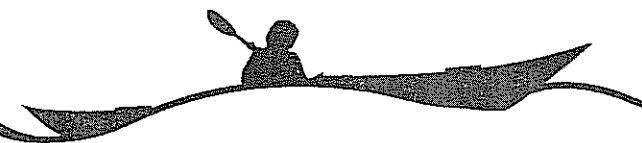


CONN YAK



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

April 1999

Searching for the Perfect Boat

by Brooks Martyn

Think back to the first time that you entered a paddle shop and timidly told the salesperson that you were interested in kayaks and would appreciate help in picking out the right boat for yourself. What probably ensued was a guided tour of the many types of boats that were available: small, oddly-shaped white water boats, recreational kayaks that were almost as wide as they were long, day touring boats, and long, sensuous sea kayaks. Depending on the insight and knowledge of the sales rep and the depth of your pocketbook, you went home with the perfect boat (you thought) that would do everything that you wanted. For some people this is the end of the story and for others, as their skills and interests grow and change, it is just the beginning of a lifelong adventure.

The beginner soon learns that there is no one kayak that does it all. Each boat is designed to do a given task in a specific environment. So when it comes time to pick out that perfect sea kayak, if voyaging on large bodies of water is your chosen thing, an educated choice as to which is the right boat for you is required. But what structural material is best—linear, cross-linked, or cored plastic, fiberglass, Kevlar, or a wood/fiberglass laminate? Should you get a boat with a hard, round, or multi-chine, with a flat, round, or v-bottom? Nick Schade, in his excellent book, *The Strip-Built Sea Kayak*, devotes an entire chapter to the intricate relationship between the paddler's body mass, the hull cross-section and length and the kayak's performance. In my opinion there is no perfect design and no perfect structural material. All are a series of compromises which are combined by the designer to achieve a desired performance.

Plastic sea kayaks are perhaps the most popular and most affordable

boats. They are relatively maintenance-free. Plastic boats are tolerant to being thumped down in a gravel parking lot and then walrus-humped off of a concrete boat launching ramp. Scrapes and bangs are no big deal. Their hull design is equivalent to that of the more expensive glass boats although the lines tend to be less fine. The deck layout of the newer boats is every bit as nice as that found on the higher-priced models. The big drawback of a plastic boat is its weight, which is normally in the range of 60 pounds, mass for which you must provide the energy to propel through the water. This much weight can be tough to carry alone and heave up onto the roof of a vehicle. A ball park price for a plastic sea kayak is \$1300. About \$200 can be saved if you do not plan to paddle in the surf or in high crosswinds and thus opt to order a boat without a rudder.

Fiberglass boats represent the next step up in construction material (and price). A glass boat weighs about 10-12

pounds less than a similar model in plastic. Its lines are finer and it is quicker and more responsive. On the down side, fiberglass does not respond kindly to abuse; the gel coat is easily damaged and the fiberglass will delaminate or crack if it is heavily abraded or crunched. A glass boat requires more care and skill from the paddler but delivers a higher level of performance in return. Glass boats cost in the vicinity of \$2200. But as one veteran paddler said, "If you're going to put that much money into a boat, why not go with Kevlar?"

Kevlar is the ultimate in man-made boat building material in common use. This material, which resembles fiberglass, is extremely tough and very light. Our original plastic boat design, built in Kevlar, will weigh in the 40-pound range. If the plastic boat was a VW, the glass boat becomes a Lexus and the Kevlar boat is a Ferrari! A sea kayak made of Kevlar prices out in the \$3000 range.



Snow surfing (on 20 footers) after the pool session this winter.

Maybe you saw one of those gorgeous wood/fiberglass kayaks at a boat show and covetous thoughts are welling up in your mind. Now you are thinking about a boat that weighs in the 35-40 pound range. While the fiberglass/plywood laminate is strong, the fiberglass outer shell is very susceptible to dings and scrapes: the care and maintenance required to keep one of these works of art in top shape is high. One gets in and out of such a boat in at least 18 inches of water and avoids dragging it across the rocky beach. Get the picture? There are two general construction methods, the stitch-n-glue technique and the strip-over-a-form method. Both require a warm, well-lighted work area. A stitch-n-glue boat takes about 70 hours to assemble and requires only simple hand tools and basic shop skills. With this technique, precut panels of thin, high-grade marine plywood are held together with copper wire and epoxied together. After the epoxy has set up, the wire is removed and the boat is covered with a layer of fiberglass. A finish of the builder's choice is then applied. A strip built boat, built from raw material, is tool and technique intensive and will require about 300 hours to construct. With this method, narrow strips of wood are glued over a skeleton form of the boat. The assembled hull and deck are then shaped, sanded, and fiberglassed. The art forms that can be obtained with the texture and color of the wood strips are exquisite and are limited only by the builder's imagination. When viewed as a whole, the strip built boat is an overwhelming task, but when broken down into simple steps, becomes an attainable project. Both types of boat can be bought in kit form and are advertised in the trade magazines. A stitch-n-glue kit plus finish materials and accessories costs about \$850. and a stripper kit goes for a little over \$1000 plus extras.

The perfect kayak has not been invented yet. The quest for excellence in kayaking comes from the self confidence and skills of each individual paddler which are expressed in the performance of his or her boat. It is a harmony not found in a showroom; it cannot be purchased. The only way to find the sweet boat that was meant just for you is to paddle a lot of boats. When found, a boat in which you feel comfortable and confident and which matches the type of paddling that you do will be a joy to own.

The Wier Point Controversy

Wier Point is an area of land 3 miles up the Pawcatuck River located on the Ct side in Stonnington. The 23 acres has been purchased by the CT Dept. of Environmental Protection as a state park and possibly including a launch ramp. The DEP owned 11 of the 23 acres which was mostly wet lands and last year purchased the remaining 12 from a private seller. The Town of Stonnington did not have the money to purchase it themselves.

Stonnington would like to keep this area for "passive" recreation and not have it opened up for power boaters, especially since the Barn Island Launch is only 3 miles away and serves the boaters with it's easy access to open water. Environmentally, Wier Point offers a pristine area for herons, egrets, osprey, swans and ducks and offers an ideal area for kayakers. Stonnington is trying to mount a convincing case with the DEP to persuade them to abort the plans of a power boat launch ramp and keep it for paddlecraft and passive recreation.

From this launch area, kayakers can paddle a leisurely 3 miles to the open water of Watch Hill and Napatree or go a few miles up stream to Westerly where you can stop, get out and buy lunch at the town which meets the river.

Marty O'Brien who lives near by the site, contacted us on this issue is asking for whatever support she can get to persuade the DEP to leave this area free from the pollution and noise of power boaters. Marty has been heading the fight to preserve the area and is also on the planning committee for the DEP.

At the meeting we will show her short video on Weir Point which describes the controversy and their will to fight it's being made accessible to power boats. Marty also may arrive to speak at the meeting.

We cannot consider power boaters the "enemy" nor can we consider the DEP an advisory. Not all power boaters are drunk water skiers. The DEP is just trying to make the State's waterways available to all people and has met this kind of resistance whenever it purchased land and tried to put a launch ramp in somebody's neighborhood.

I can truly see both sides of this issue. As Marty points out, "there's a

State launch 1 mile away on the other side of the river and four pay-for-launch sites in CT on the Pawcatuck as well as the Barn Island launch". Boaters seem to be well served in the area and seems to truly be a case where the area should be used for "passive recreation" since there is always a shortage of land designated for this kind of use.

If the DEP hears from numerous paddle sport enthusiasts, the case for a park and launch area free from motor boats may be met.

We can discuss this at the meeting, make a quick decision and possibly send a letter to the DEP in support of the efforts of Stonnington.

- Jay Babina

ConnYak Launch Directory

Stan Kegeles initiated this idea several years ago but unfortunately it stalled several times during the building process. It has always been a good idea and something that would be appreciated by new and seasoned paddlers alike.

We have decided to publish a simplified version with all salt water launch sites as well as most of the larger lakes and ponds and all the salt water estuaries. Also included will be the three major rivers - The CT River, the Housatonic and the Thames. We have purchased the DEP's guide to Lakes and Ponds in CT. We also know most of the salt water launch areas and those on the major rivers.

However we need your help with information about the "secret" but legal launch sites that only you know about. Places where a few cars can park and carry their kayaks down to the water.

Our plan is to have this a 4- page directory (the same size as the newsletter) so we can update it inexpensively and issue it out once a year to members and give a copy to new members. We will have very few drawings - Barn Island, Great Island, Thimbles and Norwalk Islands. These are launches where many destination choices are available.

Some of the information the directory will cover are : Directions to the launch; parking info.; dangerous currents, low tide problems or any hazardous conditions; boat traffic warnings and a brief description of what's there. We will not have navigational information or charts.

If you have information about a launch site that's not well publicized, please contact the newsletter.

- Thanks, ConnYak

Hello Paddlers!

I'd like to start out by thanking Fern Usen for a wonderful look at her trip to the Queen Charlotte Islands. I'd also like to thank Donald White for a his presentation on Surf Kayaking. Don obviously put a great deal of time and effort into it. He covered the evolution and hull designs of the boats as well as the many maneuvers and tricks these boats are capable of. Well Done! I would also like thank Gaeton and the folks at The Small Boat Shop for allowing us space for our club display at their recent "demo" We generated a great deal of interest for the club in an area of the state were we do not have a strong presence.

Special thanks to Ken Fink who came down from Maine to give us a really nice slide show on "Paddling Up North" along with some great information on paddling technique in wind and waves. We hope to have him back again.

Finally, Welcome Spring Time! I look forward to seeing everyone at our "season opener" April 10th at Bluff Point. Remember even though the air temperature is warming up the water is still dangerously cold so, dress for immersion! See You on the Water.

Ed Milnes



Paddling on the CT River last Fall.



CONNYPAK MEETING - APRIL

(Last meeting until the fall)

"PERFORMANCE SEA KAYAKING VIDEO"

Honest, we will show it this time. Also a very short video on "Weir Point" with a possible guest speaker and discussion on the ConnYak Library and our 1999 Paddling Schedule.

WED. APRIL 21, 7:30 PM
WALLINGFORD PARK & REC.

DIRECTIONS - Exit 15 (Rt 68) off I-91 in Wallingford. West on Rte. 68. (toward Wallingford) Approx. 3/4 mile take a right at the Fire Station (Barnes Road) - at the light. Take your first right off Barnes on to Fairfield Blvd. Wallingford Park & Rec. is the 2nd building on the left.

KAYAK DEMO SYMPOSIUMS

Try out your next kayak or introduce a friend to the sport. Lots of demonstrations and always good time.

Collinsville Canoe and Kayak

Sat. & Sun. April 17 & 18th.
Collinsville, CT
Call for further info. 860-693-6977

North Cove Outfitters

Sat. & Sun. May 1st & 2nd.
Held at Camp Hazen in Chester
Call for further info. 860-388-6585

CONNYPAK MESSAGE SYSTEM (203) 603-4615

Information regarding events, trip schedule updates, cancellations, etc. will be heard at this number.

CONNYPAK DIRECTORY UPDATE

The annual ConnYak Membership Directory will be mailed out soon. Contact Dick Gamble for any changes in address, phone etc, as well as adding your e-mail to the listing.
email: richard.f.gamble@snet.net
... or the message center 203-603-4615

BRING BOOKS AND VIDEOS

...to the meeting that you wish to donate to the ConnYak Library.

PADDLE SCHEDULE

APRIL

10th - Bluff Point Park - Groton
17th - Great Island - Lyme
24th - Barn Island paddle to Stonington Harbor

BLUFF POINT PADDLE/PICNIC

SATURDAY, APRIL 10

There's are large pond and protected bay as well as two islands right off shore in the Groton Harbor. (Sometimes there's a gentle offshore breeze)

DIRECTIONS -

I-95 to exit 88 in Groton. Head towards water (south) thru two lights to the junction of Rte. 1. Right on Rte. 1. Left at first light (Depot Road). Continue on to Bluff Point State Park. In the water by 10:30 a.m. (pack a lunch)

GREAT ISLAND - (Farmington River cancelled-opening day for fishing)

SATURDAY, APRIL 17

Lt. River, Back River or Around Great Island - according to wind conditions.

DIRECTIONS - GREAT ISLAND

I-95 to exit 70. go south on rt. 156 (Shore Road) approx. 2 miles to Smith's Neck Road (boat launch sign on the Rt.) Follow it to the end - to the launch ramp.

Explore marshes - Inland waterways of the new CT River Estuary Paddle Trail.

BARN ISLAND - STONNINGTON HARBOR

SATURDAY, APRIL 24 - STONINGTON

Paddle to Sonnington Harbor.

(The previously scheduled "Blessing of the Fleet" is in late summer, which we plan to paddle at that time)

Pack lunch. Launch at 10 a.m.

DIRECTIONS -

I-95 to exit 91 in Stonnington. Right at the end of the ramp - proceed to Stop sign. Take a right and first left heading toward downtown Stonington. At first junction go left on Rt 1. Approx 2 miles is a light with the sign for the Barn Island Launch. Take a right and another immediate right to the launch ramp. In the water by 10:00 a.m.

All itineraries subject to change due to conditions.

CLASSIFIED

Feathercraft K1 Expedition Single (foldable kayak) 15' 11" x 25", costs \$ 3850.00 sacrifice \$3000.00. Never in the water. 203-772-3174.

2 Woman's Kokatat drysuits, med & small - Bib style, boots incl. New \$275. 860-693-9625

Necky Sea Kayak, Looksha IV S, 16'4", like new. White & turquoise \$1600.00 860-228-0105

Wilderness Systems Sealution—Kevlar w/rudder, blue/white. Includes Werner paddle, Spray Skirt, Bilge pump, Paddle float, Yakima saddles. \$1500. 860-485-9173

Thule rack system, complete with 2-58" bars, 4 saddles without straps, 4 gutter feet with locks. \$150. Call 860-613-0622

Betsie Bay Manitou - fiberglass 22" x 18', excellent cond. \$1400. 203-269-0569

Kayak Trailer - holds 16 boats \$500. 203-265-4147

Nigel Dennis "Greenlander" Kayak. \$1400 203-265-4147

Patuxent 17'6"x22", 35 lb. sea kayak by Ches. Light Craft. Low volume, hard chine stitch-n-glue, varnish / off-white. Strong tracker, fas \$925. (860) 653-5899.

Primex kayak cart. Paid \$119, asking \$80. Used twice. 203 426-8286

Necky Looksha IV - Kevlar, 43lbs, 16'6" x 22". Blue/white-yellow hatch covers. Exc. cond. \$1700 Day (860) 243-7711 or Evenings (860)496-8784.

Reiver - Derek Hutchinson design, 17' 1 1/2" x 22" - fiberglass, Day hatch, spray skirt. ex. cond. \$1600.00 (203) 457-0149.

Nigel Dennis Greenlander kayak, white over white with skeg \$1350. 860-659-1223

P&H Capella, poly, blue, \$1000 860 659-1223

Orca, Royalex 16' with rudder, demo red over white, \$1400 860 659-1223

Toksook demo paddle, 2 piece, \$150. Ainsworth 1 piece paddle, \$50 860 659-1223

Nordkapp HM Loaded; day hatch, foot pump, compass, knee tube. large cockpit, yellow over white. \$1600.00 Day (860)441-8416 Evening (860)535-8087

P&H Capella, yellow, new Oct.98, 17' x 22" stable, fun boat. \$1,250. 401-596-4482 anytime.

Necky Looksha Sport, 14' 4" x 22.5", rudder, bulkheads, hatches, granite color. \$800. 860-537-1157

Perception dancer, white-water kayak. Includes spray skirt, flotation. \$300. (203)453-3369.

Two Necky swallow kayaks, glass, 16' 10" x 24', Tan & blue - no rudder, White & red w/rudder. good start-up boats. \$700 ea. 860-663-1411

Please contact the Newsletter when items are sold.

Send newsletter articles or classifieds to:
Jay Babina e-mail Jbabina@snet.net
7 Jeffrey Lane, N. Branford, CT 06471
203-481-3221 Fax 203-481-1136

KAYAK SKILLS & ROLLING

Urban Eskimo Kayaking - Mike Falconeri

Skills Workshops May 18

Eskimo Rolling - April 18, May 16 Safety & Rescue - April 17, May 15

Sheehan High School pool in Wallingford
Call for specifics - Mike at 203-284-9212

TO JOIN CONNYAK...

ConnYak is a non profit club that is open to all paddlers interested in sea kayaking from any location. ConnYak annual membership fee is \$15. Members can join the ACA with a club discount for \$15 which entitles you to full insurance coverage on trips as well as a full subscription to PADDLER Magazine. (a \$15 subscription)

Send inquiries to: Ed Milnes

35 Hampton Park, Branford, CT 06405

e-mail: Connyak@mindspring.com

Website: mindspring.com/~connyak



c/o Ed Milnes
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