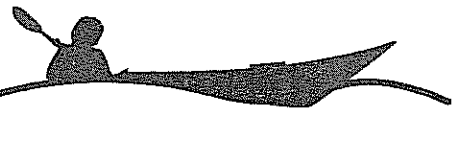


CONNAYAK

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CONNECTICUT SEA KAYAKERS

May 1999

It could have been

Déjà Vu

at Bluff Point ...but it wasn't.

by Jim Mathews

Yogi Bera is quoted with the déjà vu redundancy "over and over again", suggesting that things never changed from season to season. Connyak, however is a different entity, and one year later there is evidence of change. This year's annual opening event of the club, the Bluff Point State Park paddle and picnic was held on Saturday, April 10 under a blue sky, bright sunlight and temperature in the 50's. A sizeable crowd of club members eager to begin the season arrived along with predicted gusty winds which were to blow from the north at up to 25 miles per hour. It was all so familiar to those who were present last year.

Well, that's were the similarity ends. Last year's events on that opening day provided a number of lessons learned by a good many of the club members and by the club itself. This year's outing demonstrated many remarkable and important differences. First, everybody who showed up, was dressed for immersion - gone were the shorts and the farmer johns. Second, the number of people who were prepared to help others was relatively large in terms of those carrying tow ropes, VHF radios, and extra warm cloths. Third, there was a briefing meeting held on shore where the conditions were discussed, and the trip was outlined in terms of the physical features that would be encountered. Cautionary statements were made about not feeling obligated to do something you were not ready for, and paddlers were encouraged to ask for any kind of assistance they needed

from those with more experience. Fourth, the philosophy of "looking back" was stressed so that everybody would be in a position to help others should the need arise. Lastly, there was a final message about safety - "stay together - don't let the group get to far apart and wait for those who fall behind".

Off the flotilla went, into the protected bay that is sided by an airport and a nature trail. The wind was blowing causing a bit of weather cocking but no other real impediments. As we left the protected waters we circumnavigated Pine Island and then on the lee side of the Island the group stopped for a rest. At that point, some members of the club eyed the Dumpling Islands out in the sound and started to talk about trying to complete the journey started last year before the fateful and near tragic events began. Bob Ferente who had called the "group meeting" with Dick Gamble, said to the group of paddlers, "if you going out to the sound join that group, and if you are not please come over here". So, there was no mistake by

those who were ready for the two mile excursion out into the sound. The firm yet gentle leadership that was exerted reduced the possibility of any of us doing something that we were not ready for or comfortable in doing.

Eleven club members, half of whom had tried it last year, paddled out into the sound with the wind and current behind them. The boats moved quickly and smoothly as the water had little in the way of waves. Those of us who had tried this last year were recalling the pitching and bouncing along with the surfing that we experienced in these same waters. This time however, the conditions favored us and in turn we honored the conditions by insuring that we stayed together in one group despite the differences in age, strength and experience.

North Dumpling is an interesting visual array with a windmill, a stone house, what looks like a stonehenge-like formation of vertical rocks on the summit of the isle and a large gray amphibious craft that is parked suggesting that the island inhabitants are equally



Paddling on the CT River - last year's camp and paddle on Seldon Island.

comfortable with land and with sea. With no trespassing signs indicating that this was not to be our lunch stop, we paddled on a bit further. The next island was a bird nesting sanctuary, so on we went again. The next stop, just a stone's throw from Fishers Island became our place for lunch. As we stood on that spit of land which was really not much more than a group of small and large rocks with assorted drift wood strewn about, we could look back across the sound and spot Pine Island in the shimmering sunlight.

It quickly became obvious that the wind speed was now picking up and was blowing against us and against the current, setting up the same conditions that we endured last year when we tried to make it back to Bluff Point. As we paddled back, the wind speed would vary as if to play with us, taunting all who would remember the struggle of a year ago. The closer we got to Pine Island, the stronger the wind blew, as if testing our resolve. Again we remembered the lesson learned from the past season, stay together and be there for each other.

Our arrival back at the launch site at 3 p.m. was greeted by Dick who indicated that the rest of the group had had an

equally good time and that they too had lived by the lessons learned from last year and had paddled safely and together in a group.

This year there were no capsizes, and no rescues and while it is true that many of us had now an additional year of paddling skills behind us, there was a greater sense of group awareness and sensitivity as well as safety consciousness. We can always improve on this progress. Since the club has been growing larger, and has been attracting more and more paddlers of different abilities to our trips, I would like to suggest that we seriously consider establishing some further safety procedures.

Some of these procedures future Connyak paddles might include are:

A sign-in/sign-out sheet which would be monitored by one member/leader of the trip to insure that all who start are accounted for at the end of the day.

A designated front and rear person, each equipped with a VHF radio, to reduce the likelihood that the group gets separated.

Distribution of some type of map for to each participant so that they can be better informed about the trip for both personal safety and skill development.

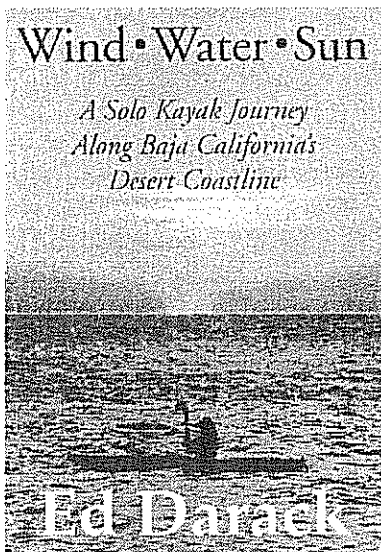
We might even consider insuring that each paddler has a "buddy" that they can count on being relatively near them through the trip.

Lastly, we might even consider grading each of the various outings with some code system as other clubs in other activities do such as hiking and cross country skiing. Each club member could select a club paddle activity for which they were prepared by skill level including personal experience as well as the specific characteristics of the trip such as length in miles, time, and possible wind, wave and current conditions.

We have grown and will continue to grow in both numbers and in heterogeneity of skills and abilities. Connyak offers its membership wonderful opportunities to paddle with others who share the enthusiasm for Kayaking and for camaraderie. What we learn from one experience and one season can be put to good use in our development and evolution, but there are some changes we can make before we have a situation occur that causes a problem or even a tragedy. How lucky we are in our organization that there is very little likelihood for us to really have déjà vu all over again.

Jim Mathews

Books:



Wind • Water • Sun, by Ed Darack
Published by Poudre Canyon Press
Fort Collins, CO. \$29.95

In November, 1997, I went on a 2-week kayaking trip in Baja California. After

reading an excerpt of Ed Darack's book in *Sea Kayaker* magazine, I had to get a copy to compare experiences I checked both BarnesandNoble.com and Amazon.com web sites. No luck. I went to the Adventurous Traveler website (www.adventuroustraveler.com) and ordered a copy for \$29.95 plus shipping.

In April 1996, Ed Darack started a 850 mile solo kayak trip paddling from El Golfo de Santa Clara to Cabo Pulmo at the tip of the Baja peninsula. This would be a challenge for an experienced kayaker; Ed Darack was a rookie paddler! This was practically his first time in the water. While recovering in California from an auto accident in the Baja, he got the idea of traveling back by kayak. This was in December. Four months later, he launched his used Necky Kyook in the northernmost reach of the Sea of Cortez.

Conditions in the Gulf of California (aka Sea of Cortez) are generally great

for kayaking. The water is warm and most areas have little commercial traffic. There are plenty of deserted sandy beaches. Animal life ranges from lobsters, skates and trigger fish to whales and sea lions. However, tides can be extreme and winds routinely exceed 40 mph. On both sides of the Gulf is desert. As the land heats up during the day, winds are generated. Most paddling days start early and end by mid afternoon. The combination of tides and winds can produce heavy chop and huge rollers. It is easy to get in trouble.

Mr. Darack is an observer and experienced writer; he reports what he sees. This is not a technical book about kayaking. Rather, Mr Darack writes about the people he meets and his paddling experiences. He meets American expats whose lives revolve around living cheaply and drinking. Some are hippie escapees from the sixties and others are well-to-do retirees from California. He spends some



ADVANCED GREENLAND WORKSHOP

BCU Coach and Greenland Style artists Fern Usen and Donald White lead a full day ADVANCED SKILLS workshop. This class will concentrate on various rolls with and without the paddle, and is offered for the Greenland style paddler who wishes to further his/her techniques and abilities, add finesse and confidence. To be accepted for enrollment, you must be able to perform at least two different rolls. Please contact Fern to register. Date: August 8th. Call 860-529-4612, or email: inukshuk@mindspring.com

ALL-LEVEL GREENLAND STYLE SKILLS WORKSHOP

A full day Greenland Style workshop in conjunction with Sakonnet Boathouse in Tiverton, R.I. This class will concentrate on various rolls with a Greenland style paddle, and is offered for the paddler who wishes to further his/her techniques or is just beginning to use a Greenland style technique. Please contact Sakonnet Boathouse for details and registration. Date: June 27th

time with fishermen and their families. They don't seem amazed in the slightest that he is paddling the entire length of the Baja.

Mr. Darack has woven the geologic and political history of the Baja in with his personal observations. This adds another dimension to the book and for me, lent added value to his well-written chronicle.

The book is complemented by his extraordinary photographs. I can vouch that his pictures are not the exception; most of Baja looks like this.

Art & Anne Layton

668 Glenbrook Road #10, Stamford, CT 06906

shebadog@home.com

web page: <http://members.home.net/shebadog>

Coming in August:
Derek Hutchinson
for lecture and paddling clinics



KAYAK DEMO SYMPOSIUMS

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

CT Canoe and Kayak Day

Sun. May 16th.
Mansfield Hollow State Park
Call for further info. 860-456-4906
sponsored by the Columbia Canoe Club

North Cove Outfitters

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

A CLINTON LAUNCH OFFER

I read in the last ConnYak newsletter about your plan to have a launch directory. My wife and I live on Shore Road in Clinton right across the street from the sound and have a right of way to the water. We would be happy to let any ConnYak members park in our yard and launch from our beach. We could probably accommodate 3 to 4 cars. From our beach, it's an easy trip to Duck Island, over to Hammonasset, east to Westbrook, or you can even go across the sound to Greenport. Anybody interested in using our launch site can call us at (860) 664-0673 or contact us at this e-mail address which we check weekly.

Sincerely, Brian and Cindy Stulpin

This is a very generous offer. Thank You - ConnYak

CONNYPAK MESSAGE SYSTEM (203) 603-4615

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

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)

MAY PADDLE SCHEDULE

8th - Branford Harbor (coastal)
15th & 16th- Selden Island
(day paddle and overnight camping)
22nd - Mystic (coastal paddle)

BRANFORD HARBOR

SATURDAY, MAY 8TH
Out the Bfd. River, across the harbor and head toward E. Haven- Granate Bay.

DIRECTIONS - I-95 to exit 54-Branford.
South to Rt 1. Cross Rt 1 - through the light to the stop sign (library on the left). Take a Rt. proceed to the light. Left on Kirkham. Thru stop sign, over RR tracks (bridge) to next stop sign. Left on Harbor to stop sign. Left on Goodsell Point Rd. Launch site is on the left 200 yards. In the water by 10:30 a.m. (pack a lunch)

SELDON ISLAND CAMP & PADDLE

Saturday, May 15 & 16 - non campers welcome...on the Connecticut River
Launch behind Goodspeed Opera House in East Haddam, CT. Non campers will be paddling along for a lunch paddle and later returning to the launch area.

The campsite ConnYak has reserved is called Spring Ledge and is located in the center of Selden Island on the river. The site can accommodate 20 overnight campers - Call to reserve a spot. Bring plenty of warm clothes, normal camping gear and your drinking water.

Call to reserve a camp site if you're planning to camp - 860-278-7440.

Directions:

Exit 7 off of Route 9. At the end of the mile long exit ramp turn left on to Route 154. 1/2 mile turn rt. on to route 82. Go over the bridge (CT River)- Airport and Goodspeed is on the right.

MYSTIC RIVER

SUNDAY JULY 22 - MYSTIC

In the water by 10:00. We visit the old boats and paddle the loop out the Mystic river and have lunch at the mouth of the river.

DIRECTIONS -

Go past Mystic Seaport on the right. Take your first right on Isham Street. Launch is at the end of the street. Street parking is available.

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.

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

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.

Yakima rack system. Includes 3- 58" bars with 6 raingutter towers including locks. \$130. (860) 439-0882

Kayook plus with rudder. 8 months old, like new, \$900.00. 860-526-1410, 860-663-2069

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

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

Nautraid One Expedition (foldable) 15'3" red & black \$1800. or best offer. 860-521-6070

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 - May 16

Safety & Rescue - 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

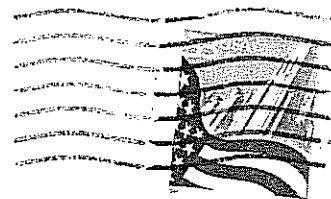
Website: mindspring.com/~connyak



ConnYak

CONNECTICUT SEA KAYAKERS

c/o Ed Milnes
35 Hampton Park
Branford, CT 06405



Russell Norton Jan-2000
PO Box 1070
New Haven CT 06504