East Norwalk is the closest access and has a site for launching boats. Out of season entry is free, but in season out-of-towners are charged \$15!!!

Veteran's Park in East Norwalk has a boat ramp about one mile up from the mouth of the river. Free out of season, but in season out-of-towners are supposed to be charged the \$15. Sometimes they don't check cartoppers.

The foot of second street in East Norwalk. The street just dead ends, and there is a short carry over gravel to the water. Always free public property.

Unofficially, out-of-towners can use our dock here at the Small Boat Shop. We do ask that people don't use it while we are launching one of our tours and try not to interfere with any of our boat demos. Also check in at the shop to make sure that your car is out of the way. We're in a large boatyard, and they frequently have to move 40+ foot boats around.

- Gaeton Andretta
SMALL BOAT SHOP



A cold start turned into a beautiful warm afternoon for 12 Paddlers on the East River Trip.

WE ALL HAVE AN OBLIGATION

It was a beautiful sunny autumn day, October 3rd about 1:00 p.m. Rob and I were paddling the Thimble Islands when he spotted two kayakers ahead, one of the boats upside down.

As we hastened over to assist, we saw that one of the paddlers was still in the water, the other alongside of her in his boat. We approached and asked if they needed assistance. The immersed kayaker exhibited total mental alertness and dexterity. She was not shivering and was totally coherent. They told us they were swimming the boat to an outcropping of nearby rocks where they planned on emptying the water. When asked if she was OK, her reply was affirmative and in good spirits. We asked if she would like a rescue to re-enter her boat and she declined. When we all reached the rocks, she exited the water. We noted that although she was wearing a PFD, her clothes were more suitable for a stroll in the nearby park. Her partner was wearing a wool sweater and slacks under his PFD. Neither had sprayskirts.

We asked if we could help her re-

enter her boat and show them how to do a rescue. Rob very calmly and patiently instructed her on how to empty her boat, and then using his boat, performed the assisted rescue with her.

We found that they did not carry a paddle-float (nor have any idea of what it was), bilge pump, charts, emergency equipment, spare paddles, or have any prior knowledge of hypothermia. We spoke with them about classes in the area. She explained that like many other people, they were simply "Sunday paddlers".

We discussed self-rescues and assisted rescues with them and watched as they paddled their way back to shore, hopefully a little more aware of their environment and perhaps seeking knowledge which will enable them to maximize their safe enjoyment of the sport.

Rob and I were certainly glad to have been of help that day ...it could have been a lot worse. That morning before launching, I left my VHF radio in the car, seeing the calm conditions. Big Mistake! This incident taught me

the value of carrying my VHF on even the simplest trips because conditions can change, and the help I may be requesting may not necessarily be for me or my friends, but for anyone who is in need.

I believe we all have an obligation to assist, educate and care about others, on and off the water. It's fun to have a repertoire of rolls, but our real strengths and accomplishments come from the compassion we offer each other every day. I believe that everyone would have offered help as Rob and I did.

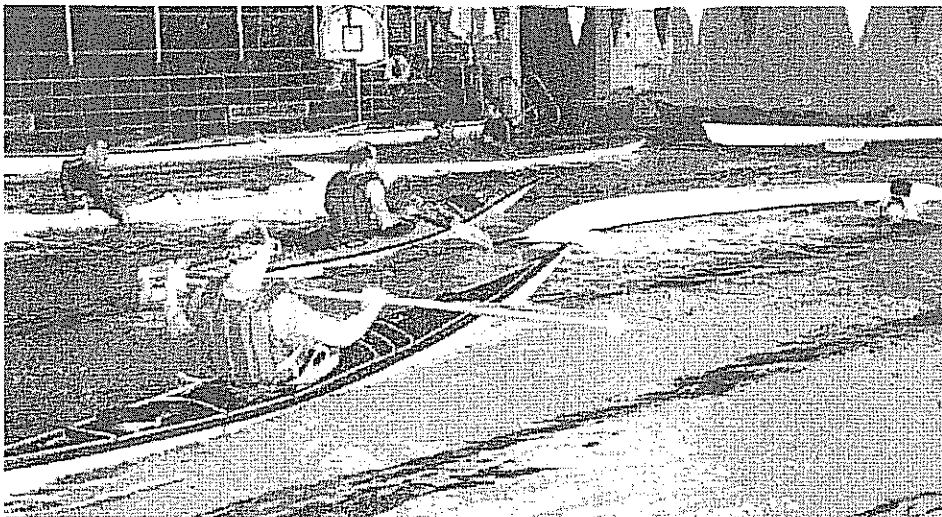
Rob and I wish a safe and happy New Year to all.

-Fern Usen



POOL TIME SCHEDULED

WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU TRIED YOUR PADDLE FLOAT?



Pool Dates: Sundays - January 19, 26; February 2, 9. Sheehan High School Pool, Hope Hill Rd., Wallingford (Exit 15 Rt 91. Rt 68 west past Rt 15 & Rt 150 - take fourth left.)

Mike Falconeri has offered to schedule four weeks of pool time with the Wallingford Parks and Recreation. They will be on Sundays in January and February for the unbeatable cost of \$40 for all four sessions. The sessions run from 9 AM to 1 PM. There's a minimum charge of \$20. Please mail a check to Mike ASAP since we need the up-front money to secure the pool.

These are great fun during those horrible cold days. There's no instruction offered just a great chance to practice rescues, rolls, re-entries and have a good time. There are always some seasoned paddlers willing to share their bad habits if needed. We owe Mike a lot of thanks for getting us this opportunity.

Send checks to
Mike Falconeri 49 Florence Avenue
Wallingford, CT 06492

DUES ARE DUE

ConnYak annual \$30 membership fees are due in January. Members are automatically joined into the membership of the ACA which entitles you to full insurance coverage on trips as well as a full subscription to PADDLER Magazine. (a \$15 subscription)

Dues will be divided into two segments: Joining January 1 to June 30th is \$30 and entitles you to full ACA benefits. Joining after June 30th, membership is \$15 with ACA benefits starting January the following year.

All PADDLER subscriptions will be addressed and resolved by January.

Members receive a club newsletter each month plus various events.

Send checks to :

Jim Gass, 64 St. Francis Woods
Madison, CT 06443

PADDLE PLUS - WEB SITE

Terry Harlow

www.serviceweb.com/PaddlePlus

NEXT CONNYAK MEETING

WED. JANUARY 22 - 7:30 PM

MANCHESTER COMM. COLLEGE

Election of '97" officers. You can nominate yourself or any willing candidate for any position. If you would like to help the club in any way, please say so.

MEETING SITES NEEDED

Alternate meeting sites more central to members are needed for the club. If you have access to a town facility, school or club house for a meeting, please contact the club.

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

CLASSIFIED

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

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

VCP ANAS ACUTA. Yellow/white,
Silva compass, Day hatch, retractable
skeg, enhanced fiberglass construction.
Dimensions: 17'2"x 20 ". \$1850.
(860) 529-4612

Keowe Kayak Saddles-paid \$80 sell
for \$60 860-693-1625 wk 860-653-8059.

ConnYak classified ads are free.

Send newsletter articles and photos to:
Jay Babina
c/o Jason Design Associates
230 East Main Street
Branford, CT 06405



ConnYak

CONNECTICUT SEA KAYAKERS

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