



This end of summer issue of the Newsletter includes a plethora of travel articles, and Jay wrote an interesting article about the history of ConnYak. It made me realize once again how really lucky we are to live where we can jump in a car and be paddling in Maine or Canada within a day. The scenery is fantastic, the people are friendly, and we get to use your own kayaks! What could be better?

I once read a book on Zen called Beginner's Mind, in which the author extolled the virtues of approaching all things with the open attitude of a beginner. That rings true to me — when I travel to great places I feel a reawakening of enthusiasm. Extraordinary vistas, clear waters, and close encounters with fantastic sea life revive my exuberance.

But remote waters have risks too. Some of these areas are world famous for fog and wind, and are often removed from outside assistance. Fog can bring it's own poignant atmosphere to a scene, or it can just be a royal pain. And let's not forget the wind — that can get old too. I'm trying to remember if I've ever actually paddled anywhere with the wind behind me...

Despite potential hazards and probable discomforts, Sheldon starts his article with this line: "It must be good. After all, we've returned to Cape Canso four years running."

Me too.

Pete Smith



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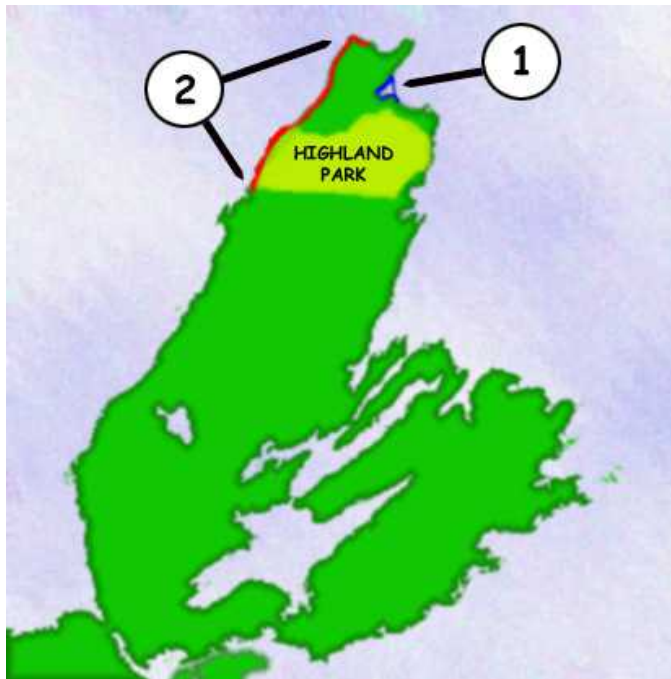
## Highland High

By Pete Smith

This was the second time we have traveled to Cape Breton for kayaking and camping. The character of Cape Breton is very different from the East shore of Nova Scotia, which is low and rocky, with lots of islands. The Highlands of Cape Breton are, well... high. The whole coastline is a series of small mountains meeting the sea. The eroded cliffs that result along the sea-coast are spectacular and varied. However, as scenic as it is, from a kayaker's perspective there are virtually no islands to hide behind if (when) the wind comes up. As a result, several times we have driven to the lee side of the park to avoid unfavorable high winds.

When we arrived there were stiff winds from the Southwest, so we decided to paddle for in the Aspy Bay area for a few days (area number 1 on the map). This is a really beautiful area, with a seven-mile stretch of beach on the ocean. The water is remarkably warm, and when the wind is down it has been so clear that we could see perfectly down 15 feet or more. Claudine and I had an exciting exit through some surf coming out of South Harbor. An hour later we discovered that our water bottles had been stripped from our decks, so we were a bit thirsty by the time we returned that day, and were delighted to find one bottle on the beach on our way back.

The Aspy Bay area is outside of the Highlands Park. We were thinking of camping on the beach, but someone advised us that non-locals who attempted to wild camp have been evicted if discovered. The remedy was a local campground that worked out fine, and featured a beautiful view as well. It was small, and unlike Florida campgrounds that are dominated by



huge RVs, our little tent was right at home among the more modest camping arrangements of our neighbors.

We had arranged with North River Kayak Tours to take a three-day trip around the West side of the Highland Park, finishing at Meat Cove. Our route is shown on the map as area 2, along the red line, ending just after rounding the point at the northernmost tip of Cape Breton. Since there are few landing opportunities along this coastline, we had decided that it would not be appropriate for two people to do alone. As it turned out, the trip was not full although apparently the week before had been packed. In addition to Claudine and myself there was only one other client on the trip, a friendly fellow named Rob. That made a total of five including our two guides, Jackie and Terra.

We started out on a beautiful sunny day. The sea was relatively calm, and we soon discovered that the lack of big waves was to our advantage because we could paddle into caves along the shoreline without having our skulls cracked. Two of the caves had secondary chambers that allowed me to paddle 60 feet or so in. Pretty cool stuff.

We were concentrating on the shoreline when Terra yelled to redirect our attention to the ocean. She had spotted a pod of pilot whales a short distance away. They were moving along at a very easy pace, so we paddled out near them for a while, enjoying the sight of their sleek black bodies sliding in and out of sight. Eventually we realized that they were headed for



Cliffs predominate in the Highlands



## Highland High continued

By Pete Smith

a meeting with another group of whales. It appeared to me that the whales from both groups broke ranks and milled around for a bit, and I imagined that they were communicating under the water, saying things like, "Hi, how's the fishing over where you were?" This was the first of four close sightings of pilot whale pods. The pods appeared to average 8 or 10 individuals, with the biggest ones being significantly longer than my kayak. I read that they get up to 5 meters long and 3 tons, which seems about right. Some members of the groups would be smaller, and there always seemed to be a "baby" that would be swimming close to a larger whale, maintaining a fixed position as rigidly as a sidecar to a motorcycle. To my untrained eyes they appeared similar to dolphins except for their size, and a distinctive bulbous area on their foreheads. Apparently this bulge has something to do with their sophisticated echolocation apparatus. It's easy to imagine how someone could devote their whole life to studying whales. I've seen whales on other trips, and it just doesn't get old.

As we were approaching our campsite on the second day, Claudine spotted a group of whales far out on the horizon. They also appeared to be moving much faster than the other pods we had encountered. After a short discussion about the likelihood of being able to even catch up to them, Terra and I decided to take out after them at top speed. My fiberglass Explorer had the speed edge on the large plastic kayak Terra was paddling, and I caught up with the whales first. Not wanting to disturb them, I paddled alongside and parallel to the pod, enjoying their company. They would come up for air in close proximity to each other with a series of "poof, poof, poof-poof" sounds as they each blew, followed by a much more subtle sound of inhaling. A few seconds later they would all be gone, only to return right on track. At some point they changed direction under water and surfaced right next to me, still on a parallel

vector, and still moving fast. I was pretty sure that I had not veered, but turned away a bit to give them some space. They all disappeared, but when they returned they had turned even more, and they came up all around me. It's hard to explain how close we all were, but I was concerned that I was going to hit whales on both sides of me with my paddle (I never did). We raced along like this for a while, and I felt like I could just continue along with my new family forever. Eventually a backward glance let me know that I had gone pretty far, so when the pod went down, I turned away from our course and slowed. This was when I discovered that Tara had not given up her chase. She had finally caught up, and went past me like a flash. So I returned to flank speed and moved back up next to her. Now she was paddling parallel to the whales, and as I came up next to her I noticed something new. In addition to the blowing "poof-poof" sounds, I began to hear a sustained high-pitched sound, sort of: "EEEEEEEEEEEEEE." It

puzzled me, because it was present all of the time, even when the whales were under water. Then I realized that it was Terra that was making the sound. She was so excited that, even while paddling a kayak at top speed, she was unconsciously vocalizing her delight. I told everyone this same story at the camp later and probably embarrassed her a little, but actually I thought it was very cool that someone who works as a guide all summer and undoubtedly has lost count of her whale sightings would still get so excited.

Eventually we reluctantly turned back and began a surprisingly long paddle back toward land. As we got near enough to spot the rest of the group, we realized that they had found another pod of whales. Unlike "our" group, this one was obviously feeding in one area, that was well marked by the seagulls who were dedicated to getting some of the scraps. We powered up into high gear again and zoomed (everything is relative) over to where the action was. Again, I





## Highland High continued

By Pete Smith



Fishing Cove

didn't want to interfere with the whales. Claudine was doing the same thing, so I stopped about 20 feet away from her and just sat, watching the whales rolling up here and there. Then, just as before, some of them came up quite close to us. Once they were satisfied with their inspection, they continued on their way.

There are few places to camp along the coast. Our guides had made reservations for us at Fishing Cove, the only water accessible campsite on the West side of the park. It is an oasis of sorts from the continuous cliffs, with a beach and a pleasant little river valley. There are small wooden platforms to pitch the tents on, which are very quite nice. Our only competitors for tent sites were a some hardy souls who had been willing to make the hike down to the cove, and were subsequently willing to make the uphill climb back out the next day. It made me tired just to think about all that hiking so I sat down and rested for a while. Good thing too, because there was a huge moose grazing near our tent and it was hours before we felt he had moved far enough to reduce the risk of potential interspecies misunderstanding to an acceptable level.

After another day of great weather, scenery, and pilot whales, we camped at Pol-

lett's Cove, another small river valley in a remote area North of the park. This time we had horses at our campsite. Those of our group who had set up tents in the grazing area were forced to build corrals of driftwood around their tents to keep the horses from pawing (hoofing?) at the edges of the tents.

The last day started out windy and rainy, with a forecast for worse in the afternoon. I knew that Jackie, our lead guide, was making a tough decision. She had to decide if we should continue around the Northern point to our planned finish, or turn back to another take-out. The converging currents at the Northern point can be miserable in the wrong conditions, and the forecast called for increasing wind shifting to the Northwest (that's bad). The forecasts had also been wrong every day so far. Jackie decided that it was a go, and we took off. Five minutes later it was raining so hard the ocean turned white with the splashes of the drops. As the rain tapered off the wind picked up. Rob was probably the least experienced kayaker in the group, but he was doing fine. The wind increased and the waves went to 4 – 5 feet, and I think we all kept an eye on him, but he never missed a beat that I could tell.

When we rounded the point the wind had never veered to the Northwest as

threatened, and we finished the trip in the relatively calm lee of the North side. We stopped for lunch and in the surf landing on relatively small waves, Rob's kayak broached and the bow hit Claudine hard in the ribs. Apparently Rob hadn't had any previous experience with surf landings, and wasn't aware how quickly a kayak can broach at the last moment. Up until that time we had followed Jackie's previous instructions to come in one at a time. But the sea was so calm compared to what we had just been through that it hadn't seemed necessary. Claudine ribs were either bent or broken, (she never had it checked) but she was able to grind out the last bit to the take-out without incident. She was a bit slower than usual for several weeks on account of pain, but she never missed any paddling time due to the injury. Of course Rob felt terrible, but everyone could see how it could happen.

I think I have a good start on developing the proper mental attitude for paddling in Canada. I allow myself to hope for good things, but the weather always rules. The year before Claudine and I had to skip paddling for a couple of days because of high winds. This year everything came together for us. The weather was fantastic, and Jackie and Terra said that they had never seen so many pilot whales on a trip. We were just very lucky.





## Kayaking Shangri-La Found

By Sheldon Penn & friends



Claudine looking at a seal-covered rock in the distance

It must be good. After all, we've returned to Cape Canso four years running. This area has everything: wilderness; paddling; big ocean swells; beautiful calm backwaters; crystal clear water; and lots of wildlife. Did I mention great places to stay and friendly locals?

Our first year, we stayed at the Sea Breeze Cabins and Campground near Canso. Nice place, good ice cream, and a lobster pound. However, our favorite is Foxberry by the Sea, which is about 30 minutes from Canso in a tiny town called Whitehead. Linda and Dave run an excellent bed and breakfast. We rented the waterfront cottages with gorgeous views and direct access to Whitehead Bay for kayak launching from the front yard. One two-bedroom and two one-bedroom cabins with full kitchens are available. After 15-hours of driving over two days, we arrived Saturday afternoon. First, we

checked in with Linda and unpacked the cars. Then, I walked down to check the water for the next day's paddle. I took note of the large waves breaking over the rock reefs at the mouth of Whitehead Bay.

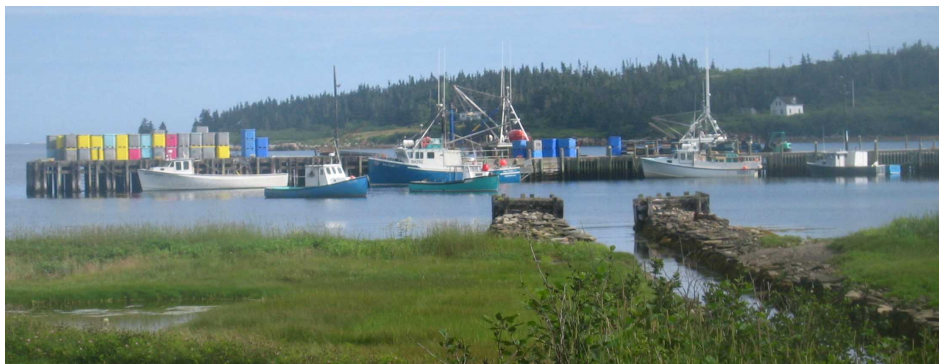
Sunday arrived, big waves continued in the ocean and a strong wind blew down the bay. Over breakfast, we decided the prudent thing to do was launch from the front yard, cross the bay, and explore the miles of island laden interconnecting backwaters. With some less experienced paddlers in our group this was a good choice as these areas were protected from the 20 to 25 MPH north winds. Beautiful rock lined coves topped with pine trees awaited our every turn. Of course, no houses, no boats--just pristine wilderness. We emerged toward the

north end of Whitehead Bay with the wind and waves on our stern quarter for an exhilarating run back to Foxberry.

Upon our return, Kristine decided she wanted more adventure for the day. So Oliver, Kristine, and I headed for the mouth of Whitehead Bay and the big waves. To make a long story short, she swore we were trying to kill her, and that became her tag line for the week. "They're trying to kill me."

It was an exciting time paddling in the big waves, braking over outlying rocks and the nearby island and a wind so strong that going to Ireland for Guinness became a definite possibility.

With the waves calming on Monday, we decided to paddle out Whitehead Bay and up the coast into a wilderness area with outlying reefs and rock islands. We paddled 5 miles then into a sheltered cove for lunch. A perfect spot: lobster shacks; a small brook with a waterfall; and, gorgeous scenery. The lunch conversation revealed one member of our group was injured a few days earlier. An inexperienced paddler ran into Claudine during a surf landing. She suspected her rib was broken. Our remaining paddles were chosen to so as not further aggravate her injury.



Whitehead Harbor with the canal in the foreground



## Kayaking Shangri-La Found continued...

By Sheldon Penn & friends

Fay and I were in the lead on the return trip and stopped in a fairly ruff spot to let the rest of the group catch up. With out looking back at Fay, I asked her how far back the rest of the group was. A minute later she paddles up along side me dripping wet to report that the water was not to cold for rolling and the rest of the group will be caught up shortly. She had tipped over while looking back and performed a perfect combat role in fairly rough conditions.

Tuesday brought even calmer weather. We ventured out and around Whitehead through open-ocean to Tor bay. Seeking a safe spot for a potty break brought us into an enchanting cove with water so clear an entire undersea forest was visible though water 20 feet deep. Then, we paddled on to a group of small islands and lunch on a sandy beach. Many seals, one large sunfish, and a bald eagle visited us. The return trip took us through a small canal built in 1800s to let small skiffs travel from Whitehead Bay to the adjoining bay.

Wednesday, we launched from Little Dover and paddled into a series of rock-lined ponds full of tiny islands--each one more fun than the last. With strong winds, the backwaters were a safe place to play and explore.

Thursday brought us back to Little Dover for a paddle down the coast toward Whitehead Bay. After paddling in and out of bays around islands through Little Dover Run, we lunched at an incredible set of pocket beaches on Little Dover Island. Andy spotted a 2.5 lb lobster wandering around on the bottom, this was the third spotted on the trip. Kristine hadn't complained of any attempts on her life in several days, so after lunch Oliver suggested they paddle all the way back to Whitehead and close the circuit between Little Dover and Whitehead. Peter volunteered to ferry Oliver's car back and with an exchange of keys, Kristine and Oliver set off. On the way, calm seas and Kristine's love of lighthouses enticed them to swing around the



Kristine escaping from an Ocean Sunfish (swimming on it's side)

light on Whitehead Island at the head of the bay. It was a fabulous sight. The trip was exciting. They stayed to the outside of the islands and paddled through gentle ocean swells nearing two meters. As they came around Whitehead light, the wind picked up. The last few miles were tiring, as they paddled up Whitehead Bay into a fierce head wind.

Friday we launched at the Canso Town Launch for our shortest yet most enjoyable paddle of the week. The town has a long history of the French and English fighting for control of the rich fishing grounds. Although Canso gained 20<sup>th</sup> century fame as the point where the transatlantic cables departed the new world for the old, with the advent of satellite communication all that is gone. Canso remains a fishing village with lobster, crab, and halibut the primary catch.

Paddling out of town, we headed through a hand dug channel, used to escape French attacks, to an incredible area filled with rocky islands, small passages, and tons of seals. We drifted around watching seals and soaking in the beauty. It seemed a sacred place, and perhaps was for the seals and their pups. One tiny inlet was so full of fish, the water appeared black. When a few larger fish entered, the water boiled with confusion.

With some of the group packing to head back to the states, we awakened Saturday to yet another perfect day. Our smaller group decided to launch from the cottages. We paddled down Whitehead Bay and again played in the tiny bays that lace the coast. Then, we headed out to Whitehead Island looking for a dock to allow us to walk to the lighthouse. With no dock found, our group split. Some went out into open water for an exciting paddle to view the lighthouse, while the others selected one more beautiful lunch spot. We met up for a long and enjoyable lunch before returning to Foxberry by the Sea and a lot of packing. Our nights were filled with the consumption of lots of great food including local lobsters and the sharing of stories. A good time was had by all. We plan to return one more time before looking for new places to paddle. If you are interested in joining us next year, let me know.





## Bonjour Monsieur Whale!

...

By Wayne Smith

Over the course of the winter, Judith and I decided that we wanted to do some paddling in Quebec this summer. More specifically, in the Saguenay-St Lawrence Marine Park. The park encompasses the entire Saguenay Fjord, and the north shore of the St Lawrence from the Charlevoix region to Les Escoumins, some 20 miles east of the Saguenay.

This area is unique in the world for its diversity of wildlife, whales in particular, and its beauty. The area of the St Lawrence that is in the park is an estuary, and has brackish water at the surface, and salt water below. At Les Bergeronnes out past Les Escoumins, the river is more than 1,000 feet deep, and the currents and ample food supply draws 13 different species of whale there in the summer to feed. The Saguenay also is host to hundreds of whales, Belugas in particular. The belugas breed in the Saguenay, at a place called Baie St Marguerite. More about there later.

In discussing the trip with friends, we got more information, and decided to camp at Camping Paradis Marin in Les Bergeronnes, because the whales come right up to shore there, and it's not uncommon to have even Blue whales come right past the campsites within spitting distance. The campground is also VERY kayaker oriented, and has an outfitter on the grounds.

We arrived on a Sunday, after having spent the afternoon in Quebec City the day before. What a great place! I hadn't been there in 25 years, and thoroughly enjoyed it. We had no problems with not speaking much French, because most people we ran into spoke good enough English that we could get by just fine. We set up our campsite, and Beth came over & told us that she had already had a Beluga swim under her boat, and had a close encounter with a Blue whale. And while we were setting up several Minkes swam by, and a Beluga cruised by a bit further offshore. We did an evening paddle and saw a few whales out in the distance.

Monday came, and everyone was there;



Lucky folks paddling with a Minke

Myself, Judith, Ron, Kate, Beth, Pete, Donna, Bernie, Alison, John L and John J. After the obligatory "dawn patrol" just offshore of the campground, whose members changed daily, we headed out for a paddle from the campground to Les Escoumins. About three quarters of the way to our destination, the decision was made to stop and have lunch in a cove where there was a pilot station and a sizeable beach. Just as we landed, a dozen or so Belugas swam by, headed towards where we had come from. We

continued on after lunch, with about half the group heading back to camp, and never quite made it into Les Escoumins, stopping about a quarter mile short because of fog. Along the way back, several of us ran into Ron and Kate, who had found a beaver pond on top of a sort cliff that created a waterfall below. Quite a pretty place to stop. On our way back, we passed another campground, and two guys out on a platform invited us up for some wine. Well, I think that's what they said. I said "No Francais", and one repeated the invitation in semi-english. We politely declined, and paddled on. We headed back to camp, and were treated to a close encounter with two Minkes right near the launch ramp.

Tuesday, we planned on paddling from Tadoussac up the Saguenay and around the lower Fjord. The winds were very high, so we went sightseeing instead near Tadoussac. We went to Domaine des Dunes, which is a set of big sand hills that go right to the water. Quite interesting. Then, we walked around town, and did the tourist thing. Judith and I got

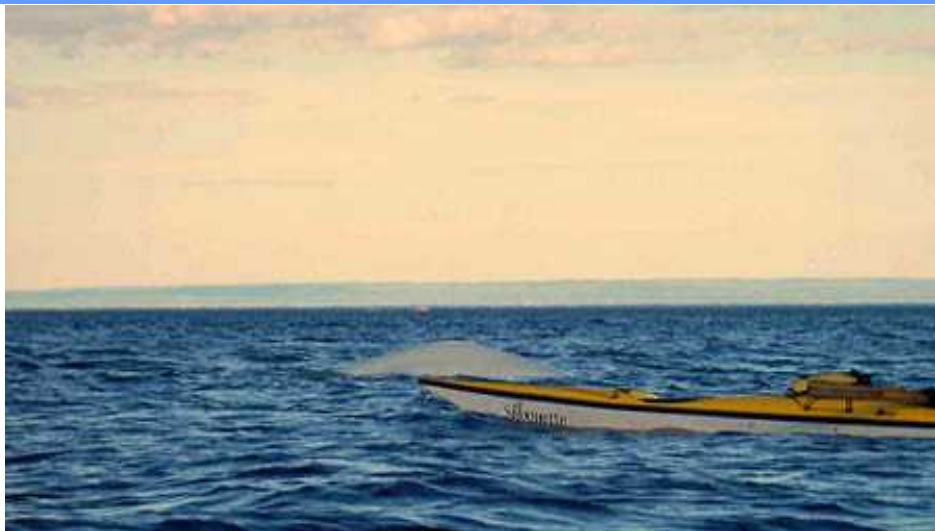


One Big Whale!



## Bonjour Monsieur Whale! Continued...

By Wayne Smith



They don't get much closer than this...

separated from the rest, so we went back to camp and decided to paddle. The winds had diminished a bit, so paddling was fine now. We paddled down past Cap Bon Desir, and headed towards Les Bergeronnes. A Minke cruised by, and there were Belugas way offshore.

We were about a mile past Cap Bon Desir, when we saw a large whale blow ahead of us. We stopped, and waited. It was heading towards us, and blowing regularly. It was obviously big, and we didn't see a dorsal fin, so we assumed it was a Humpback --- until it got closer,



Or this

and we saw the dorsal fin. It was a huge Fin whale, more than 60 feet long. It just went about its business, and cruised right past us. Awesome. I shot photos as fast as my camera could. We were giddy after that.

We swung about a mile out into the St Lawrence, and made our way back towards camp. A Beluga approached us, and we stopped. He (Females stay in the Saguenay, and the "Bachelor Boys", as the locals call them, stay in the St Lawrence during the summer) swam right past Judith, just feet away, and went on about his business. Right after that, we met up with Bernie, who had just come back from Tadoussac, and we were floating along telling him of our encounters, when the Beluga came back. He swam around Judith again, and went just inches off Bernie's bow, and swam away. We figured he was done with us by now, so Bernie went to join others who had launched, and we headed back to the launch, or so we thought.

As we were paddling back, we met up with Alison, and told her of our exploits. We left, and the Beluga made another pass, this time right next to Judith. I made a joke that the whale liked her, and was trying to play. So, we headed back about another 50 yards & talked to Beth for a while. We figured by this point, we were done for the day. Nope. The Beluga came back again, and swam around Judith half-way, and then went under her kayak and floated for a few seconds. The water turned a bright whitish green under her kayak, and she was pointing down saying "Look where he is...what do I do now?" I said relax and enjoy! It's not every day a Beluga Whale takes an interest in playing with you! We finally made it back to shore as a Minke was showing off just east of the boat ramp. We spent the evening out on the rocks drinking wine and beer, and watching whales.

We finally did paddle the Saguenay on





## Bonjour Monsieur Whale! Continued...

By Wayne Smith

Wednesday, launching from downtown Tadoussac. Wow is the only word that fits this place. As fjords go, I've seen taller cliffs on the sides, and more dramatic landscapes, but nothing quite this beautiful. It's all in how the place is laid out, and the fact that the Saguenay winds a little, and there are coves of varying size off of it, most with no land access. You could explore one section for days and not see everything. There were waterfalls in various places. One that had stairs alongside it, and another that was 300 - 400 feet high, though our sense of scale was so ruined that it was hard to really tell. Could have been higher according to the map. We did a 12-mile circuit at no hurried pace, and just soaked in everything we saw. There were Belugas around all day, including an immature one that kept popping his head up to see what we were all about.

At the very end of the paddle, we crossed a rip at the end of the Saguenay, and Ron, John L and I surfed it a bit, and I guess gave the locals a show. There were people sitting on the rocks right next to us, and they seemed a bit entertained by our antics.

Judith and I got back to camp about 45 minutes before the others, and as we were unpacking our wet stuff, the people out on the rocks started going berserk. We looked out, and saw a Blue Whale right in close to shore. I thought it was a



big Fin whale at first, but our neighbor Michel told us later that it was a small Blue. It came back later, and we all had a party out on the rocks complete with local cheese and some excellent smoked salmon (Firm and not slimy, eh Bernie?). Later on, a Minke cruised right by the rocks and did 2 barrel rolls and then breached. Great fun!

Thursday, the group split up into two factions: Four who wanted to paddle despite the small craft warnings, and those who went hiking in Baie St Marguerite. I planned the paddle. We would launch at Les Bergeronnes, and paddle to Tadoussac and back. Upwind on the way out, and surf back. Well, best laid plans... we made it about half way to Tadoussac, and the winds really whipped up. We had seen some whales in the distance, and lots of Harbor Porpoises, and we were making no headway, so we stopped on a beach that we saw a double land on. We stayed there for about an hour, and decided to abort, because the winds were just too much, and now the tide was against us, too. What took an hour and 45 minutes to do upwind took 40 minutes

coming back. We had Harbor Porpoises leading our kayaks almost all the way back. Guess we were finally moving fast enough to be interesting.

The other group came back, and said that the hike was great, and that they saw dozens of baby Belugas and their mothers swimming around. Judith and I decided we'd do the hike Friday.

Friday, we split again. Judith and I did the daily dawn patrol at 6:00 AM and had a big Blue whale cruise by, and several Minkes. We came in about 7:30, cleaned up, and headed out to do the hike. The rest of the group paddled with Michel and his friend Pierre, who is a local kayak guide & works out of the campground. They were going to paddle from Tadoussac to Les Bergeronnes one way.

The hike was really cool. 3 km out to an observation platform where you can see the whole bay. And there were lots of baby Belugas. A lot of fun to watch, even if from a distance on land. Boats are forbidden in the bay except right along shore, so as to minimize human impact on the little ones. We spent a good part of the day there, and in Tadoussac, and got





## Bonjour Monsieur Whale! Continued...

By Wayne Smith



being totally self-sufficient, but that it was still fun just the same. We had wine and cheese with Pierre and Michel, and hung out the rest of the evening. I had spent all of my energy this day, knowing that we had to leave at sunrise to head home the next morning. Driving home when you've spent it all seems a little easier to do than if you still have fuel in the tank. Although, I insisted on stopping in Sainte Anne de Beaupre for breakfast --- best crepes I've had anywhere.

We might go back next summer, and spend more time in Quebec City and further up the Saguenay. But we'll spend at least 3 days at Paradis Marin. You can't not go there.

Au Revoir!

back to camp about 4:30. Michel's wife was there, and she said that the other group wasn't back yet. I had to wonder about that ---- it's only 6 miles, and downwind the whole way the way they were doing it. She didn't seem concerned. She got a message to go pick up Michel about 5:00. I decided to paddle one more time before we went home.

I launched, and headed towards Les Bergeronnes along the shore. I saw two Minkes swimming abreast, and lots of spectators at Cap Bon Desir. I went about 3/4 of the way to Les Bergeronnes, and then swung about a mile and a half out into the St Lawrence, and headed back towards camp. The winds were brisk, but diminishing, and at my back now. There was an outfitter with clients inshore from me, and I drifted towards them. As I did that, a huge Blue whale surfaced and blew right near them, and about 50 yards from me. It blew again, and then dove, throwing its tail fluke in the air. Only fluke I saw all week, and the only time I didn't have my camera on me...ugh!

When I came back in, I mentioned the tail fluke, and nobody seemed shocked. Turns out that Pierre changed the plan, and took all but Donna and Michel (Who paddled alongshore according to the original plan) about 6 miles out, and in a triangle to Les Bergeronnes looking for

Humpbacks. They said they saw more whales on that paddle than the rest of the week combined, and REAL close up. Ron said the conditions were less than ideal to be that far out without everyone





## Cobscook Bay — 2006

By Brooks Martyn

There was a time when the Cobscook Bay Encampment would draw 10-15 paddlers from ConnYak and AMC. This year's mid-July event drew only three old duffers, Bill Knose, Clark Bowlen, and me. The 437-mile drive from Hartford up to the northeastern-most tip of Maine is still a grind but once there nothing much has changed. Cobscook Bay State Park has clean hot showers and outhouses, and offers campsites with beautiful vistas of the ocean. It is also well stocked with mosquitoes. Since my last visit several years ago the park no longer allows launching boats from the campsites and we were required to drive a mile or two up the road to the state launch ramp. Due to the 24-foot tidal fall in this region it is prudent to carefully plan one's daily trips around the tide chart as Cobscook Bay turns into a vast mud flat at low tide. We averaged 9-11 miles of paddling each day and were able to retrace several trips from previous years. The population density in this area is relatively low and the few houses that dot the shoreline actually give perspective and beauty to the unspoiled maritime vistas.

On our first paddle we went northward to Dennys Bay, then entered Bellier Cove, passed under an abandoned stone bridge and proceeded up Hobart Stream for a half-mile or so until we were stopped by a small rapid. It was there that we ate lunch and were entertained by a family of Merganser ducks. A subsequent day's paddle in the opposite

direction took us into Whiting Bay, past the Narrows, where several years ago Fran Griffin went over in the raging current and was heroically rescued by Wayne Smith: we uneventfully paddled through at high tide on this trip and got to within a few yards of the bridge on the Lubec Road. One day Bill and I paddled several miles up the Orange River, a tranquil trip through tall grass and water lilies, over a beaver dam, and past several derelict small camps. Our one rainy day was spent drying out Clark's soggy sleeping bag at the Laundromat in Machias, followed by a drive to the Reversing Falls. We spent a relaxing hour or two there, just watching the seals and water birds navigate the rapidly changing water patterns.

No trip to Cobscook Bay is complete without a paddle at Campobello Island, Canada. We were able to negotiate the border crossings both ways by presenting our drivers license; we were informed that a passport would be required in the near future. Our trip plan on the Island was to put in at Mills Cove, paddle out past the fish weirs to East Quoddy Lighthouse, and then ride the eddy current several miles southward to a convenient takeout point. Clark and I prudently chose to pass to the west side by going through a little cut while Bill paddled out around the lighthouse, hoping to see a whale. Bill's trip proved to be the most adventurous as he negotiated a considerable tidal rip at the point. What we did

not account for in our trip along the cliffs on the west shore was the fact that, although the tide was going our way, the eddy current plus the wind was going against us. Clark was able to minimize the effect by paddling very close to shore. Bill caught on after a while but I never did, choosing to paddle a straight line across the many small inlets in the rocky cliffs. How could these guys, who were paddling a longer distance, always beat me to the next point? At one point a mature bald eagle with a large fish in its talons flew over my head. It was a beautiful trip even if it was a real slog of several hours duration. The water temperature in Maine seldom gets out of the 50's and a prudent paddler dresses accordingly. My two companions wore Henderson wetsuits while I dutifully wore my Kokatat dry suit; in my opinion I was better dressed but they were definitely more comfortable, as the air temperature ran in the 80's each day.

The only other kayakers we encountered all week were an outfitter guide with six tourists, all dressed in cotton, none with spray skirts. They looked happy and comfortable, but we were doing it right! Paddling in this region requires careful planning due to the large tidal range but is within the capabilities of novice to expert paddlers.

I hope that in the future the Cobscook Bay Encampment will again become a popular event for our club members.



Generic picture by Pete Smith



## Always Bring Along the Boats

By Bill Anthony

My wife, Joan, and I had for some time planned a classic road trip out west. This year we got off on June 28<sup>th</sup> in our van turned camper and, of course, we brought the boats. Having taken three trips to the Florida Keys with the boats, they were an easy addition and would give us some on water experiences along with hiking and sightseeing. The trip would take thirty-seven days and cover 8,200 miles.

Our general itinerary was to head to St Louis for a an afternoon's visit via a night in Indianapolis, go on to Independence, MO and explore back roads in Kansas and Nebraska. A stop in Laramie, WY, sent us off over the Snowy Range and into northwest Colorado and eventually on to Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area in northeastern Utah where we stayed in the Manila KOA. This vast area extending ninety miles down from Green River, WY and into Utah is administered by the Forest Service. The Green River impounded by a dam in Dutch John, UT, extends northward as a flat-water lake through thirty miles of Flaming Gorge and then onward another ninety miles northward through the high desert to the town of Green River. This is the same Green River which courses through Utah's canyon lands and converges with the Colorado River below Moab. But that is another trip and another paddle.

We put in at the Sheep Creek Canyon boat launch, which is located on a broad arm of the lake, and paddled across to the high rock escarpments forming the beginnings of the canyon itself. These massive cliffs of red sandstone give the canyon area its name. Paddling to a flat spit where the lake widens, we stopped to explore the shoreline only reachable by boat or bighorn sheep. Thin shale-like slabs of sandstone showing the tiny ripples of an ancient seabed littered the shore. Off to our right loomed the entrance to the main canyon and its high narrow walls beckoned. Here we met the first motorized boats, as the lake is renowned for trophy trout and bass fishing.



Bill at Flaming Gorge

The canyon walls rise five hundred feet. Towards the middle of the canyon, which is about twenty miles long, the cliffs rise to fourteen hundred feet. We settled for a seven-mile loop and slowly wound our way back. That afternoon brought one of only three rainy episodes of the entire trip so we were glad we had an early start.

After a three-day stay in the Flaming Gorge area, we moved on to Grand Teton National Park. As park campgrounds are first come first served, we stayed at a KOA on the Snake River south of Jackson in order to make an early morning's entry in to the park. But we stayed an extra day, enjoying a riverfront campsite, in order to take a whitewater raft trip



More Flaming Gorge



## Always Bring Along the Boats Continued...

By Bill Anthony



The Snake River

down the Snake below Hoback Junction. This was a good place to wear a paddling jacket, as we were wet most of the time. Joan rode the "bull" at the front of the raft. One young woman, who did so, hit the drink and was pulled out by fellow paddlers on her side. Not for the faint at heart, our laconic guide/climber/skier who manned the oars kept us amused and distracted with constant banter.

The afternoon of our arrival at Signal Mountain Campground, found us launching at String Lake for a paddle and an hundred yard portage to Leigh Lake, a back-country lake, which brings you right under the towering Tetons. Here Mt. Moran rises almost 5700' above the level of the lake. A rock falling off the top could almost splash right next to you. The second of only three rainy episodes was about to pounce on us as thunder clouds from the west started over the mountains. We made it back with plenty of time still marveling at how close one could paddle to soaring mountains. Nothing this high is so close to the water, it seems, unless one is in Alaska or Patagonia.

The Snake River, our next adventure, starts its long western course in Yellow-

stone National Park north of Teton, flows south through Jackson Lake around the mountains and northwestward through Idaho to the Columbia River in Washington. Its most benign and flat section is the six miles from the Jackson Lake Dam to Pacific Creek. Below this point, the river is a bit faster but also encumbered by dangerous downed tree trunks that can entrap paddlers in any craft. Earlier this year, three people were drowned on a guided rafting trip when they capsized and were trapped under a log.

Our trip started just below the Jackson Dam. A well-used pebble beach with a parking lot just beyond the outflow rapids makes a surprisingly easy access to the water. Frequently used by paddlers and guided fishing trips, it was empty this sunny morning. We were helped in discovering this trip and positioning our van downstream by a neighboring couple at our campground. From California they had been coming to the Tetons for almost forty years and had taken this river trip many times in their canoe. Two days later when we reciprocated in shuttle support, we saw a bear swim across the river just yards down from the put-in. Our trip was not without wildlife, however, as we spent some time watching

eagles and enormous trout below us as we floated by. One could almost reach into the water and stroke their backs.

We floated along, occasionally paddling to keep to one side of the river. The current was not much more than a modest tidal flow but swift enough to require a strong effort avoid any obstructions, which fortunately were few. There was one small rapid that was easily passed in the deeper water close to shore. All this was done with a Greenland paddle, which may be a first. The river has an enormous ox-bow, which we took and enjoyed watching a great amount of bird-life on and off the water. The take-out is below a slight riffle at a large sandbar. The bank to the riverside paved access road was heavily washed out but negotiable. I had a nice chat with the seasonal river ranger, a woman who with her ranger husband was from out of state. It was nice to see the park service had a presence on the river.

After traversing through Yellowstone, including time spent in Cody, WY and Red Lodge, MT, we wound our way up through Montana to the west side of Glacier National Park. Yellowstone does offer paddling opportunities on Yellowstone Lake, Lewis Lake and backcountry Shoshone Lake. I found the flatness of the landscape and the monotonous shoreline to be somewhat uninteresting. A multi-day trip to Shoshone Lake would have been interesting. The intensity of the afternoon winds can make paddling on such large lakes a long slog. Nursing a torn shoulder ligament, which will necessitate some minor surgery, we kept our paddles modest in length and intensity. Besides I had lost a crown waiting for Old Faithful to erupt and was not anxious to bring on another water related episode. We also did not go on to Big-horn Canyon, as the temperatures were over 100 degrees throughout Wyoming. Glacier was hot but pleasant and we



## Always Bring Along the Boats Continued...

By Bill Anthony



Bowman Lake

swam in both Lake McDonald and Bowman Lake. So splashing around in a kayak was a pleasure. Our campground was at Apgar, just inside the park from West Glacier and located on Lake McDonald. The lake has an incredible view of the still snow-capped Rockies back up the valley to the east. I took a solo evening paddle on the lake to the sounds of a trio playing Swiss mountain horns. The music echoed and reverberated off the mountains in the glow of the waning sun. It does not get dark until after ten o'clock so evening paddles can be long.

Our last paddle was on backcountry Bowman Lake, a thirty-one mile partial dirt road drive from Apgar. The drive took two and a half hours at speeds of ten to fifteen miles per hour. The wider two-lane road had such a vicious washboard that anything above or below 15MPH made the van sound like a heavy

metal band. The final six and a half miles from Polebridge to the lake was a single lane winding dirt road through a 1988 forest fire burn. Traveling no more than 10MPH, the views were expansive and only one vehicle was encountered. Bowman Lake was featured on the cover of the June 2006 issue of [Sea Kayaker](#) magazine. If someone could photograph their two kayaks there, I could certainly do ours. We only encountered a few canoeists at the boat launch and beach who were off for a picnic or fishing. The views of the snow-capped mountains ahead were stunning and it was a disappointment to have to turn around to paddle back.

We continued our trip by heading up the Canadian Rockies to Banff, Lake Louise and Jasper and then headed back across Alberta and Saskatchewan to the Great Lakes. We spent a day at Mackinac Island and then crossed the Straits and

headed home by way of Ontario and New York. Spending a few more days at any point along the trip could have afforded more paddling but we had roughly a five-week itinerary and obligation to meet at home. There are a large number of lakes and some flat-water rivers in the west, although seeing sea kayakers is a rarity. Access to lake water in the Canadian Rockies was limited and in some areas the launch sites were encumbered with driftwood logs. This was the case in Lake Louise. The Great Lakes are windy and so early morning or evening paddles are the best option. Our day at Mackinac was very hot so we went swimming in Lake Michigan later in the afternoon. The next day it was so windy, we needed a 20MPH escort over the five-mile long Straits of Mackinac Bridge. But it never hurts to bring the boats along!



## Origins of ConnYak (A Brief History)

By Jay Babina

I was alerted of the 2nd meeting of a Sea Kayaking club starting in CT by one of it's founders, Bill Pratt who I knew through my profession. Sue Warner from Collinsville Canoe/Kayak along with Bill Pratt & Stan Kegeles were the forces behind the original concept of a sea kayaking club. Sue got it going with what I believe was the honorable intention of having something available to paddlers to help their business as well as the sport in general. The meeting was held at a school in Willimantic. Around 18 paddlers arrived, who desperately needed paddling partners and were quite excited about meeting other people involved in this rare sport. It was the winter of '91 and we left the meeting with Stan Kegeles being the president and the all-important task of picking a club name at the next meeting. We talked about our paddling experience and we all had about one year or less and we discussed our boats. There weren't many choices then and you had a plastic Aquaterra, a Necky, Wilderness Systems, Current Designs, Valley and some Hydra Sea Runners. There were a few West Coast kayaks but you didn't see them on the east coast. And in rare cases you saw an Orion (British). We had no day paddle trips but there was discussion of traveling trips like the west coast, Maine, Block Island by ferry etc.

I remember the chalk board in the classroom at the next meeting with 20 wimpy kayak club names on it and then Stan wrote ConnYak from the list and a smile immediately came over everyone's face. The club treasurer Jim Gass contributed this entry which was unanimously chosen in seconds. As our club grew, we had no choice but to be fair and open to

the other 2 stores in the state (Small Boat & Wilton Outdoor) when we published our first newsletters. We could not remain with an attachment to Collinsville as long as paddlers were willing to join us from all areas of the state. Sue from Collinsville understood this and basically took a back seat as we grew with leaps and bounds. I always felt that Sue's intent was more than honorable as they backed out graciously and accepted our relationship with other stores. We do owe Sue Warner from Collinsville a lot for her impetus in getting ConnYak started.

Bill Pratt did the first newsletter which was a single one-sided sheet of paper but had to drop out due to some personal issues. Fern Usen did a few newsletters after that and turned the chore over to me. It was the tail end of our 2nd year when we started to mail out newsletters to members. You have to remember there was no web at that time. The birth of a newsletter also started our dues that were needed to pay for postage and printing. Our huge growth started during that period because we sent out free newsletters to the stores and the sport was taking off. Kayak instructors were hard to find and Mike Falconari and Cheri Perry were running classes and the two stores each had an affiliation with an instructor. That was it unless you traveled. "Can you roll?" was a common question that kayakers asked one another, since this unheard of feat remained allusive and placed you in a definite pecking order.

I remember how valuable the club was because you actually got to see other kayaks and shared paddling techniques as well as the obvious networking of

paddlers. Mike Falconeri was the rolling king and little by little everyone went to the Wallingford pool and learned to roll - mostly taught by Cheri Perry who had a partnership with him.

It wasn't long before we started to develop a weekly paddling schedule throughout the state. There were no recreational boats at that period so kayakers who took the sport seriously arrived with a paddle float under the bungees ready for not only instant but probable use. A normal scheduled paddle would produce around 12-16 paddlers. Our membership soared up to 200 in our third year. Everyone had the standard issue Werner blue shaft paddle. Almost everyone used it feathered since that was what a kayak paddle was supposed to be and we all wanted to be prepared for the wind - just in case. (sorry... couldn't resist) Greenland wasn't invented as of yet.

The only other club in existence was MASK (Metropolitan Assoc. of Sea Kayakers - NY) and many members belonged to both. MASK would do paddles in CT and often we would join in. In some ways they were a model for us having a newsletter and a large organized membership with an advanced schedule of paddles. Bobby Curtis was the newsletter letter editor of MASK for years and we were very influenced by them and made a lot of nice friends.

Our growth over the years was paralleled by the growth of the sport with more stores, kayaks, instructors, greater skills by paddlers and more opportunities across the board. At one time ConnYak owned a club kayak which was a plastic Necky. The idea was that we could loan



## Origins of ConnYak Continued...

By Jay Babina

it out as well as use it to train paddlers. It was a noble idea but 2 years later we decided we were taking a huge liability risk and the club voted to sell it off.

In the mid 90's the plague of paranoia came over the club and people were going nuts at meetings discussing responsibility and liability issues to death. We became an ACA affiliated club and all members automatically became ACA members which included insurance. Our club dues had to be raised to \$30 to pay for it. Eventually the hassles of paper work, forms and secretarial duties turned it into a nightmare and we dropped out of the ACA as a club. We dropped our dues back to \$15 for single or family memberships and peace was restored.

There are two definite areas where I think the club took a powerful turn in various directions. One is the opportunity and desire to bring in outside instructors for clinics and talks. Terry Harlow who was a member was able to get Derek Hutchinson to visit us and give clinics and talks. Through Terry we brought in other instructors from England since he often traveled there representing Derek's paddle (Toksook) in the US. This was all still occurring pre-internet era. We learned that all we had to do was ask, and we could arrange to bring in anyone short of the president for a little money and airfare. We were also able to open up these opportunities to non-members which caused our membership to practically double. Our talks and lectures were always open to the public as they are now. We developed a reputation of being a club that did things on the level of major symposiums. For example, in '96 we had John Heath (Inuit historian/author) Nigel Foster, BCU coaches Linda

Legg (women's workshop) Howard Jeffs, Kevin Mansell and Charlie and Cindy Cole (Greenland paddling workshop). We had the money to do these things and weren't afraid to use it which allowed many members to get BCU certifications.

The second time the club took a noteworthy turn in trend was the steady acceptance of the Greenland paddle. The first users were in MASK and inch by inch paddlers tried it, liked it and stayed with it. When Cindy and Charlie Cole gave their talk and clinic to ConnYak in '96, they couldn't believe the turnout and skill of people using the Greenland Paddle. Paddlers were interested in refining their Greenland style hand rolls and needed no beginner introduction to the paddle. Cindy and Charlie were instrumental in the starting of the Delmarva Greenland Gathering and were teaching these ways before it became mainstream. Since then the world has become infested with Greenland paddle users but I fully believe that ConnYak paddlers more than embraced this trend with full enthusiasm before it became popular. From then on, ConnYak went out of its way to accommodate both GP and Euro paddle users with our clinics and lectures catering to both disciplines. We also surprised instructors from England with the general caliber of the paddlers. We were aggressive with learning skills and every year we had clinics and pool sessions. We made learning convenient.

I believe many of the ConnYak members during the mid 90's, partially influenced by Derek and other instructors had a much greater opinion of our invincibility than deserved. We paddled all winter in any seas that were there and almost never checked the weather forecast until

the day we got into trouble. I remember a combined paddle with MASK when we were caught in honest 50 mph winds with higher gusts. We could just about make progress and get back. We had no tow lines and had a few people who could not break the wind. We actually took turns paddling next to them and pushing them along. We also had an event where a few paddlers were picked up by a dive boat after a capsize and kayak rescue in high winds as they were blowing out to sea. The group was scattered, fighting for their lives. The Coast Guard was alerted that day. Another day we had a paddler (dentist) break his arm while sandwiched between two boats during a rescue. After these near disasters, the club as a whole began to sober up and were much more sane about our paddling. We learned that these things can actually happen.

In the late 90s we grew to over 450 members. Recreation boats and cheaper kayaks were available and our paddles were producing up to 50 paddlers. We had a major problem. We were not only obnoxious but unsafe. We were filling parking lots and also turning off members as well as the boating community. We divided up paddles on the same day to rectify it and for some strange reason, the attendance started to decrease. My own personal opinion is that the fad of paddling for people who got into it because it was a cheap and instantaneous afternoon on the water faded. The core paddlers who are really addicted remained and we are back to a respectable 6-18 or so. Our current membership is a bit over 300 at this time. As always, many members belong





## Origins of ConnYak Continued...

By Jay Babina

for the things we offer and support us although many do not paddle with us or only on occasion.

One major side benefit of the overpopulation of recreational kayakers was the introduction of our rescue clinics 7 years ago. After the exposure to an onslaught of summer paddlers with zero knowledge and skills, we felt that someone has to show them how to do things. Otherwise we would all be registering our boats and taking a useless paddling course sponsored by the state as well as shelling out money each year. These paddlers weren't about to take lessons so our civic duty has not only helped them but created an educational event for seasoned paddlers as well.

Would you believe that ConnYak has a CD! When Dick Gamble became the treasurer in the early-90's, he not only brought in a lot of knowledge from being the former CEO of several CT corporations but a lot of business discipline as well. He not only managed our money but got us thinking like a business. Since he moved we have fallen back a bit into lazy kayak slobs but are doing OK without him. He was a pivotal person in the growth of this club and an inspiration with his boundless energy.

All of the kayak stores have been very generous to us with raffle gifts for our picnics as well as the generous library gifts from Wilton Outdoor and the seal repair kits from Nick Deslyn of Kokatat.

Through the years ConnYak has learned that it can't be everything to everyone. We can't teach the world how to kayak, or have mass opportunities for all levels

of paddlers all of the time. I think we learned to post some paddles, let the members post things they want and let it flow along effortlessly without too much analysis or intervention. Our club motto - "if you have an idea, do it and we'll support you" has remained a productive philosophy.

For 15 years many paddlers (not just officers) have donated their services to this club helping one another keep it an interesting and educational group. Because

of our web site, we get visitors from far away who not only read about us but join us on events as well. Our website also allowed us to rally the troops to fight down the proposed CT registration bill twice. What was the simple desire of a few paddlers in 1991 has turned an interest into a very diversified organization that has done a lot for paddlers through the years and continues to evolve with our basic goal in mind... having fun.



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