



Rudders and Skegs

A selection of some points on rudders and skegs taken from a response article by Paul Caffyn. Paul Caffyn is a world renown kayak explorer and the author of a book on the circumnavigation of Australia.

Forward by JB - Kayaks with skegs and rudders are basically trying to achieve the best of a few worlds. They always have fairly rocker hulls and add skegs or rudders to stiffen up the tracking when desired. In the case of the rudder, it achieves the best of three worlds. Maneuverability (when up), tracking and often steering. The steering part is why they were so popular a few years back - it was a merchandising feature for kayak manufacturers - instant control. You still see it advertised by kayakers as a sought after feature. In upper end boats it has been largely replaced by the skeg although the skeg is costlier to install. A skeg is also very difficult to install in a plastic boat and rare.

There's very few commercially made kayaks that don't come with one or the other. Dedicated racing kayaks often have both. The theory is that paddling in the "grove" is what you try not to disturb with trivial things like steering. The Arctic Hawk, Betsy Bays, and the Greenlander are the only ones I can think of that comes skegless. Ironically most of the real Greenland skin boats are used with strap on keels or "skegs" although their commercial copies have strong tracking. Even the Nigel Foster kayaks now come with skegs, and overseas, the infamous Nordcapp is available with a skeg, rudder or none.

RUDDERS & SKEGS by Paul Caffyn

In my formative years of sea kayaking, I was opposed to the use of a rudder, or in retrospect I would say ignorant of the benefits of a rudder. However through a process of experimentation and the school of hard knocks, I came up with a rudder system that I use on all my trips 100% of the time.

During my very first sea kayak expedition around Fiordland (southern New Zealand) in 1977/78, we used small retractable skegs that were attached to a shoe, or fiberglass sleeve that slid over the kayak stern. Only the size of a cigarette packet, the skeg blade was rotated into position in deep water by the other paddler. It evolved during the South Island trip into a deep sharkfin shaped skeg, mounted on a sleeve, that sat loosely on the stern for launching and was pulled into position with a cord from the cockpit. Shockcord, from the stern to the skeg, allowed the skeg to retract, out of the way for landing. For following, or quartering seas from the stern, the skeg improved the kayak's tracking in a straight

continued on page 3 >>

A Tale of Two Paddles

by Peter Smith



I was quite intrigued with Jay's article on paddles: Greenland or Euro - (whose paddle is better), in the April newsletter. Jay made some excellent points, and as much as I enjoy a good argument, I'm not about to challenge the proven capability of the Greenland style paddles. However...

You knew that I was going to say "however," didn't you? Jay did make a statement that started me thinking. "Thus... a paddle that has enormous blades and tires you out in minutes would be totally inefficient for the paddler using it." It struck me that this statement propagates a common misconception about the use of the modern kayak paddle, so I decided to respond and attempt to make the point that refined skills can be developed with the modern paddle as well as the Greenland paddle. By the way, I intend to write these comments without using the term "Euro-paddle," which sounds to me like some exotic foreign gadget that you would use with Euro-sunglasses and a Euro-bathing suit.

The Forward Stroke:

This is how the tale goes: since the blade is larger, there is less slippage in the water and therefore each stroke puts more stress on your muscles and joints. To be honest, I agree that a poorly executed stroke with a large blade can stress your body more than a poor stroke with a narrow blade. However, used with a paddle stroke that combines the best assets of your

body and the paddle, the larger blade can be stroked with an efficient sideslip that glides easily through the water instead of yanking directly against it.

When I first started paddling a kayak, my childhood canoe-paddling training was my only reference, and as I bravely set out on my first voyage I grimly clung to this dogma: keep the paddle next to the hull for the entire stroke. This is an awkward stroke at best, and it is the first step on the road to paddling hell. While ideal in a canoe, in a kayak this style instigates dreadful affects such as the aforementioned stress on the body, forcing the hapless paddler to sharply bend an elbow on every stroke, discouraging good torso rotation, and other things too fearful to mention.

Conversely, if a paddler keeps his or her arms fairly well extended, plants the blade and then uses torso rotation to create the stroke, the sun comes out and smiles on all the world. The paddle blade sideslips away from the boat with a smooth easy stroke, like a lark's wing in the air. Then a subtle forward lift angle on the blade causes it to act a bit like a propeller as it slides outward, magically producing forward

continued on page 2 >>



Kate Powers and Beth Morrissette at the launch of their new twin Explorer LVs (low volume), Wickford Harbor 4/6/03. Photo by Rusty Norton.

Two Paddles ...

lift. As you know, one of the characteristics of these modern blades is that they slice sideways through the water quite effortlessly. By maintaining the comfortable arm extension throughout the stroke, arm flexing is eliminated, which is very nice on your joints. This stroke encourages torso rotation, in fact, it just plain doesn't work without it.

OK, how come I'm such an expert? Hey, I'm an old guy, we're experts on everything. However, if you would like some truly credible confirmation I can recommend the video, "Forward Stroke Clinic" by Brent Reitz. This video provides an excellent instruction by a paddler with great credentials. I was gratified by the fact that he agrees with some things that I had figured out, and naturally since he's a world class expert he adds a bunch of refinements that I would never have thought of in two lifetimes. If you want to go faster, cruise easier, etc., etc.

Rolling:

Now I'll really get into trouble. Many people claim an advantage for Greenland paddles in rolling. Call me skeptical. Before anyone goes ballistic on me, I'm not saying you can't do lots and lots of wonderful, odd, and even bizarre rolls with a Greenland paddle. All I am saying is that I, meaning me in the first person, can use my modern paddle to roll up easily without having to move my hands on my paddle shaft. When I scientifically use the same person for comparison, (me again), I need to extend the Greenland paddle to do the same roll. The fact that Claudine (my wife), a Greenland paddle user and my paddling companion, can easily roll her boat without shifting her hands on the Greenland paddle is completely irrelevant to me - I'm the one that's going to be needing air in short order when I'm looking at the fish. It is also irrelevant to me if you can roll your kayak with sticks, pumps, sponges, or bricks (of course I'm jealous of people who can do all that stuff). When I capsize I intend (and hope) to have my paddle at hand.

I've heard claims that: the blade angle is less critical on the Greenland paddle during the roll, the added floatation of the blade helps, and that there are mystical properties to the design. As long as we are throwing theories around, try this one out for size: because (most) Greenland blades are thicker and don't slide sideways as easily through the water, it naturally slows the sweep down a bit, which helps the roll by sustaining the lift period. Extending the paddle, which is typical for a Greenland roll, slows it down even more. It is easy to make the mistake of slashing a modern paddle through the sweep too quickly, which robs efficiency and grace from the process. Try slowing the sweep down and you'll have just as good a roll without having to resort to your pocket knife and a 2x4.

High Winds:

Finally, Jay says that a regular paddle is a pain in high winds. Boy, can that ever be true! I've learned to compensate for high winds to a degree by using a low stroke, but a good strong wind on the beam and a feathered paddle can

make you reevaluate your religious beliefs. The most positive thing I can suggest is that the modern paddle builds character better under these conditions. Anyhow, I have no plans to change paddles. Well, alright, I do have a plan to make one of those suckers and try it out for a spare paddle this summer. Hey, I'm not that old...

Hand rolling with a brick

For generations horse cultures such as the Mongols, Russian Cosacs, American Indians and even the U.S. Calvary have prided themselves on their skills in horsemanship. Normal practices consisted of riding standing on the horse, on one leg and even upside down to not only amuse themselves and compete but to gain the highest level of confidence and skill for when it was really needed.

The kayaking cultures such as the Greenlanders also took great pride in their kayaking skills and came up with ways to push their abilities to the limit and to enjoy themselves as well.

The trick rolls that they used, challenged their abilities to maximum levels and helped them in their ultimate survival as hunters. Greenland style paddlers who now also challenge themselves to emulate the skills of the original Greenland hunters are doing these things for no more of a reason than the jogger who tries to add on some more distance. Will the jogger ever need that extra mile to carry the groceries to the car? ... of course not.

We all occasionally push ourselves a bit to gain confidence, learn, build, test ourselves and ultimately to achieve. Whether it's surf, a longer distance, challenging rolls, rougher conditions or a better photo of a bird, we lay tiny goals for ourselves to not only make kayaking diversified and fun but to make our lives more fulfilled. - Jay Babina

New Classifieds section on the Connyak BB

The ConnYak website now has a new section for classified advertisements. Advertisements are limited to paddling related items from ConnYak members. Commercial Ads Are Not Accepted. To place an ad, email it to the Classifieds Editor at classifieds@connyak.org. Include, Name, E-mail Address, City, State, Phone Number (optional), and Description of item.

When an Ad is no longer needed, please inform the Classifieds Editor for removal. Ads posted longer than one month are to be renewed or they will be removed.



Manatees in the Midst

By Ernie DeSalvatore

It all started on Monday March 10th when my associate "Norm" poked his head into my office and said "you know, I could put the roof racks on my truck, you could load your kayak and join us on our trip to Florida next week". Norm and his friend John had been planning a trip to the Florida Keys since November. Their plan was to drive non-stop to the keys on Friday night, veg out in Key Largo for the week returning home the next Saturday. It took two days to organize my schedule so I could say yes.

The drive there was uneventful. We left at 7pm. Friday evening and pulled into the parking lot at the "Hungry Pelican" 26 hours later. We took turns driving and stopped only to eat and get gas for the truck.

The "Hungry Pelican Resort" is located in Sunset Cove on the north side of Key Largo. It's private beach and boat launch provide easy access to Buttonwood Sound and it's numerous mangrove-covered keys. There is a stiff breeze most of the day so paddling in the early morning is best.

While quietly paddling through the mangroves, you have the opportunity to view up close many species of wildlife indigenous to the area. The water is clear and only 6 feet deep allowing you to observe the underwater life as well. Polarized sunglasses, camera and binoculars are a must.

One morning as I paddled though a small estuary I could see something moving in the water ahead of me. I paddled cautiously, not knowing whether I was approaching a log floating in the water or a crocodile. I slowly closed the distance between myself and the object until I could just make out the tip of a manatee nose as his nostrils opened to take a breath of air. The Manatee is threatened with extinction; so encountering one in the wild was a real treat.

The "West Indian Manatee" is a large mammal that can grow to 15 ft in length and weigh as much as 2000 lbs. It can have a life span up to 50 years. This gentle herbivore feeds on a variety of aquatic vegetation such as turtle grass, water lettuce, manatee grass, shoal grass, various algae, water hydrilla and water hyacinth. It grazes on the under water grasses like a cow does in a pasture, and is also called a "sea cow". There is a legend that the "mermaids" sighted by ancient sailors actually were manatees.

Manatees can usually be found in shallow coastal waters, slow moving rivers, estuaries, saltwater bays, canals and coastal areas that are rich in sea grass and other vegetation. It is a migratory species that prefers water temperatures greater than 70 degrees F. at depths of at least 3 feet. They rarely venture deeper than 20 feet. I decided to keep my distance and just observe the animal in its natural surroundings. I watched for about ten minutes and was surprised when the creature noticed me and swam right up to the cockpit of

my boat. It exposed his back to me; behaving the same way a dog does when it wants it's back scratched.

As the manatee approached, I held my camera under the surface of the water pointing it in the animals' general direction, snapping off pictures. I then decided that I could get better photographs if I rolled the kayak over and got into a position that would allow me to aim the camera accurately. I had to think for a minute how I could do this and set up the shot correctly. Fortunately the Manatee was approaching from my port side. I normally roll up on the starboard side so I didn't have to worry about hitting the Manatee with my paddle when I rolled back up. I then rolled the kayak over, but at the sound of my splash, the Manatee dove into deeper water. I rolled back up and waited for the manatee to surface again, when he didn't, I thought I had frightened him off. Then suddenly, I heard the snort and smelled his exhaled breath as he broke the surface of the water only inches away from the cockpit of my boat. It wasn't frightened; it was playing with me. I rolled again, this time trying to slip into the water without a splash. Again the manatee dove into deep water. This time I was able to snap the shutter but due to the poor lighting in the deeper water the picture quality was poor. I rolled back up and again a short time later the manatee surfaced next to the boat the same way as before. It was obvious that this particular manatee had no fear of humans. This lack of fear could ultimately be dangerous for the animal, I did not want to reinforce this behavior so I moved off.

Kayaking in the keys in March is a great way to remove your winter blues. Warm water and warm weather is just what the doctor ordered. To see a manatee was icing on the cake.

Changes in latitude, changes in attitude.

Rudders and Skegs continued

line. For the start of the Australian trip I used a HM Nordkapp, which had an extended keel stern to aid straight tracking, but after a gripping experience of being unable to turn up-wind on a flat sea in gale force winds, I cut the wretched extension off and reverted to using my shark fin skeg.

Prior to the 360 day, 9,420 mile trip around Aussie, I had been intrigued by deep draught, oversterne fiberglass rudders which Tasmanian paddlers considered not as optional extras but as integral parts of their boats. Photographs of the seas they paddled and accounts of long distances achieved with rudders in diabolical conditions, led me to thinking about trailing a rudder. When I broke the skeg blade, south of Brisbane, a friend helped me build a sturdy Tasmanian style rudder out of aluminum.

The statistics speak for themselves in showing the benefit gained from the addition of a rudder:

Melbourne to Sydney: HM stern - 30.6 miles per day. Sydney to Brisbane: Skeg - 34.3 miles per day. Brisbane to Cape York: Rudder - 39.2

miles per day.

Contrary to the notion of a rudder being not for steering, but to trim and that sea kayaks are steered with a paddle or by raling (leaning), I use my rudder for steering. My paddle is solely used for forward propulsion. When a paddle is used for corrective steering strokes, either sweep or successive strokes on one side, forward propulsion suffers and the normal paddling cycle is upset.

Situations where I have found a rudder to be invaluable: maneuvering in congested sea ice or iceberg choked seas: ferry gliding across channels with fast tidal streams-coping with boils and eddies in overfalls: steering when the wind is too strong to paddle: hugging coastlines in gale force offshore winds: fast maneuvering in congested shipping lanes: hugging reef fringed coasts when paddling into a strong tidal stream flow: surfing in front of following seas.

A major advantage of a sturdy deep draught, oversterne rudder is a surprising increase in overall boat stability. With respect to rudder control mechanisms and rudder construction, Kiwi paddlers in general use a fixed heel/moving toe pedal steering system. Very similar to the hinged pedals on surf skis, where the heels are always in the same position, while the toes do the steering. It is difficult to roll or brace a kayak when the heels move with sliding foot pegs. I thought sliding foot pegs went out with the ark?

NZ rudders are built of aluminum, not steel! Weight factor being critical here. Those pushing the weight barrier use carbon-fibre composite blades to lessen weight, while expedition paddlers drill holes in the rudder cheeks and top section of blade to reduce overall weight. The swage cable fasteners are not steel either!

Maximizing speed for the 12m yacht racing in recent years has had spin off for Kiwi kayak rudders. The use of a foil or wing shape for the blade, and moving 10% of the underwater blade area forehead of the pivot axis have significantly reduced drag and improved rudder efficiency. Having said all that, I must note that design, structure and mounting determine the difference between inefficient and efficient rudders. If a rudder blade slops around between the rudder cheeks, it is not efficient.

My rudder blade projects 12% below the keel line. I have never broken a rudder - bent the blade once off North Queensland during a broach in massive surf, but straightened it out over my knee on shore and it was good for another 6,000 miles.

The most magic sound I hear at sea is a humming vibration generated during fast surfing runs at up to 15 knots, either when surfing boat wakes or in front of following seas. Sheer magic!

Check the bulletin board for impromptu trips listed by members -
www.connyak.org

EVENTS



Fundraiser Sea Kayak Paddle Saturday, June 7

Hole in the Wall Beach in East Lyme, CT.
Experienced paddlers will be launching at 10:00 am; beginning paddlers are encouraged to launch at 10:30am. Event money goes to the Tommy Fund. A \$5.00 donation to the Tommy Fund is requested the day of the event.

Directions: Hole in the Wall Beach, East Lyme, CT: I-95 to exit 72 (Rocky Neck State Park in East Lyme). Left at light on route 156 East. Travel 2.7 miles and take a right on Baptist Lane (McDonalds across the street). Large dirt parking lot with kayak launch on the other side of the very obvious hole in the wall.

David Fasulo david.fasulo@SNET.Net

3RD ANNUAL MEET AT THE BEACH

Bluff Point State Park - Groton

SAT. JUNE 14 - 10 AM - ?

Kayak builders gathering. Stitch and Glue, Strip-Built, Skin on Frame - all styles welcome. Non builders - paddlers and interest parties welcome. (Free)

(event goes Rain or Shine)

GREENLAND PADDLERS DAY

Bluff Point State Park - Groton

SUN. JUNE 15 - 10 AM - ?

A gathering of Greenland style paddlers. No itinerary as of yet.

BARN ISLAND - STONNINGTON

SAT. JUNE 21 - LAUNCH AT 10 AM

NI based on conditions

Route picked based on conditions and desires. Pack a lunch. Launch time (in the water) 10 am.

HUDSON RIVER CAMP / PADDLE

JUNE 20, 21, 22 - FRIDAY - SUNDAY

Mills Norrie State Park (near Rhinebeck and Hyde Park, NY) featuring 1000 acres.

Sea kayaking (intermediate)

Rustic cabins are drive-in, equipped w/ electric, running water, sink, stove/oven, refig, table/chairs and 2 bunk rooms.

Bathroom and hot showers close.

With 4 people per cabin, the fee is \$35.

Campsites are \$13 (tent or RV)

Motels available in Hyde Park

Paddlers - please reserve w/ leader.

for cabin space reserve now w/leader.

for campsites go to

www.ReserveAmerica.com

<www.ReserveAmerica.htm>

(campsite choice is done onsite)

Anita BERSON 212-245-0025 (9am -9pm)

fax 212-245-5490 Abirdson@aol.com

CLASSIFIED

NORDKAPP HM good condition. Day hatch, rear oval hatch, canvas storage bag, compass. Orang / white \$1600 860-633 7254

16'x 22" Yellow/White Dagger 'Meridian SK' 1/g kayak with skeg, 2 hatches, Nexus Type 85 Compass, spray skirt, 1/g paddle, Milford, CT \$1850 203.877.8493 'clayluce@hotmail.com'

FOR SALE - Janautica "ANADYR" Sea Kayak 17.5'X 21.25" Adjustable seat and footpegs, 2 hatches, bulkheads, rigging etc. Designed for speed and rough water. See Mfg. webpage for complete specs. www.splashdance.com \$1845- free delivery in CT. E-mail rithey@lycos.com or call 917 567 9430

Necky Tormae 15' Kevlar w/rudder, carbon paddle, spray skirt, Yakama rack and saddles \$1300. all. Must sell - Moving 203-458-2362

Skin on Frame - Baidarka- brand new- (back problems) Willow Kayaks, only 29 pounds, 18'x 21", 8" depth to shear, skeg, very fast, Rye NY, \$1950 or best offer. 914 698 8354 or sd.a@att.net

Perception Pirouette white water/surf boat for sale. Paddle, helmet, cockpit cover, air bags. Very good condition. Asking \$300. Call (860) 653-5899.

North Shore Freewater Trek. Fiberglass, Fast, light. 16 ft 22 in, 45 lbs. Great for small to medium sized paddler. \$990 - 203 853 2909

VCP Nordkapp HMC Good Condition, Golden Yellow Deck White Hull \$1000.00 860-643-1609 or email: nordkappdg@aol.com

Library Notice:

I have just finished making an inventory of what I have of the library but I don't have complete records of what has been borrowed. If you happen to have books, videos or CDs that belong to the library, please let me know. I need to have your name and the title and author of the book. When I have a complete list I will attempt to put it on the website.

Claudine Burns-Smith
claudinebu@yahoo.com

NORTHERN CT RIVER CAMP OUT July 26 - 27

2 Days - Vernon Dam, VT to Northfield MA. call David Cornell 860-875-4981 to reserve a spot and for info.

Fee's: The \$25 dollar camping fee will be split between the participants, and \$10 per person fee for the shuttle. Trip is limited to 8 people.

Send newsletter articles or classifieds to:

Jay Babina e-mail: jbabina@snet.net
7 Jeffrey Lane, Branford, CT 06405
203-481-3221 Fax 203-481-1136

**Please contact the Newsletter
when classified items are sold.**

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.

Membership includes monthly newsletter, paddles, functions, etc. Send check to:
ConnYak, P.O. Box 197, Ellington, CT 06029
E-MAIL: CONNYAK@CONNYAK.ORG

WEBSITE / BULLETIN BOARD: WWW.CONNYAK.ORG

T-SHIRTS FOR ARTICLES

Authors of articles for the newsletter get a free T-shirt.

CONNYAK PADDLES RESPONSIBILITY

All open water paddles are (N/I) Novice/Intermediate because the sea conditions can drastically change in an hour. Novice paddles are inter-coastal and river paddles. Advanced paddles will always be marked on the listing and encompass offshore crossings, and usually rougher conditions and longer distances.

Any paddle can change dramatically which is the nature of our sport and something we should always be aware of. Although paddlers will always help one another, ultimately, you are always responsible for your own safety when paddling on any trip.



ConnYak

CONNECTICUT SEA KAYAKERS

P.O. Box 197, Ellington, CT 06029



Russell Norton
PO Box 1070
New Haven, CT 06504

1/1/04

