

# CONN YAK



CONNECTICUT SEA KAYAKERS

October 1999

## Good paddling skills take time

Jay Babina

Whenever I teach someone to roll, scull or other skill related techniques, I always notice a sense of impatience. I was the same way when I first learned. The unfortunate truth about learning more advanced paddling techniques is that it takes time - simply because the techniques involve more than learning specific moves. They involve learning to adapt the moves to your total body - it's size, weight, flexibility as well as the way you fit in your boat. The general characteristics of your boat also greatly affect how you will adapt the techniques to your own style.

This may be an unpopular view, but I think it's a waste of time spending hours and hours of instruction trying to develop the perfect paddling stroke. It's even worse if you're paying someone to do this to you! Why? Because the perfect paddling stroke doesn't exist and your efficiency and ease of paddling will automatically come after you paddle for a while ... maybe on your second or third season. Besides, the person teaching you, did no better than you when they first started and went through the same learning curve. Corrective and analytical advice will help the process, however, only you can train your body to paddle smoothly.

Just like a baby learning to walk, you can't speed up the process. Fortunately, babies have no command of language at that point in their development, because

it's often said if they had to take instructions, they would never walk.

While on a recent ConnYak paddle, I had a discussion with a woman who was having trouble keeping her boat going straight. I remember when I had my first plastic kayak, I used to turn it upside down and sight down it with one eye. I was totally convinced the hull was distorted since it was always pulling to the right. It couldn't be me! I only paddled at one speed - full tilt - totally out of control and had to correct the kayak back in line about every 6 strokes. I had a Werner paddle that was about a foot too long with those huge San Juan blades. People watching used to tell me "that kayak seems pretty fast". I was only good for about 2 hours, then I would crawl back to my car on all fours. About a month later I calmed down and magically I could go where I wanted with no problem. I started to develop a normal paddling stroke.

Maybe some lessons might have helped, but I doubt it. What I really needed was a tranquilizer. Kayaking to me was how fast can I get from here to there or how fast could I learn the next technique. The following year I was just like everyone else who paddled for a year - a little smoother and a little more confident.

If your paddling diet consist of going out 5 times a year, your progress is obviously going to proceed at that pace. There are really no goals in kayaking other than

## Hats are in!



The long awaited and often requested ConnYak hats are now available in three stunning colors - light yellow, buff and light grey - stone washed cotton with a full color or embroidered logo (not a stick on). As usual, these are sold to members at our cost of \$8. One size fits all - Adams brand quality hat with the leather adjustment strap. They will be at the meetings and at all the scheduled paddles. Bring cash in an envelope with your name on it or a check made to ConnYak.

your personal sense of satisfaction - we learn skills for a feeling of security and safety. Just realize that paddlers who paddle regularly and practice a few sweep strokes and turns while they're out paddling are going to develop these skills much sooner. The aggressive paddlers who really go all out learning rolls etc. get their basic knowledge very much up front, yet I always notice that the smoothness of style and ease of making the boat do what you want it to still comes after a



Paddling out at the mouth of the Mystic River

few years no matter how much learning you try to cram in. What's really happening is a blending of techniques and a blending of the coordination and balance that your body has developed.

Remember when someone showed you the high and low brace? In my 9 years of paddling I don't think I ever saw a paddler robotically bring the paddle up to their chest, slap the water and put it down and continue paddling. You have to learn the bracing moves that way but bracing and paddle strokes actually become one. There's a melting of all the paddle strokes, sweeps, sculling strokes and braces into one continuous smooth movement. Just like the baby learning to walk, you develop confidence with every step. You build on this confidence going on to a new skill or incorporating two moves in to one - as minute as it may be. Nobody can really teach that to someone else. After you paddle for a while it will just start to happen.

A while back, Clay Luce wrote an excellent article in the newsletter "The Precursor to Rolling" where he describes how your basic aptitude has a major bearing on learning to roll. The ex-Navy Seal v.s. the life-long couch potato. The points he made are significant. We all fit in there somewhere and our experiences and personality will have a huge bearing on how we go about learning things in kayaking. One thing for sure, the ex-Navy Seal and couch potato will never be paddling smoothly until they paddle for a while. They will both have to be patient and allow their bodies to develop a style and rhythm that is part of themselves.

It's common to hear "What am I doing wrong" from people learning to scull as they struggle to keep afloat. "You're not doing anything wrong". Learning to roll and scull take a long time. You can roll on your first lesson, but it's a long transition to the point where you're totally smooth and comfortable and can roll up from any position you find yourself in. You're always refining your body movement ...and just when you're kind of satisfied, you start changing it again. Any paddler who has some experience will tell you that it's a journey refining these techniques and everybody goes through the struggles and awkwardness that you experience at first.

The most important thing is to be patient and enjoy the process! The winner is the one who gets total personal satisfaction from being in their kayak no matter what they're doing or where they are. There's no substitute for time - which is really based on an accumulation of our experiences.

- Jay Babina

## ISSUES & MEETINGS

Well, another summer has gone by, faster than the tidal bore of the Bay of Fundi! We've had some good paddles this year with excellent attendance - 8 or so paddlers when it rained and as many as 47 when it was sunny! About 100 new members have joined our ranks since January and we continue to grow. Unfortunately this increase in size has created some logistical problems. We now have so many paddlers of different abilities showing up for our scheduled events that the group is sometimes strung out over the course of a nearly a half mile. It seems that within a half-hour of departing the launch point we separate into 2 distinct groups with a widening gap in between. The slower group generally being composed of newer paddlers, the faster group of more experienced kayakers. The problems with this disparity in speed is that it soon becomes no fun trying to keep up with the faster group, and if you are a faster paddler it is tough to paddle slower than your normal rate of speed or always stopping to wait for the group to catch up. The speed/group separation issue is only one of the problems involved, there are also some concerns with safety and rescue as well as navigational issues. We have a diverse and resourceful membership and although I'm not sure what the answer is, I'm confident as a club we can come up with a solution. This is one issue we must address and as always, anyone with suggestions or comments on this or any other concerns should voice them at our upcoming meeting or contact me or write the newsletter. Also... we will discuss lectures and programs of interest for the future meetings. Paddle Safe, and I'll see you at the meeting.

- Ed Milnes

*"A man who is not afraid of the sea, will soon be drowned for he will be going out on day when he shouldn't. But we do be afraid of the sea and we do only be drowned now and again." Attributed to an Irish fisherman from "On Celtic Tides" by Chris Duff.*

## HELP WANTED

North Cove Outfitters in Old Saybrook, CT is looking for Campers, Birders, Paddlers and Fishers interested in full or part time positions. For more information, please contact Jim at 800-769-6858 or 860-388-6585.

*Newsletter articles are always needed and welcome. You don't have to be an expert at anything. Share your view or experiences with other members.*

## OCT. CONNYAK MEETING

*Discussion of upcoming events, our larger paddling groups, library, financial report etc. ConnYak Hats will be there.*

**WED. OCTOBER 13, 7:30 PM  
WALLINGFORD PARK & REC.**

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

## CONNYAK LIBRARY

At all our meetings Nora Galvin will have the video and book library. As a member you can borrow any items you wish. Don't forget donations are well appreciated and well used if you have any kayak related books, videos or magazines. Subjects can be First Aid, Navigation, Boating Safety, Camping, Kayak Building, Fiberglass Repair etc., as well as focused kayak titles. You can also temporally donate a book for a given amount of time if you want to ultimately keep it for your library.

## COMING IN NOVEMBER

On Friday November 12th, Jonathon Reynolds and his wife Heather Smith authors of "Kayaking Georgian Bay" will present a slide show and talk on paddling on Georgian Bay at the Essex Town Hall at 7:30 PM. This promises to be an interesting and informative presentation, look for more information in the November newsletter.



### Note:

**All paddlers on ConnYak trips must wear the appropriate CG approved Personal Flotation Device and wear a spray skirt. The boat and equipment must meet CG requirements, including a signaling device (whistle or horn). All paddlers are responsible for their own safety, including dressing for immersion. Beginners must have taken a basic course and be proficient in performing a wet exit, paddle float re-entry and carry a pump. Kayaks without bulkheads should have floatation installed. (always carry extra dry clothes, food and water)**

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## KAYAKER DIES ON THE QUINNIPIAC RIVER

Paul Santoni died Sept. 17 in Meriden while kayaking on the Quinnipiac River.

According to news articles, Paul and friend Adam went white water paddling on the Quinnipiac after the storm waters turned it into a raging river. The paddlers were wearing PFD's and helmets and in sea kayaks. There's a section of the river that has a pipe crossing that's usually visible. There was a huge back current and hole created because of the high water and fierce current. The paddlers got trapped in it and were thrown out of their boats. An unofficial interviewer told me that they wore no spray skirts.

Adam clung to a tree and then made it to shore where another person called 911. Ten minutes later, fire fighters arrived in survival suits and made it to Paul crawling across a ladder to grab his body. He was not breathing at that time and they gave him CPR.

*This is a tragic and sad incident. We wish our deepest sympathy to his family and friends. - ConnYak*

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## POLAR BEAR SHREDS KAYAKS, STRANDING 2

OSLO, Aug. 24 (AP)—Two Norwegian adventurers spent 12 days stranded on an Arctic island because hungry polar bear destroyed their kayaks.

The men, Jens Abild and Simen Havig-Gjeiseth, set off in mid-June on a 700-mile trek around Spitsbergen, the main island of the Svalbard irchipelago.

After almost two months of paddling through the icy waters, they had less than 190 miles to go on Aug. 3 when, as they were unloading supplies into a borrowed cabin, a huge polar bear caught scent of the dried food in their kayaks. The bear ripped the boats into pieces to get at the food.

Luckily the men had food and other supplies in the cabin being 125 miles from the nearest settlement. Saturday a Norwegian Coast Guard helicopter spotted the two men and arranged their rescue.

Both were in good condition.

*The New York Times - August 25  
- sent by Russell Norton*

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## CONNYAK MESSAGE SYSTEM (203) 603-4615

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

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## KAYAK DEMO SYMPOSIUMS

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

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### Collinsville Canoe and Kayak

Sat. & Sun. October 2 & 3.

Collinsville, CT

Call for further info. 860-693-6977

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### Small Boat Shop

Sat. Oct. 2nd.

Held at Ascension Beach Club - Norwalk

Call for further info. 203-854-5223

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## FIBERGLASS REPAIR

I found an excellent source for fiberglass, kevlar and plastic kayak repairs which I would like to share. Rick Harless, the Service Manager at Pine Island Marina in Groton (right next to the Bayberry Lane and Bluff Pt. Launch areas on Shennecosset Road did a fantastic repair job on my fiberglass P&H Sirius. Apparently, I had a crack which ran about 12" near the rear bulkhead, allowing water to seep into the boat. Rick repaired the crack (you can't even tell!) and I'm off paddling merrily. Repairs average \$150 per hr. If anyone wishes to contact him, the number is: 860-445-9729. - Fern Usen

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## Y2K WINTER POOL SESSIONS

ConnYak member and Wallingford resident Dean Bertoldi has reserved 6 Sunday pool sessions at the Sheehan High School for January 9, 16, 23, 30 and February 6, 13 from 9 am to 1 pm. In order to avoid the overcrowding that we have experienced in the past, it will be necessary to limit attendance at each session to 20 boats. The cost for each session is \$7, non-refundable, paid in advance by check made out to ConnYak and mailed to Dick Gamble, PO Box 862, Essex, CT 06426-0862. The roster for each session will be made up on a "first received basis" with no limit on the number of sessions that a club member may attend. For those requests exceeding the session limit, the reservation will be moved to the next available session, but if it is not possible for the member to attend the alternate session or sessions, the \$7 per session will be returned. If your reservation is OK as requested, your canceled check will serve as confirmation. - Dick Gamble



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## PADDLING SCHEDULE

10th - Sun - Branford Harbor

16th - Barn Island, Stonnington

23th - Bluff Point, Groton

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## BRANFORD HARBOR

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 10

Out the Bfd. River, across the harbor and head toward E. Haven- Granite Bay.

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

**In the water by 10:30 a.m. (pack a lunch)**

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## BARN ISLAND - STONNINGTON

SATURDAY, OCT., 16- STONNINGTON

Watch Hill or Sonnington Harbor depending on conditions. etc.

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### DIRECTIONS -

I-95 to exit 91 in Stonnington. At the end of the exit ramp, continue straight across on to the road in front of the ramp. Take your 3rd rt. on to Farm Home Rd. and continue until you hit Rt 1. Take a rt. and a left at the light. Take your first immediate rt. off that to the Barn Island Launch.

**In the water by 10:30 a.m. (pack a lunch)**

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## BLUFF POINT PADDLE /PICNIC

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 23

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

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### DIRECTIONS -

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

**In the water by 10:30 a.m. (pack a lunch)**

*All itineraries can change due to conditions.*

# CLASSIFIED

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

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

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

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

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

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

Necky Looksha IV, 4 Yrs old. Plastic. Rudder, Bulkheads, hatches. \$875. 203-481-1881.

Wilderness Systems Pamlico: 14'9", red. Double or single seat kayak, skirt. \$700. 860-684-6168 or lynes@uconnvm.uconn.edu. ecky

P&H Capella, new Sept. 98, yellow, new condition, \$1,150. quality poly kayak. 401-596-4482

TRADE? Canoe, Bell Northstar, carbon/kevlar, used twice, paddles, center seat. \$1,450. or trade glass / kevlar new condition sea kayak. Pat 401-596-4482

Necky Nootka - 22' tandem sea kayak, double hatches, kevlar, brand new. Cost \$3500. will sacrifice for \$2500.00 Call 860-456-0558.

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

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

Necky Santa Cruz, bulkheads, spray skirt, very stable, paid \$700. sell for \$495. 860-827-1111

Dagger Transition, whitewater boat, red, airbags, bulkhead footrest, nose cone, a bit fuzzy but rock solid \$400. W (860) 441-8416 H (860) 535-8416

Wold Ski Custom Terminator, Surf Kayak, Kevlar, 29 lbs, green over yellow, will do fantastic things in the waves. \$500 W (860) 441-8416 H (860) 535-8416

NECKY JIVE (white water) 8'4" long. Planing hull-surf and whitewater boat. new \$899 Sell for \$650. Turquoise blue with a gradient to purple at the bow. 860-529-4612, or 860-721-0050.

Arctic Hawk - Wildernes Systems, Kevlar- 38 lbs., tan w/green trim, mahogany inlay. \$1950. 860-450-1026

Wildernes Systems Picollo- Green, skirt, float bags \$380. 203-269-0569

Thule outrigger, load assist for your rack, brand new. Paid \$43 Sell for \$25. (203) 368-4453 leave message.

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

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

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## (LESSONS) GOOD LUCK MIKE!

Urban Eskimo Kayaking - Mike Falconeri  
*is off doing his expedition (circumnavigating the U.S.) and will be back in the spring.*

**Classes continue and will be taught by John Tobiassian and /or Chris Hauge**

### KAYAK SKILLS & ROLLING CLASSES

Sheehan High School in Wallingford  
Oct. 2, Safety & Rescue, Oct. 3, Rolling  
Call Wallingford Rec. Dept. 203-294-2120

YMCA pool in Westbrook  
Oct. 10, Safety & Rescue, Oct. 17, Rolling  
To register call Lynn Brewer 860-399-9622

For specifics call Nancy at 860-228-0105

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## TO JOIN CONNYAK...

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

Send inquiries to: Ed Milnes  
35 Hampton Park, Branford, CT 06405  
e-mail: Connyak@mindspring.com

**Website:** mindspring.com/~connyak



**ConnYak**  
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