

CONNAYAK



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

December 1996

It was another cold November Saturday morning that would have been better spent in bed. Instead I opened the newspaper to the weather section and read the marine forecast: gusts to 40, gale warning, 50 degree water temperature and 5 to 8 foot waves in the sound. Making the decision to head to the Thimble Islands for a morning of paddling was easy. GO.

As I arrived, I was shocked to see so many willing paddlers ready to launch. The onshore wind and approaching storm had created sea conditions that to this day rank among the worst I've been in. Nevertheless, we amassed a group of twelve and headed straight towards the further-most island of the Thimbles - Outer Island. The initial plan was to meet Mike Falconeri and Desmond Harrington, who were late in launching.

Our group handled the oncoming 2 to 4 foot waves with virtually no problem. The trip was slow due to the extreme headwind, but an hour later we finally reached our destination, the backside

of Outer Island. As we pulled into a protected beach area to gain relief from the wind, a few of us noted the activity on the other side of the island. Fern Usen, Dick Gamble and I ventured away from the beach far enough to witness large 4 and 5 foot breaking waves, a confused sea and some foam developing on the ocean surface. To me, with only 6 months paddling experience under my belt, this scenario was awesome. I felt nervous and excited at the same time, wondering how it would feel to nudge the kayak into those



About 15 minutes after our group arrived, Mike and Desmond were seen approaching Outer Island, not from the protected side, but from the open sea side. Nobody could believe it. They had just come through the very same waves that we could never imagine

ourselves in. They came around, joined us at the beach and then asked if anyone was going to play in the waves. Dick and I decided to try and head out, while the remaining ten paddlers headed for shore. I must point out that my decision to go and probably that of Dick's as well was predicated on the fact that both Mike and Desmond are instructors with excellent rescue skills. Mike asked me if I could brace, and I answered with an uncertain yes. I had learned to roll months earlier and felt sure that I wouldn't be swimming.

Desmond, Mike, Dick and I started smashing through waves that literally picked my eighteen foot kayak clear off the water and dropped it into a trough 4 feet below. Desmond was just motoring through the waves while Mike was screaming instructions to Dick and I, but the wind and crashing waves made communication difficult. We really didn't need help, we knew what we were doing. Right?

As each wave tried to capsize my Legend, I braced and kept thinking of

IN AT OUTER



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In at Outer continued...

how traumatic a capsize and subsequent attempted roll in that sea would be. Very shortly my thoughts were transformed into reality. I was hit by two large waves simultaneously and had to brace hard on my left. I reached over with the paddle in a low brace position only to find that my kayak was 2 or 3 feet off the water surface. Nothing there except air! I reached even further until I was looking at the foaming sea rushing towards my face.

No problem. I am wearing a drysuit and I can roll. I could feel the waves pounding the hull of the boat. The water was cold and the storm had churned up the bottom yielding virtually zero underwater visibility. I tried to remain calm, waited a few seconds to get some orientation, set up for the roll, swept the paddle, and....nothing. Apparently I was sweeping in a trough and never contacted the water. After 3 attempts I managed to sweep and roll up to surface. Little did I know that my problems were only beginning.

When I came to the surface I started to rotate back over again to my left. I reached out, braced, glance to my right, and got trashed by another large breaking wave. This time I bailed out and needed to be rescued by Mike. True to form, Mike made light of the situation, got me back in my boat, and pointed me in the right direction.

As I started to paddle towards shore, another large wave, another poor brace, and yet another plunge to the sea. It was only a minute since I was rescued and here I was again in the water. This time, having never mastered an off-side roll, I was floating face down on my left side trying to get the boat to rotate to a completely capsized position. This would prove useless as the wind and waves kept me pinned on that side. Realizing I would never come around for another roll attempt on my good side, I bailed out for the second time. I didn't know that my problems were only going to get worse. As I came to the surface, I noticed my boat being swept away by the wind. Luckily, I thought, I still had my paddle connected to my wrist by a leash. Desmond chased down my kayak and was instructing me to swim to him. I started to swim very aggressively, trying to

grab a line on my boat, but couldn't match the speed at which both kayaks were being blown. At one point the wind picked my Lendal paddle off the surface and blew it straight away from me only to be reeled in at warp speed by an outstretched leash. The paddle came straight back at my face and gashed me above the right eye. Finally, after swimming about 150 to 200 feet I made contact with both kayaks. Desmond skillfully got me back into my kayak in seconds. At this point I was starting to feel disoriented and somewhat ill. The four of us decided to head back in on a very large following sea, which was becoming difficult for me to negotiate. Dick stayed with me until we reached shore. Mike and Desmond eventually headed back out to continue playing in those "great" conditions. That night and for the next 2 days, I was sick with flu-like symptoms. I am not sure if I was in the process of getting sick before I launched or whether this was a byproduct of being totally trashed.

Note: One of the ten paddlers who turned around and headed for shore also capsized and was rescued. Mike Falconeri also capsized close to shore. No rescue needed.

If there is a moral to this story - Underestimate your ability and overestimate the risk. My attitude concerning rough water paddling is anything but cavalier: I always launch dressed for the occasion and carry a cellular phone, yet, I seldom pass up a chance to dance with mother nature.

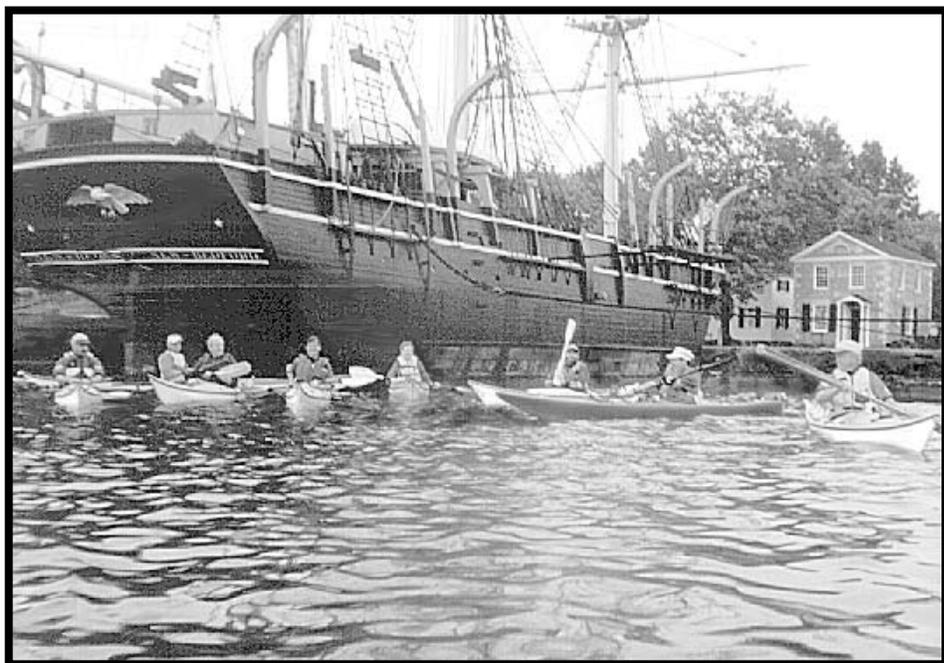
-Dean Bertoldi

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Well here we are, closing in on the end of our fourth paddling season for Conn-Yak. It was by far our best year yet, thanks to the efforts of many of our club members.

Due to the monumental behind-the-scenes efforts and incredible generosity of Terry Harlow of Paddle Plus & Sea Paddler Magazine, we were able to bring to Connecticut's paddling community what was without doubt one of the best lecture series in the country. Those of us who were lucky enough to attend all the lectures at Essex were treated to great entertainment, beautiful slides, and great camaraderie. For those of you who missed the series, we had the following lecturers at Essex: Nigel Foster, Linda Legg, Howard Jeffs, Charlie & Cindy Cole, Kevin Mansell, & last, but by no means least, John Heath. The arrangements for the Town Hall lecture space and the CT River Museum were made by our tireless Dick Gamble! Many of our members were able to take advantage of the workshops offered by the lecturers, and all who participated came away from the sessions with increased knowledge of the sport and much technical improvement.

The combination of lectures, club boat use donations, and raffle proceeds has put our club in a good financial position as the new year approaches.



Paddlers heading off on the the Mystic trip held in September.

The club boat has been stored in North Guilford, thanks to the generosity of Ingela Helgesson. A big THANKS to all who donated prizes to our raffle: Nick Dyslin of Necky & Kokatat & Werner; Outdoor Sports Centre in Wilton; Small Boat Shop in South Norwalk; North Cove Outfitters in Old Saybrook; Collinsville Canoe & Kayak, and Terry Harlow.

Throughout the year many members were able to take advantage of the fine teaching expertise of the guys at Urban Eskimo - Mike Falconeri & Desmond Harrington. It's indeed a privilege to have such great talent among our membership, and we wish Desmond well in his new endeavor on the Pacific Rim.

You have doubtless noticed that the quality of our newsletter has changed. We've had several editors who all did a great job during their tenure - Clark Bowlen and Fern Usen. Our newest editor, Jay Babina, adds his professional graphics skills.

Lastly on a personal note, you'll notice that I finally moved to Branford. I'm working at the Beazley Realtors office in Guilford. My new address is PO Box 2006, Branford, CT 06405. I can be reached at work at 203-453-5244, or at home at 203-481-1881. A reminder to all club members: Practice Safe Paddling, and whenever possible, teach it to others!! See you at meetings.

-Stan Kegeles

Seals appear on Long Island Sound approx. January thru March. They are often seen on the east side of the Thimbles in Branford. They hang out on small rock piles and are never seen on the main islands. They're extremely shy and don't allow you to get too close.

Other spots where sightings have been reported are Faulknors Island, Duck Island in Clinton, The Dumplings / rock piles off of Fishers and the Norwalk Islands.

It's important that we keep a good distance and don't force them off their spots. Forcing them into the water only teaches them that this may not be such a great spot for their winter vacation.

-If you have any other sightings that you would like to share, please write in.

Seals & Sea Lions

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

Paddling on a tranquil sea, you spy a small round object - with eyes and whiskers - peering back at you. As quickly, your observer disappears below the surface, almost as if never there. You holler to your buddy. "hey, I just saw a sea lion. Technically, you wouldn't be correct since there are no species of sea lions endemic to the North Atlantic.

Sea lions evolved from early carnivores in the temperate North Pacific some 24 million years ago (mya).

At that time, the Central American Seaway was open but subtropical waters formed a warm-water barrier

keeping sea lions out. But, I digress, I'm sure you are more interested in the present day seals and sea lions. Afterall, I doubt you will see any critters from -211 mya!!

Seals and sea lions are members of the order Pinnipedia, which also includes the walrus. They are considered amphibious marine mammals: mammals because they breathe air, suckle their young, have hair and give birth to live young. Marine because they get their food from the ocean. And amphibious because they live both in the water and on land during their lives. There are also some key identifying differences between the true seals (phocids) and sea lions (otariids).

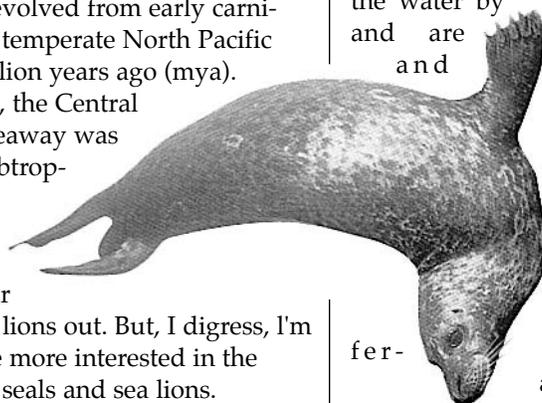
Sea lions are usually the "seal" stars in many aquaria shows. They have reversible hind flippers, that is, they can flip their hind limbs up under them and walk on land. Okay, so their walk

is more of a waddle! Sea lions swim using their fore flippers and have external pinna, or ears. True seals, on the other hand, have no external ears, do not have reversible hind flippers, and move about on land by "galumphing". To be honest they look like giant sausages or inchworms. Actually, they can move faster than you might expect on land. True seals propel themselves in the water by their hind limbs, and are some of the deepest and longest repetitive divers of the marine mammals. But, their diving escapades are enough for another story at a later time.

External features are not the only differences between these amphibious marine mammals. Sea lions mate in groups similar to harems -- many females to a single male. Thus, sexual dimorphic traits (observable difference between the sexes) are extreme in sea lions: for example most males are significantly larger than the females. In seals, mating systems are more variable and sexual dimorphism is less pronounced. Except, of course, for the elephant seals - and their name says it all.

So, if you want to see a seal, grab your kayak and take a paddle on the Sound in the winter. To view sea lions, you'll need different transportation. A plane to the Pacific Coast / Southern Hemisphere, or a car to the Mystic Marine life Aquarium. Either way, happy paddling!

-Kathleen Dudzinski



Sea Lions

Kathleen Dudzinski is a Marine Biologist. She did research on Beluga whales at the Mystic Aquarium and was awarded a National Science Foundation Three Year Fellowship. Kathleen studied the Atlantic spotted dolphins in Bahamian waters and conducted research on bottlenose dolphins in the Gulf of Mexico. She also designed and built a new system for simultaneously recording the behavior and vocalizations of dolphins underwater.

DUES ARE DUE

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

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

All problems with the PADDLER subscriptions will be addressed and resolved by January of "97".

Members receive a club newsletter each month along with various scheduled events.

NO CONNYAK MEETING IN DEC.

Board members and committee heads only. Date and location to be established and announced by phone.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS - '97'

Nomination for officers to be submitted in Dec. by mail or at the Jan. meeting when elections will take place. You can nominate yourself or any willing candidate for any position. If you would like to help the club in any way, please say so.

TO JOIN CONNYAK...

ConnYak is a non profit club that is open to all paddlers interested in sea kayaking from any location.

Meetings are usually on the 3rd Wednesday of each month. Yearly dues are \$30. Direct membership inquiries to: Stan Kegeles
P.O. Box 2006 Branford, CT 06405

LESSONS

*Fundamentals, Bracing & Rolling,
Practice Pool Time*

ALL EQUIPMENT PROVIDED IF NEEDED

THE SMALL BOAT SHOP

203-854-5223 - for information

CLASSIFIED

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

Powermaster paddle - 216 cm. \$50.
860-767-0610 Fax 860-767-0617

Betsey Bay Recluse - white/white \$1200. P & H Sirius, low volume Yellow/White w/skeg 5 mo old.- \$1800. 860-721-1593

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

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

ConnYak classified ads are free.

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



ConnYak

CONNECTICUT SEA KAYAKERS

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