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Atlantic Coastal Kayaker • March 2010

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Are You Moving?

Please send us your change of address so you don’t miss any issues. Send change of address notification to:
Atlantic Coastal Kayaker
PO Box 520
Ipswich, MA 01938
You can also call us at (978) 356-6112 or email us at ackayak@comcast.net.
On 15 December 2009, Freya became the Freya Around Australia first woman to paddle around Australia. It was an outstanding effort given the sustained time commitment, the dramatic range of sea and climate conditions, the three long set of limestone cliffs, the long multi-day crossing of the Gulf of Carpentaria, and paddling solo. To achieve completion of her paddle around Australia required an exceptional level of motivation and determination, and a better than average physical stamina to be able to endure the day after day grind of paddling.

So writes Paul Caffyn of Freya’s journey of kayaking all the way around Australia (Dec./Jan. issue of The Sea Canoeist, The Journal for the New Zealand Association of Sea Kayakers. Out of many attempts, Caffyn is the only other person to complete the circumnavigation, which he did 27 years ago.

Hoffmeister started her epic journey Jan. 18, 2009 from Queenscliff near Melbourne and finished 8,500 miles (8,565 to be exact) later in less than a year.

The German business woman and former Miss Germany contestant has two other circumnavigations on her resume: Iceland and New Zealand’s South Island. Congratulations to Freya for this remarkable achievement.

For more information, go to Hoffmeister’s blog at qajaqunderground.com

The Future of ACK

The cost of production and mailing has gotten so high and the number of advertisers has gotten so low that we have decided to publish the magazine online in digital format as a cost cutting measure. We are going to experiment with that arrangement starting in May and will run it on a trial basis for four issues.

Basically, for online magazines, you can either view full monthly issues online in your browser or you can download the magazine from a website and save it on your own computer. We have chosen the latter method because the online version requires the viewer to have an up-to-date version of the Adobe Flash plug-in in their browser. These Flash-driven documents are commonly referred to as flip books. The viewer can only look at the book or magazine on the website while they are connected to the internet. The second type of setup, called “eBooks” or “eMagazines” are downloaded from a website via a link directly on the website or in an email. These publications are in PDF (“Portable Document Format”) format and require Acrobat Reader to view them. Acrobat Reader is a free download from the Adobe website (www.adobe.com/products/reader/). Once downloaded, eBooks can be read without having to be connected to the web. eBooks can have many additional interactive features, like bookmarks, web and email links, embedded sound, movies, etc.

The way it works is that we will send each subscriber via snail mail a password and a link to a web page for that month’s issue. Same password for everybody, different password for each issue. You will type in your password and the magazine will start downloading to your computer. You will be able to print out any pages you want.

While going digital is not our first choice (it is, as mentioned, a cost cutting measure), it does have several advantages as Kenneth Blasius, who runs Mungo Works in Connecticut, and who will oversee the process, points out. The digital version have active table of contents links, page turn buttons to each page, email, and web links to all ads and articles.

Another advantage will be full color for all pages, images, and graphics. You will see all the wonderful color photos that are sent to us, and that we currently must convert into black and white, often with mixed results.

We foresee a great advantage in you readers being able to print out a trip report, with directions to the put-in and a map, directly onto waterproof paper that you can mount under your bungee cords.

Other advantages: If your eyesight is getting weak, you can blow up the type to read it more easily. We can go back to our original horizontal format to optimize display on a computer screen. Finally, we will save several trees.

You may like this so much you may not want to go back to the printed version.

We will give you a further update in the April issue. You can help us out in the meantime, by including your email address in all correspondence with us, so that we can email you the pass code, instead of mailing it to you. You can also send us your email address at ackayak@comcast.net. We promise never to share your email address with anyone whatsoever.

Meanwhile, we are still receiving responses to our reader survey, so we will wait until April to publish the results. Many, many thanks to everyone who has responded. We are getting a good sense of what you would like to see covered in future issues.

Happy Spring Paddling.

On the cover: Steve North visits the Socrates Sculpture Garden in Queens, N.Y., a stop on his circumnavigation of Manhattan Island. Photo by Jerry Wylie.
Cold Water Boot Camp, Part II

Thanks for your excellent editorial in the November 2009 issue of ACK. The National Water Safety Congress issued a CD entitled “Cold Water Boot Camp USA” in early 2008. Their objective was to inform boaters about the danger associated with accidental cold water immersion. Their prime objective was to convince boaters to wear life jackets when out on cold water. They told me they were not targeting paddlers, even though their venue was littered with sit-on-top kayaks. They fooled me completely on that.

I believe their video was effective in demonstrating the dire effects of unprotected cold water immersion (www.coldwaterbootcamp.com). It is unfortunate that they concluded by saying that there was no suitable gear for cold water boaters to wear other than standard marine survival suits (“...too bulky for routine use unless boat is clearly sinking”).

Many of us coastal kayakers have been instructing paddlers about the use of wet suits and dry suits since 1983 (ANorAK, Who remembers ANorAK?). ACK and Sea Kayaker, same objective from day one of both journals.

Cold Water Boot Camp, Volume Two, is currently in production. Jeremy Oyen, Director of Safety, Education and Instruction for the ACA, attended the new video shoot on Lake Erie last December 2009. He took a load of cold water paddling gear with him that was generously supplied by NRS. Dr. Gordon Giesbrecht was able to determine that “single layer” drysuits, such as those routinely used by paddlers and USCG rescue personnel in winter time, works effectively in cold water. This seems to be a discovery for the Boot Camp folks. When Boot Camp Two is released, we will review it for ACK.

Chuck Sutherland
Green Lane, PA

Acadia Birding Festival

The next Acadia Birding Festival will take place June 10-13, 2010. Our festival planning is well underway and I am pleased to announce that Paul Kerlinger will be the keynote speaker, presenting “Migratory Birds, Wind Turbines and Communication Towers” at the College of the Atlantic, Bar Harbor, Maine. Our panel session this year will host several speakers who will help us understand this year’s theme “South to North: Land Use Issues Affecting Migratory Birds.” Paul and our other panel members will bring insight to many of the complicated issues affecting biodiversity along the migratory path of Neotropical birds.

Did you know that 127 species of Neotropical birds are in steep decline due to a 95 percent loss of natural habitat in the US? We humans have turned 54 percent of the U.S. into a suburban/urban mix and 41 percent is in agriculture. Four million miles of roads now cover what were once thick forests and there are millions of square feet of windows that kill large numbers of migratory birds each year. Land use issues greatly affect migratory birds complicating the climate change issues we are hearing about each day. There is hope! Through new innovative ideas around landscaping and land use changes. As stewards of our land, we can save biodiversity from extinction by simply starting to plant native species which will greatly benefit the birds we value. I look forward to seeing you at the 12th Acadia Birding Festival.

Michael J. Good, MS
President Down East Nature Tours
Founder and Director
12th Acadia Birding Festival
Bar Harbor, Maine
www.downeastnaturetours.com
www.acadiabirdingfestival.com

New England Intermediate Rough Water Symposium
June 10 - 13, 2010
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Reader Survey

We’d like to know more about you, and what you enjoy or wish to see improved in ATLANTIC COASTAL KAYAKER. Please fill out the survey and return to us at ACK, POB 520, Ipswich, MA 01938. Include your email address to receive exclusive ACK Enews. Results will be published in March.

Your Name: _______________________________________________ (Optional)
State or Country: ____________________________________________
What is your profession? ______________________________________
Email address: _____________________________________________ (Optional)
Boat(s) and Paddle(s) Make/model/Style: ______________________
_________________________________________________________
Skill Level: Novice Intermediate Advanced (circle one)
Available to Paddle: Anytime Weekend Only Other (circle one)
How many years have you been paddling? ______________________
What are your three favorite places to paddle? __________________
_________________________________________________________
What is the best trip you’ve been on? Outfitter? _________________
_________________________________________________________
What was your scariest moment(s) in a kayak? ___________________
_________________________________________________________
I prefer to read Atlantic Coastal Kayaker in: printed format only, electronically only, in both printed format and electronically (circle one).
The thing I like best about Atlantic Coastal Kayaker Magazine is: ________________________________
_________________________________________________________
The thing I would most like to change about Atlantic Coastal Kayaker Magazine is:

_________________________________________________________
Should ACK remain focused on the East Coast or expand? ________________________________
I would like to see more stories on: (circle the ones you want)

Technique Safety Places to Paddle Kayak Reviews People Trail News Expeditions
Access New Products Environment Book and Movie Reviews Accident Reports News Boat Building
History Other – Please specify ________________________________

Thank you for your time. It will help make us an even better magazine. Tamsin
**News & Notes**

**Champlain Bridge Design Chosen — New Ferry Service to Begin Soon!**

The public overwhelmingly chose this design for the new Champlain Bridge. Photo from NYS Dot website

A unique arch structure has been chosen for the Champlain Bridge replacement. Public preference played a significant role in New York and Vermont officials’ final bridge design recommendation. An online survey and public meetings held in December and January revealed overwhelming public support for the Modified Network Tied Arch alternative. Officials thanked everyone who weighed in to advocate for bike and pedestrian corridors and a visually pleasing design that complements the surrounding land and waterscape and historic setting. Construction will begin this spring and is expected to be completed by the end of summer 2011 at a cost of approximately $75 million.

A new, temporary Lake Champlain ferry was operational by the end of January near the former site of the Lake Champlain Bridge. There is no cost to ride the ferry, which will operate 24-hours a day, seven days a week to help restore commuter, tourist, and commercial traffic in the former Lake Champlain Bridge corridor. Crossing time is anticipated to be around 10-15 minutes. Ferry boats will accommodate approximately 40 to 50 cars as well as pedestrians and other vehicles.

- From Lake Ripples, Lake Champlain Committee’s E-News Bulletin, January 2010

**Blog of Blogs**

The blog www.paddlingplanet.com is a new very comprehensive blog for kayakers. Paddling Planet is a compendium of blogs whose editors request inclusion. Rene Seindal - who runs a kayak tour business in Venice, Italy - is the editor. Paddling Planet checks the registered blogs for new entries and then simply copies the posting photographs and all and presents it in one long web page. Keep in touch with kayakers from all over the world!

**Kokatat Blog**

Kokatat, the paddlewear and accessories company, launched its official blog recently: http://blog.kokatat.com. The Kokatat blog will offer readers content from Team Kokatat (sponsored whitewater and sea kayakers), Kokatat Ambassadors (supported athletes from within the disciplines of paddle sports), press announcements, product reviews, event reports, and more.

The Kokatat blog will offer regular contributions from Team Kokatat in the form of competition recaps, on-the-ground event coverage, photos, expedition documentation, and videos. “Our sponsored athletes are active, well-rounded professionals in and out of the water,” said Lisa Beckstead, Kokatat field marketing manager. “When they’re not competing they’re finding ways to foster growth in the sport and engaging in clean water initiatives. Our blog will be an excellent resource for our fan base to get all the latest Kokatat family news,” Beckstead added.

**WCCC to Train Interpreters!**

Washington County Community College in Calais, Maine is now offering a certification course in interpretation. Through a course entitled Environmental Interpretation, students can be eligible to become Certified Interpretive Guides (CIG) from the National Association for Interpretation (NAI). The course is required within the Adventure Recreation and Tourism program. With the help of funding from the Vacationland Resources Committee, Julia Berry, Stephanie Allard, and Scott Fraser attended an instructor certification training last September that was hosted by the Schoodic Education and Research Center in Winter Harbor. WCCC intends to work with local businesses and individuals to deliver the training to tourism operators, guides, and outfitters in the hopes of helping them provide a high quality interpretive experience for visitors. Businesses or individuals who are interested in receiving the training should contact the Outdoor Adventure Center at WCCC at (207) 454-1060. More information on the NAI Certified Interpretive Guide certification program is available at www.interpnet.com.

**Stay for Free, Eat for Free, Make a Difference**

Every spring the owners invite the public to help clean up the on-water Recreation Campground, a kayaker favorite, outside Freeport, Maine, during the first two weekends of May (May 1 & 2 and May 8 & 9). There is always lots of raking, cleaning, painting, repairing... and camaraderie, and in exchange you receive free camping and a BBQ lunch each day. Register in advance by contacting info@freeportcamping.com or call (207) 865.9307 to be assigned the best available site of your choice. When registering, let the campground know of any special skills you bring (such as painting, carpentry, roofing, etc.). Visit the website at www.freeportcamping.com
Kokatat is sponsoring Hayley Shephard for her attempt of the first solo kayak of South Georgia Island. Kokatat and Shephard have also joined in creating public awareness for the devastating decline in the world’s albatross species. Shephard’s expedition, called “Kayaking to Save the Albatross,” will bring light to illegal fisheries and the outdated techniques used in the current long line fishing industry. As albatross habitat, South Georgia Island with its rugged beauty and abundant wildlife is home to a number of species.

Shephard, a wilderness guide and expedition leader by trade, set out on Jan. 22. An exceptionally isolated, storm torn island, South Georgia in the southern Atlantic Ocean is isolated as its nearest neighbor is 1,400 kilometers away. As hostile, dangerous, and foreboding as it feels, South Georgia is charmed with dramatic and stunning beauty that has a power to draw daring adventurers.

Beth-Anne Masselink is Shephard’s backup rescue kayaker who will launch from the support vessel and come to Hayley’s aid should it be needed.

Kokatat will supply Shephard with several of their acclaimed women’s-specific products including a GORE-TEX® Expedition Dry Suit, GORE-TEX® Whirlpool Bib, ProFIT Tour PFD, women’s OuterCore long sleeve top and pants.

In 1999 Shephard was the first woman to solo sea kayak the 1,200 kilometers circumnavigation of Vancouver Island, followed by another epic adventure in 2005 when she was the first woman to solo sea kayak the rugged and exposed coast of the sacred Haida Gwaii (Queen Charlotte Islands). Shephard has spent nearly a decade guiding tours of Antarctica.

The two-month expedition includes a seven-to-ten-day open ocean crossing to the East coast of South Georgia Island, that was scheduled mid-February as we went to press. Shephard’s journey will be showcased in a documentary film as well as a series of multi-media photo presentations to inform the public on the Albatross situation.

For more information, http://www.kayakingtosavealbatross.com or www.kokatat.com
Chuck Sutherland Awarded NASBLA Public Service Award

On a warm and sunny November Sunday along the chilly 48 degree Hudson River, Dr. Charles Sutherland was awarded the NASBLA Public Service Award for his more than 20 years of dedication to educating recreational kayakers to the dangers of cold water immersion and how to prepare for and survive cold water accidents.

After receiving his award, Chuck launched into his workshop featuring the facts of cold water immersion and using several accounts of actual rescues and preparedness tips for beginners and experienced kayakers. Following his workshop, Bill Lozano engaged the audience with a tour through choices of proper clothing for cold water paddling and offered the audience a chance to don a dry suit and jump into the Hudson River.

Chuck has written extensively on cold water paddling safety and is the author of the widely distributed “Cold Water Boating: Sudden Immersion, Cold Shock, and Hypothermia” brochure. He holds a PhD in reproductive endocrinology and has extensive experience in the field of cardiovascular and respiratory biochemistry.

He and his wife Marilyn live in Green Lane, PA.

From left, Brian Kempf, New York State Boating Law Administrator, Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation; Al Johnson, Northeast First Coast Guard District recreational boating specialist; Dr. Chuck Sutherland, cold water expert; Bill Lozano, Atlantic Kayak Tours, Annsville, N.Y.; Ro Woodard, New York boating education specialist.
Don’t Be Late for Hell Gate

By Dave Manzo and Jerry Wylie, Photos by Jerry Wylie

Our lunch stop was surreal. We pulled our kayaks up on a small sandy beach - near what looked like a butchered whale - to wait for the area’s treacherous currents to slack. No, this wasn’t Alaska or Greenland. We were in Queens looking across the East River at the skyline of New York City, and the “whale” was a piece of art at an outdoor sculpture park.

We were enjoying what more and more sea kayakers have discovered: the urban adventure of New York City’s waterways. Eleven of us combined our passions for kayaking and our love of cities and planned a one-day, 30-mile circumnavigation of Manhattan.

What did we learn from previous urban paddlers? “The tides, the tides, please pay attention to the tides,” “There is a reason they call it Hell Gate,” and “Your hours in the kayak are like a long family drive, a very long family drive.”

With our NYC Parks Department launch permits ($15 each) and a detailed float plan - including GPS waypoints, tide and current effects, emergency contact information, and historic and recent photos of the NYC waterways - we launched from the New York City Downtown Boathouse on Pier 40, on the Hudson River at 8 a.m. on Saturday, Sept. 19, 2009. Our weather was sunny, 70 degrees, with a 10 mph NW wind.

It was almost exactly 400 years earlier that Henry Hudson first sailed into NY Harbor and spotted Manhattan. Then, the island had more than 66 miles of streams. It was a wilderness of hickory, chestnut and oak trees, as well as salt marshes and plains filled with beaver, elk, and black bear. The Lenape Indians who lived here called it “Mannahatta” for “island of many hills.”

The key to our success was prudent planning, strong communication, camaraderie, and humor. With his careful use of the Eldridge Tide and Pilot Book, our chief navigator, Pete Rollins, plotted our counterclockwise journey around arriving at Hell Gate for slack tide at 11:08 a.m. when there is no current.

The first hour of our trip was the toughest. From Pier 40 around the Battery, a distance of just more than two miles, we bounced in confused water. With wind and water moving strongly against each other, coupled with boat traffic (watch out for the Staten Island Ferry!) we moved at about 2.5 mph. Paddling in the shadow of lower Manhattan’s towers, we were inspired by Lady Liberty’s gold-clad torch set ablaze in the early morning light just two miles to the southwest.

As soon as we hit the East River, with its magnificent Brooklyn Bridge, the current was with us, and the waters calmed immediately. It was like stepping onto an escalator. We sped past the Brooklyn, Manhattan and Williamsburg Bridges, admiring these engineering marvels of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The Brooklyn Bridge opened to great fanfare in May 1883 and was the longest suspension bridge in the world and the tallest structure in the Western Hemisphere. The Manhattan Bridge assumed the title of world’s longest suspension bridge when it was completed 20 years later.

With the Manhattan skyline to our left and Brooklyn (and soon Queens) to our right, we safely navigated the East River. Our goal was to reach the small sand beach of Hallet’s Cove - for a brief stop prior to entering Hell Gate at slack tide. Hallet’s Cove, while quite small, had everything we needed: a place to stretch, eat and rehydrate, a public restroom, and, as an added attraction, the Socrates Sculpture Park. The park is the only site in the New York Metropolitan area
that provides opportunities for artists to exhibit large-scale work in an urban environment. Our favorite piece was a fake NYC subway entrance, that we used as a backdrop for a fun kayak photo op.

Hell Gate is in the middle of some pretty complicated plumbing connecting three major waterways: the East River, Long Island Sound, and the Hudson River (through the Harlem River). If we had misjudged the timing, we could have faced rough water and currents more than five mph. However, crossing Hell Gate to the west of Mill Rock at slack tide, with the exception of a couple of passing barges and tugs, proved uneventful, and we entered the eight-mile-long Harlem River.

The stately Brooklyn Bridge, once the largest structure in the Western Hemisphere, was the first and foremost of the 21 bridges we passed beneath.

The Brooklyn and Manhattan bridges and the lower Manhattan skyline.

The Triborough Bridge is one of 12 along the eight-mile-long Harlem River.

This narrow, gritty little river is spanned by 15 bridges including the oldest (High) and the third oldest bridge in NYC (Macombs Dam). These plus five on the East River and one on the Hudson, totaled 21 bridges that we passed beneath that day. Viewing these massive bridges from below gave us an entirely new perspective on the city, as well as kinks in our necks from staring up at the sights overhead.

The sports fans in the group got to see both Yankee Stadiums in the Bronx (the old and the new side-by-side), and Coogan’s Bluff in Manhattan, where the NY Giants played for more than 40 years. Just before exiting the Harlem River, we paddled by Columbia University’s famous giant “C”, located near the Henry Hudson Bridge and Spuyten Duyvil (Dutch for Spinning Devil or Devil’s Whirlpool).

Beginning the final portion of our trip, the current that was pushing us north in the Harlem River strengthened and shifted to the south as we joined with the Hudson. Immediately upon entering the expansive Hudson River we stopped at Inwood Park, having covered two-thirds of our trip. Although officially closed and littered with beach glass, the small park was full of picnickers and fishermen and proved a welcome rest stop.

Departing Inwood Park, we saw the magnificent George Washington Bridge. Directly under the bridge was the Little Red Lighthouse on Jeffrey’s Hook, made famous by the 1942 children’s book, The Little Red Lighthouse and the Great Gray Bridge. Now on the home stretch, with overworked muscles aching and lower extremities cramping but spirits high, we relaxed.
slightly and enjoyed Manhattan’s stunning west side in the mellow afternoon light.

Notable sights along the Hudson included the Cloisters, Riverside Park, and the famous WWII aircraft carrier Intrepid, submarine Growler, and the supersonic Concorde jetliner at the Sea, Air and Space Museum.

We returned to Pier 40, 7 hours and 40 minutes after we departed. We had paddled 30.2 miles and rested twice, at Hallet’s Cove for 43 minutes and at Inwood Park for 33 minutes. Although we were not racing, with the help of the currents our average speed was still 4.72 mph. The fastest leg was the final ten miles down the Hudson from Inwood Park where we averaged 6.65 mph with a top speed of 11.1 mph. (Gotta love that Hudson River current!)

We weren’t the first or the fastest kayakers to paddle around Manhattan, but we probably had the most fun of any group. We learned that kayaking here isn’t all that difficult with proper planning, that interest in sea kayaking in New York City is clearly strong and growing. We saw another group from one of the city’s two kayak companies doing a circumnavigation, and not one but two kayak races were scheduled the next day…each heading in opposite directions.

But the most impressive display of urban kayaking was at the Pier 40 Boathouse. When we returned at 4:30pm, the place was filled with people taking advantage of its free kayak program. Dozens were waiting patiently on the dock for their turn in a boat. The dock was so crowded that we had to wait 15 minutes to get our boats out of the water. People of all ages were having fun paddling on their own and some were receiving one-on-one instruction.

Who knows...maybe the “Island of Many Hills” will become soon become the “Island of Many Kayakers.”

Dave Manzo is the president of Cotting School, teaches an urban studies course at Boston College and is an ACA instructor.

Jerry Wylie is an ecotourism consultant, ACA instructor trainer, and owner of Connecticut Coastal Kayaking.

Trip Planner

The Eldridge Tide and Pilot Book has tables giving the time and height of high and low tides and the time and strength of the current along the East Coast.

The New York City Downtown Boathouse on Pier 40 has lockers, a changing room, bathrooms, and free kayaking every weekend from 9AM to 6PM. There is a large parking structure at Pier 40.

Manhattan Kayak Company on Pier 66 offers a variety of classes and tours. www.manhattankayak.com

New York Kayak Company on Pier 40 also offers classes and tours (closed Mondays). www.nykayak.com

Our float plan is available in the library at www.ctcoastalkayaking.com

More trip photographs can be viewed on PhotoBucket as “Manhattan Sept 19” and “Manhattan Sept 19B” of the “CTKayaker” album.
An Epic Experience in Captiva, Florida

By Timothy Dwyer

The full body exercise benefits and the desire to stay paddle fit are so strong that we surfski paddlers go year round even in winter’s ice. Gone are the easy summer days of paddling in shorts and warm breezes. Traveling south is the only direction to go to find that again. A family trip was planned for this Christmas and Sanibel/Captiva, arguably the kayak capital of Florida and the location of many symposiums and kayak events, was the clear destination of choice.

Yet I had little hope that I could locate a surfski, and plans to find one to paddle fell through. I’ve been a guide and have paddled sea kayaks extensively since my first Nordkapp in the mid-80’s. Now I only use my sea kayak for overnight trips and photography. I still consider myself a sea kayaker but once you paddle a ski, a sea kayak for day paddling seems tedious.

Thus I had little interest in paddling anything but a ski in Sanibel. I guess this makes me a bit of a snob among sea kayakers. But don’t knock it till you’ve tried one. Precise steering, comfort, 25-33 pounds in weight and the ability to remount are just a few of the many advantages a ski has. I dare-say a ski and a wing paddle was a logical next step in my evolution as a paddler and a wonderful addition to any lucky paddler’s assortment of boats and paddles. The cockpit layout of a ski and the combination leg drive, core rotation, and arm position make it seem to take flight through the water.

Dream on. But this was going to be a family trip without paddling despite being in paddling Valhalla. Or so I thought.

While exploring Captiva, we stopped by a colorfully decorated resort nestled between the Gulf of Mexico and Pine Island Sound called ‘Tween Waters Inn Beach Resort. It had all the usual amenities of a resort with one significant difference - a rack of sea kayaks and a sign for Adventure Sea Kayak and things got interesting. I met the affable Brian Houston, an ACA/BCU instructor who runs wildlife tours and rents kayaks. To my surprise I saw high performance sea kayaks such as the Epic 18X as well as an assortment of wider sea kayaks and yes, even the stubby Tupperware beasts. Did I mention I was a paddling snob?

Yet I had to rub my eyes when I saw the long, sleek shape of a surfski appear before me. It was a recently updated Epic V10 Sport, one of the more stable novice/intermediate skis and a cousin to my Epic V12 Ultra. What was a ski doing down here?

It turns out Brian is also an avid ski paddler and an Epic Kayaks representative. He used to run the popular Captiva Classic race some years ago. This was a race where sea kayakers and elite ski paddlers like Greg Barton, a two-time Olympic Gold medalist and several time World Champion and world surfski ambassador Joe “Glicker”
Glickman would race around Captiva.

Like a kid sent out to play in fresh snow, Brian sent me off toward Buck Key and Blind Pass, the channel between Sanibel and Captiva. Using an Epic Mid-Wing paddle the boat leapt forward like the flying fish printed on the front of my shirt. When I didn’t think anything could get better, I sighted a pod of dolphins feeding in Roosevelt Channel and stopped to watch them feed. The waters off Blind Pass, the channel between Sanibel and Captiva had wind driven swells—just what ski paddlers look for. I was able to catch few downwind runs and the V10 Sport handled beautifully and felt solid and fast shooting through the “bumps.” To learn more I’ve posted a review of the V10 Sport on surfskiracing.com.

I came back another day and my wife and two kids took a two-hour guided tour with Brian in and around Buck Key while I zipped around in the V10 Sport of course. Brian is a native and is extremely knowledgeable regarding the flora and fauna of the area. His wit and low-key personality captivated my family and they had a fine time. My 12-year-old son, Finn, loved paddling the Epic 16. It’s narrow beam and light weight allowed him to make it fly. It was a huge step up from his 12-foot Perception Umiak.

I’m already scheming to return with a group of fellow ski paddlers in the near future to make some vitamin D.

To learn more:
1) Epic Kayaks - epickayaks.com

2) For a review of the paddling characteristics of the Epic V10 Sport and other skis and learn more about these unique craft, go to surfskiracing.com and see the Surfski Basics video.

3) Brian Houston at kayakadventures@aol.com, www.kayak-captiva.com

4) Go to Youtube.com and search “surfski racing” to better understand the rush of a downwind run and why skis are addictive.


6) My email: Timothy Dwyer, Jamestown, RI; rid02709@ride.ri.net

Finn Dwyer, 12, loved paddling the Epic 16.

Goodbye to warm weather paddling for five months.
The Ultimate Sun Screen

Gail Ferris

In reading the December 2009 issue of Atlantic Coastal Kayaker I noticed that among New Products was listed products Dr. Shade sun protection items from Glacier Glove, www.glacieroutdoor.com.

Quite by accident I decided some years ago to take with me a ski hood made of black windproof material that covers my entire head with openings for my eyes and mouth. The opening for the mouth covers my nose so that I can breathe freely with a flap along the top of my lips covering my mouth. Very conveniently the opening for my eyes can be stretched open to expose my nose and mouth as needed. Wow, what a nice invention that hood is.

My original intention was to have a windproof insulating material hood to keep me warm in cold windy conditions in the ice. I have had the less-than-pleasant experience of being committed to paddling many hours in the ice wearing insufficient insulation on my head, neck, and face – really it is not fun just getting colder and colder knowing there is no choice but just to try to make do with anything I could scrounge, any flat material like a plastic bag or a piece of waste plastic debris from the water in my cockpit to help me stay warm. I am not above stuffing Mylar and/or plastic potato chip package wrappers inside my hat hood or inside my pogies just to help me stay warm. Thanks for trash on the water in seriously freezing moments like this.

I noticed that Campmor in New Jersey offered this neat ski hood in black polyester velvet wind proof material that does not absorb water and just folds up small.

On the back of my lifejacket I have sewn a large hook and loop closure pocket where I keep these special items. These are items I may or may not need depending on the circumstances while paddling. When I get out of my kayak I just put these items such as binoculars back inside this pocket on my lifejacket. The reason for this pocket stowage is that I do not want to be doing the awkward move of hunting in my cockpit for any of these items.

Opening the sprayskirt on my cockpit while paddling in the ice is a very bad choice. I lose all the precious heat from my cockpit and run the risk of losing my balance or taking in a wave.

When I am already feeling cold, any activity that interrupts my paddling in the ice for more than a split second really can make me become much colder.

I stay warm by paddling. I know I have already tried sailing my kayak in the Arctic. Forget that idea, only in a dire emergency, really dire, would I sit and sail or fly a kite from my cockpit to propel my kayak.

What is really scary when the cold is getting to me is that my judgment ever so slowly becomes more and more compromised. Hypothermia is really scary because there I am all alone and I start misreading what I am seeing.

One time I nearly missed a whole settlement, Aappilattoq, and paddled over to another island a few miles away because I did not happen to look off to my side and notice that it was nearby. I imagined that I was still among the islands and that the island this town was on was more miles to the west. Wow, that was close!

Looking at the ad for Dr. Shade I agree that white is the best color for paddling in warm climates to wear as a sun screen.

I discovered that using a hood as both insulation for cold conditions and as a physical sunscreen keeps me from developing the proverbial cold sore on my lip. The endless discomfort of a cold sore is distracting because it never goes away until days after I get off the water and it is ugly to look at.

When I paddled in 1989 in Pond Inlet I had a cold sore the entire time, the results being that no one whom I was with ever knew what I look like without a cold sore.

The sensation of being sunburned is miserable. I would rather wear some sort of fabric barrier than attempt to use chemical sunscreen agents because they irritate my skin and do not provide sun barrier for sufficient time as I paddle usually the entire day. Four hours which is what chemical sunscreens work for is just long enough to get started paddling on a normal day.

I have had my Kokotat dry suit for years and noticed that any petrochemical based compound I put on my skin drastically reduces the life expectancy of my latex seals. This is a major factor why I put nothing on my skin because the last thing I want to do is compromise my latex seals.

I wear a drysuit always when conditions require and wearing my drysuit is a matter of trust because when I fall into the water any leak in my drysuit is the last problem I want to have as I am paddling in Greenland’s icy waters. Kokotat makes a very reliable product I can attest to that after years of relying on its drysuit and finding that, yes, my dry suit keeps me dry even when I trip and fall into the water and when I am paddling in breaking waves for hours.

Above is a photo taken off Innarsuit island where I was wearing these items which I find very handy for dealing with paddling exposure in cold bright sun.

Gaileferris@hotmail.com
Tangier Island Kayaking

Tangier Island, Va., in the Chesapeake Bay offers water trails for kayaking enthusiasts and adventurers alike. You can borrow kayaks for no charge at the Tangier History Museum and Cultural Interpretive Center. You can obtain a brochure at the museum that tells you where to take the kayaks. There are five water trails for you to discover while boating or kayaking on Tangier Island.

The Town of Tangier Main Trail: A circular trail through the Main Gut, the Orange Trail goes under five bridges and while boating through it you will pass Tangier Island’s Bay View Inn and the Tangier Combined School. Wind through the harbor where you will see crabbing boats and soft shell crab shedding houses. Watch for tide levels, though, you may have to portage your boat and put in on the opposite side of the bridge at the Main Gut.

The Port Isobel Trail: This trail follows the main channel to Port Isobel, which is owned by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. A scenic walking path is close by that takes you through the marshes. Visitors are welcome.

The Marsh Trail: Branching off the Town of Tangier Main Trail, the Marsh Trail takes you toward the “Hoistin” Bridge on Factory Road. Winding through the marshes and bringing you close to the beach, the Marsh Trail is very shallow during low tide.

The Cod Harbor Trail: This trail takes you to the lagoon and isolated beaches. South of this trail is the Tangier Light, built on the foundation of the original Tangier Sound Lighthouse. This is also a nesting ground for terns and black skimmers.

The Uppards Trail: This trail is a circular route north of the main channel. Taking you through the “Uppards,” the trail takes you to a sandy beach on the western side of the island.

For more information, go to the www.tangierhistorymuseum.org.

Bill Revisits Past to Protect Potomac Lands’ future

Several environmental and Congressional leaders are moving to preserve Potomac River lands for the future by reaching into the past-reviving a long-dormant partnership that helped make the Capital Beltway region green.

The bill, called the National Capital Region Land Preservation Act, seeks to secure up to $50 million a year for five years in federal funding for preserving land in the Greater Washington metropolitan region, much of it along the Potomac.

That money would be used with funds from Maryland, Virginia, the District of Columbia, and West Virginia to buy land and keep it in green space. The National Park Service would administer the grant program, but local governments would hold title to the land.

If enacted, the bill could help protect land along the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Water Trail, which includes several sites along the Potomac, as well as land near Great Falls, Rock Creek, and Anacostia parks.

- Rona Kobell, Bay Journal, 2009

Boost to Popular Adirondacks Canoe Route

The state of New York, under the urging of the Adirondack Park Agency, has reclassified 8,000 acres in the Adirondack Park, adding 7,965 acres to the Five Ponds and Round Lake Wilderness Areas and creating a new Eastern Five Ponds Access Primitive Area.

The action is a major boost for creating the key canoe route – Lows Lake-Bog River-Oswegatchie – first envisioned in 1985. It also protects the lands and waters in the vicinity of Lows Lake.

“This action provides a rare wilderness paddling experience for both Adirondack residents and visitors by linking Lows Lake and the Bog River to the Oswegatchie River, Lake Lila, and Little Tupper Lake wilderness canoe route,” said Adirondack Park Agency Chairman Curtis Stiles.

Adirondack Park consists of six million acres, 3,000 lakes and 30,000 miles of rivers and streams – plus 130,000 people who live there.
Ten years ago I paddled along the entire south shore of the St. Lawrence from near Montréal, past Québec and around the big Gaspé peninsula back to New Brunswick, along the edge of the Appalachian Mountain Range. So I thought it might be fitting and interesting ten years later to check out the north shore of the St. Lawrence, along the edge of the Laurentian Shield from Québec City to Tadoussac and then up the Saguenay Fjord to Chicoutimi, which I also had wanted to see for quite some time.

As then, it was my birthday present from my family, my 70th now, and Nancy was again sweet enough to car shuttle me to my put-in in Québec and pick me up at Chicoutimi at the end of my trip. Thanks, my dear, I really appreciate it!

Part One: Down the St. Lawrence to Tadoussac

The summer of 2009 had been very wet, foggy, cold and windy and continued like that for the entire duration of my trip. I set up my boat on a tiny beach near the Lévis ferry to downtown Québec City between rain showers on the morning of July 22, 2009. The tide was just turning, which looked very promising for my downriver trip. As expected, though, crossing over the main arm of the river to Orléans Island and the north shore turned into my first test. I had to dance in the strong, breaking tidal rips caused by the four-knot ebb stream and a strong 15-knot opposing NE wind. It got me wet for the rest of the day, but I felt good that I had not lost it over the winter and being 70 years old.

My goal for the trip was again about 20 nautical miles a day, or about 22.5 statute miles, following the shoreline, going point to point. After six hours, the shore at low tide, so it seemed, had moved farther and farther into the river. One- to two-mile wide mud or mostly rock flats extended out from the bank, making landing very difficult. For my first overnight I therefore decided to ascend the St. Anne River near Beaupré, often lining my boat over the shallows. I thought I had finally found a spot above the high water mark, but when the tide came rushing back in, I had to break camp and move even higher up river, where I was able to pull out and pitch my little tent on someone’s riverside lawn. Fortunately for me, the owner did not mind.

The Tides in the St. Lawrence

I knew then that taking out at the end of each day’s paddle would be a problem all the way to Tadoussac, but that could not be helped – Portage! Canadian canoeists seem to be very fond and proud of this character-building pastime, but not I. Anyway, the next day would take me through and around a large bird sanctuary along Cape Tourmente, the area where each fall thousands
of snow geese gather for their flight south. I saw none at this time of year, just a few Canada geese, ducks, terns and gulls, and an occasional eagle or raven.

I kept paddling, hoping for a possible take-out, but there was none. Instead I saw miles and miles of extensive boulder fields and “rock gardens.” After 9:20 hours in my boat, I finally found a steeper Maine-like shore at Cap de la Baie, at the mouth of St. Paul’s Bay. I had gone 33.5 miles, my longest daily paddle ever. I was bushed, but still felt confident I could clamber up to the tiny, tent-sized brushy rock perch with my gear, but decided to let the slowly incoming tide carry my empty boat up there, about 18 feet.

After my usual BDS (brief daily swim) and coffee as well as cocoa, I noticed I was right across from Île-aux-Coudres, which was named “Île-es-Couldres” by Jacques Cartier in 1535 (his second trip to the New World) after the many hazelnut trees (“coul-dres-coudriers”) there. The large island creates a sharp bend in the North Channel of the Seaway, forcing all ships real close by my shore. At night that bend was even illuminated with a string of lights marking the center line of the shipping lanes, just like on our freeways on shore.

From my 1999 trip down the St. Lawrence I also remembered that the tides were not as regular as in New England, but that one high tide, mostly the morning tide, was one foot higher than the other. So I made sure I left myself a one-foot margin of safety for my camp. And sure enough, at 6:00 a.m. the tide was almost kissing my tent. Time to pack up and be gone, which was distinctly easier than landing here.

Fog and rain, and more rock flats the next day, till I reached the breakwater at St. Irénée, 24.5 miles downriver near the mouth of Malbaie Bay. There was a nice level pebble beach, which made portaging much easier than the day before, but it was still a very long, arduous haul to get my gear and boat up above the high tide mark.

On the Edge

Strong wind warnings and a thunderstorm around supper time were the usual fare of my NOAA weather report, but I was off again at the usual 6:00 a.m. The tide was ebbing very hard into Malbaie Bay, three knots on my chart, and I had to watch my step. But I could not possibly imagine what was waiting for me on the other side of the bay, at Cap-à-l’Aigle. Before I realized what was coming, I was in it, and with the steep shores on my left, there was no way to get out. I was headed for a tidal rip the likes of which I had never seen, with humongous, steep and confused, six- to eight-foot breaking waves. “Oh No!” I yelled, looking for the TV control to switch channels or turn off that darn machine. But life has no such control buttons. I was in it for dear life, fighting each wave as it broke over my deck, whomped me in the chest and even hit me big time in the face and over my head. I was working feverishly to keep my boat running straight, accelerate over the crests, punch through the breaking tops and...
brace in anticipation of the slammers and side-slewers. And all that with only “half a paddle” a sea kayaker would say, a 50-inch, bent-shaft canoe racing paddle. But it was light - only ten ounces - and I was quick, but very much on the edge, even more so than last year along the west coast of Newfoundland. But this time I could at least see what was coming – it was gnarly, menacing, and downright scary, but I had seconds to get ready for each of the breaking waves.

It seemed I was caught in this tidal rip forever, till I finally managed to duck behind a ledge wall, which turned out to be the Cap-à-l’Aigle yacht club entrance. I breathed a big sigh of relief, mumbled a couple of thank-yous and pulled out on the beach just outside the breakwater. I was physically and mentally spent; I was done for the day after only ten miles. I even considered aborting my entire trip here. This trip was supposed to be a fun trip, I had told myself before I started - no nightmarish survival situations, I reminded myself. So I quietly beached my boat, bailed out, dried my clothes and tried to distract my mind with some easy, fun-reading by Clive Cussler and lots of hot chocolate.

I holed up for the rest of the day feeling very small. High wind warnings from the northeast for the next day did not buoy my spirits either. However, I decided to wait making any drastic decision and see what tomorrow would bring.

**Back in the Saddle Again**

Thick fog, a gentle drizzle and a light easterly wind greeted me the next morning, and I was off again at the usual 6:00 a.m. I had to get back on my horse. I hated the thought of giving up. I only hoped “the eagle” of Cap-à-l’Aigle would not swoop down on me again.

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*Cap Éternité.*

*More rocks and steep shores.*
Instead I saw my first pod of white beluga whales while rounding Cap Saumon (Cape Salmon) when the fog lifted for a moment. They surfaced repeatedly off the big lighthouse on the point, while a small mink was swimming ashore, just feet away from my boat. That made me smile again.

I made it fine to the St. Siméon/Rivière du Loup ferry terminal and felt very accomplished. Three miles farther on I found a small gravel beach in Anse de la Ciboulette (Chives Bay), just before Pointe aux Quilles (Keel Point – I love those descriptive French place names). Twenty miles in 5:20 hrs – I was back on my bucking bronco.

That afternoon I heard several mighty, deep-throated fog whistles of the huge bulk carriers and container ships steaming up and down the St. Lawrence Seaway. I never saw the big ships, even though I was so close, I could hear the breathy drop-off at the end of each whistle blow: "Whoah-aw!" More fog, rain, and strong winds predicted for tomorrow. What else is new on the St. Lawrence? But I will make it to Tadoussac now. I was very confident.

The Rock Flats, “Battures,” of St. Catherine’s Bay

My next big obstacle were the extensive rock flats (not mud flats) in St. Catherine’s Bay just before the entrance to the Saguenay Fjord at Tadoussac. They are seven miles long and extend four miles out into the river and are bone dry at low tide. And along its outer edge my chart indicated wicked tide rips. Crossing the “battures” needed careful planning; I was not going to be caught outside, for sure! I figured I had to get up even earlier and be on the water at 5:00 a.m. I would then have to buck the incoming tide for two hours, and paddle three hours of the ebb tide in order to cross the flats at half tide. That should work, I hoped.

The thick fog that morning posed an extra challenge, adding a lonely, eerie feeling to the run, but all worked out as planned. The incoming tide, however, was very strong again, so that I barely made it around Cap de la Tête au Chien (Doghead Point) and two more points (Raven and Basque Point). But I finally made it to Pointe Noire (Black Point), at the mouth of the Saguenay Fjord. By then it was ebbing so hard (seven knots according to my chart), I could not even make it up to the ferry dock.

I turned around and found a beach in St. Catherine’s Bay, before that too ran dry. More rain and thunderstorms in the afternoon. Ah well, I did not care, I had made it to Tadoussac! I looked at the harbor, which Jacques Cartier had visited in 1535 and which became the first European trading post in the new world (set up by Pierre de Chauvin in 1600). But I especially visualized Samuel de Champlain sailing up the fjord to Chicoutimi in 1608, hoping to find a route to “the saltwater sea up north,” James and Hudson Bay. I also looked hard to see the “tadoussacs,” the two breast-like rounded hills the place was named for by the natives, but did not see anything resembling that female anatomy. I decided instead that early inhabitants as well as early sailors and traders must have been in the woods or at sea too long, and that this whole thing was nothing but wishful thinking. The Grand Tetons in the Rocky Mountains on the other hand...

Part Two: Up the Saguenay Fjord to Chicoutimi

Now 133 miles done, 75 more miles to go! What a sweet thought, provided the wind did not pipe up from the northwest. The easterlies of the last couple of days would be nice, real nice, but please not 20-30 knots! Early the next morning I had to feel my way into the fjord with the flood tide. The fog was so thick I could not see the opposite shore. As a matter of fact, I had to...
steer a compass course from point to point whenever I was not directly touching the steep granite walls on my left. At mile ten the current turned and I was bucking a rather strong ebb tide, eddy-hopping from rock-outcropping to rock-outcropping in order to make it up to mile 23.5.

As a matter of fact, the higher I paddled up the fjord, the more I noticed the warmer surface river water out of huge St. Jean Lake “ebbing” all the time, while the colder, heavier ocean saltwater must have been settling at the bottom of the deep fjord (up to 276 meters, about 830 feet), mostly just lifting the freshwater layer on the surface. So if I were to paddle the Saguenay again, I would definitely choose to paddle down from Chicoutimi to Tadoussac and not the way I was doing it now.

I had picked a small gravel beach/ramp at the Petite Saguenay River, just outside the national park, to be legal. There also was a public road to the point, and tourists were stopping by to admire the views all afternoon. “Wow! Look!” “Click” went the camera shutter, and moments later they drove off again. Then two ski-doos and a couple of four-wheelers, all driven by oversized local youths, tore up the tranquility of this unique geological place. The engine noises reverberated mightily for a good two hours from the steep granite walls, while they churned up the quiet waters of the fjord or tore up the mud/rock flats. I had to stuff pieces of wet Kleenex into my ears and was eager to move on tomorrow.

My satellite phone worked flawlessly, though, even in the tight, steep-walled fjord. My new SPOT satellite GPS locator, on the other hand, was a disaster and never really worked. It was supposed to send my location to e-mail addresses of family members and friends at home, but all they and I got was a road map where X marks the spot. Each time I endlessly watched the little doo-hickey blink at me, but no real action, no real transmission. It took about 6-8 minutes to finally send the locator message. (What good would that do in a 911 emergency situation?!) “Tracking” did not work at all, not even as a locator. It goes back!

At 5:30 the next morning I saw my first sunrise of the entire trip. What a difference the sun makes! The fjord was calm and very still. Here and there a few fog clouds seemed to be hung up on the higher ridges and points along shore, rising in places to almost 500 meters (1,500 feet). Otherwise I saw mostly bare granite walls or steep slopes covered with very dense, green and narrow-shouldered spruces. There was hardly any deadwood as in our Maine woods.

I made it easily (for once) past Cap Éternité and Cap Trinité, maybe the most spectacular area of the entire fjord, to Anse du Gros Ruisseau (Big Brook Cove). I had chosen this spot because I expected a small sand or gravel beach or silt deposit at the outflow of the big brook. And I was right. Even better, the Park had established a few wooden platforms there for river travelers to camp on. I appreciated that, especially when I was hit with yet another thunderstorm and torrential rains in the late afternoon.

I again had a very early start without breakfast and a long portage to the water’s edge, in order to catch what there was of the incoming tide. But as you know, I am a minimalist, and two granola bars on the run with plain water were just fine with me, as long as I could go with the flow.

The fjord was widening suddenly and the steep rock walls moved back somewhat and became lower, allowing houses to crowd in along shore. I had to smile when I crossed Ha! Ha! Bay. Last year I had camped at Ha! Ha! Point at another Ha! Ha! Bay in Newfoundland. This arm here would dead end at an industrial harbor, Port Alfred. (I had read that “Ha! Ha!” was derived from an old French word meaning “Dead End,” which would make sense in both instances.) My trip was distinctly winding down, as I entered the last arm to Chicoutimi.

I had one more overnight on a small pocket beach in La Grande Anse (The Big Bay). I arrived at about high tide and felt that my spot for my tent would allow even for the usual one foot tidal fluctuation of the St. Lawrence. But at 11:00 p.m., the waves
were gently lapping against my tent, and the water was still rising. Gear bags, sleeping bag and pad as well as the entire set-up tent got tossed onto the rocks behind me, while I perched on a ledge in the moonlight, wearing my head net to ward off the mosquitoes. What a way to spend the last night of your trip, I thought to myself. At midnight, though, the tide had turned enough for me to move my tent and gear back to my old location. The night was short, but sleep came very easily.

**The pick-up and happy encore**

Only 12 more miles to Chicoutimi! No problem, no matter how bad the weather would get. I remembered the end of my 2007 trip from Lake Ontario to Québec, where I had left myself 21 miles for the last day and was hit by a 25-knot headwind. I almost missed my pick-up and my date with Nancy in the fancy hotel, the Chateau Frontenac. Did I ever work hard to get to that take-out spot!

On this trip, 11:00 a.m. on July 31, 2009 was our target time to meet up at the public boat ramp at the Chicoutimi Yacht Club. I was right on time, and so was Nancy. What a wonderful sight that was: A smiling Nancy, camera in hand, and the car parked right beside the boat ramp. Hugs and kisses, a quick gear transfer, the boat on the roof rack...and off we were, back down to Tadoussac for a couple of days of happy R&R in the famous, traditional Grand Hotel Tadoussac. And yes, we again visited the Chauvin/Champlain trading post, went in the picturesque little “Indian Church” and enjoyed the spectacular boardwalk from the harbor around Pointe de l’Islet to the fjord entrance. Even a few whales showed up to make this moment perfect.

Our return trip to Maine took us via ferry from St. Siméon, 15 miles across the St. Lawrence River to Rivière du Loup and on Canada’s superhighways down to the crown of Maine and then back home to Orono. Another successful trip, consisting of 133 hard tide-ridden miles down the St. Lawrence with hardly any place to take out at low tide, and 75 spectacular miles up the Saguenay Fjord. It was 208 miles/333 km in 10 days – not bad for a 70-year-old geezer, I thought to myself. But in the future I will try even harder to stay out of those nasty tidal rips...if only I knew where they would materialize. The 100-200 yards of six- eight-foot breaking tidal waves are no fun, folks; believe me.

Well, we’ll see what next year brings. Enjoy!

reinhard@maine.edu
www.ZollitschCanoeAdventures.com

**Trip Information**

*Boat & gear: 17’2” Verlen Kruger SEA WIND sea canoe (www.krugercanoes.com)*

*10 oz. carbon fiber bent-shaft marathon-racing canoe paddle by Zaveral (www.zre.com)*

*NOAA paper charts for the entire area (no GPS)*

*Iridium satellite phone (for daily safety check-ins at home – worked great, even in the steep fjord)*

*SPOT, GPS locator (a disaster; “Tracking” never worked; a total waste)*

*VHF radio telephone (for weather reports and contacting Coast Guard and other boats)*

*Luneberg lensatic passive radar reflector by WEST MARINE (so I show up on other boats’ radar)*

*6-foot bicycle wiggle stick with orange flag (on stern; so other boats can see me better)*

*Two 10 liter (2.5 gal.) water bags by MSR-DROMEDARY (enough water for the entire trip)*

*Camping gear, including one-burner propane stove, and all canned foods etc. from home; for beach camping (no official campgrounds or marinas)*

*Expenses: Food and propane tank from home; car shuttles and R&R with Nancy*

*No sponsors – no stress, no obligation*
The Norwalk Islands of Connecticut sit one mile offshore and stretch approximately four nautical miles from Sheffield Island in the west to Cockenoe Island in the east. There are nearly two dozen small islands but the largest ones include Sheffield, Shea, Chimon, Copps, Grassy, Goose, and Cockenoe. Some of the Islands are public, some are private, and a few are part of the Stewart McKinney Wildlife Refuge.

The Islands have become a popular destination of kayakers from all over Connecticut, New York State, and sometimes even farther away. The City of Norwalk welcomes out-of-area kayakers. The Islands are an attraction because of the many public access points, viewing of wildlife including winter Harbor Seals, several islands that are open to the public for camping, picnics, exploring...and I should mention the available outhouses. The Islands are also home to a variety of nesting birds including Great Egrets, Snowy Egrets, Black Crowned Night Herons, Oystercatchers, Terns, many other birds, and several active Osprey nests. And this is where the story of the new book, “Kayaking In and Around the Norwalk Islands” begins...the Osprey!

In the spring of 2009, I came up with the idea of documenting the locations of active osprey nests along the coast of Norwalk, Darien, and Westport. More than a decade ago, when I started kayaking the local waters, there was only one active nest in Norwalk and one in Westport. The Osprey, a fish hawk that flies to South America each winter and returns in late March, has made a dramatic comeback in recent years. The decline in population has been attributed to the use of the pesticide DDT, banned in the early 1970’s. As of 2009, there are 13 active nests in the Norwalk area and approximately 17 chicks hatched during the summer of 2009...all good news.

I then had the idea of writing about the local Osprey population, along with my Osprey nest location list. A few local newspapers published stories on my work. I then thought, why not write about kayaking around the Norwalk Islands. Since I knew all the nooks and crannies of the local waters and was well versed in the sport of sea kayaking, I started composing chapters and taking photographs.

The book took all year to produce with many drafts and design changes, but it is finally in print. There has been a lot of enthusiasm over it including public officials, those who have an interest in the stewardship of the Norwalk Islands, the waters of Long Island Sound, coastal and island wildlife, and, of course, kayakers. The chapters include local launch sites... navigation...descriptions of all the islands with a little history...details of local kayaking including along the coast of Darien.
Norwalk, and Westport, the three local rivers, and around the islands offshore... safety suggestions and other pointers...a chapter on nesting birds including Egrets, Herons, Terns, and other birds...and, of course, the latest Norwalk area Osprey nest location list.

It has been a lot of work and fun to produce the book and I am quite pleased with being able to share the book and all it has to offer. It has proven to be quite popular as it has filled a niche. If the book continues to be popular, I plan on updating it as needed and doing additional printings.

The book is on sale at the Outdoor Sports Center, 80 Danbury Road, Wilton, (203) 762-8797; Small Boat Shop, 144 Water Street, South Norwalk, (203) 854-5223; Maritime Aquarium Gift Shop, 10 North Water Street, South Norwalk, (203) 852-0700 ext. 2236; Norwalk Dept of Recreation & Parks, 125 East Avenue; and
Norwalk Museum Gift Shop, 41 North Main St. The price is about $10. Park is selling the book to retailers at direct cost without profit. Dozens of copies have been sold over the past couple of months. The book is not available on line, but the kayak retailers are willing to send books out of town if you give them a call or e-mail them from their web sites.

David Park is chairman of the Norwalk Historical Commission, board member and secretary of the East Norwalk Library Foundation, East Norwalk Improvement Association, and board member of the Norwalk River Watershed Association. He lives in East Norwalk and is retired. He has been a canoeist of New England lakes and rivers all his life and kayaker of local waters for more than a decade. He is also a backyard bird watcher enthusiast.

For more information, contact David Park at (203) 866-7555 or david@kayakingnorwalk.com

Historic Sheffield Island Lighthouse

IMPORTANT NOTICE ABOUT THE FUTURE OF ATLANTIC COASTAL KAYAKER

Due to increased production and mailing costs and the current economic situation, ACK be will going to an entirely on-line format starting with the May 2010 issue. We will put this on a trial basis for four months: May, June, July/August, September. Please read this issue’s editorial or go to our website, www.atlanticcoastalkayaker.com, for further details.

Tamsin Venn, Editor and Publisher

Also, check out our recently revamped website, with up to date calendar, classifieds, and Atlantic Coast resources for kayakers. We are adding more exciting features daily. We want it to be just right for our readers!
A longer than usual hike—that’s what it was from the stairs at the bottom of the bluff to the waterline at Jailhouse Beach Thursday. I haven’t seen that much sand at Jailhouse in many moons, the evening’s near full moon, in fact, a major player in the bay’s low-slung hemline.

About that full moon: it was the biggest and brightest for all of 2010, biggest and brightest because the moon was as close as it gets to Earth this year. Another close encounter of the big and bright Thursday was Mars, the planet’s next close flyby in 2014.

All told, a spectacular show Thursday night. The shame of it was we couldn’t see the performance except for a hazy film of moon, and Mars not at all. The month-long gray dreary that’s been smothering the Bay Area was a thick tent pole blocking our peanut-gallery view of the main attraction.

The water rushing away to expose all that sand at Jailhouse was motoring toward Angel Island, a perfect destination for a current-assisted paddle. Instead, the Mayor, Billy Pilgrim, the Czar, and I ferried at a 30-degree angle against that same current to Red Rock. Why we fought the current rather than flowing with it is as bewildering to me as the weather.

There are two ways to paddle at cross-purposes to a current: the right way and the wrong way. The Czar and the Mayor chose the right way, angling upstream and to the north of Red Rock, paralleling as close as possible to the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge. When they were directly across from the rock, they let the current carry them the last quarter mile.

Billy Pilgrim and I chose the wrong way, paddling a straight line from Jailhouse toward Red Rock. Two miles out we knew the error of our ways, piles of white froth churned up by the tide rip on either side of the shipping channel marking the 200-yard-wide river pell-melling it to Angel Island. Paddling against that river the last quarter
mile, we touched down on Toilet Bowl Beach well after the Czar and the Mayor.

Billy and I figured the smarter two of our foursome would have a fire going and dinner simmering when we reached Toilet Bowl. The Mayor and the Czar, however, outsmarted us again, fire and food absent when we arrived.

Tasks to be shared equally, we four set about building a fire and cooking dinner together. The burnable flotsam and jetsam on Toilet Bowl too wet for unassisted combustion, the Mayor did a ziggurat of wet 4x4s around a Presto log courtesy of Billy Pilgrim. Within half an hour, we had dinner around a fire hot and hungry enough to ignite wet tinder, which we fed for two hours before leaving.

The Czar’s upcoming Gonzo paddle ate up a fair portion of our fireside chatter. Held any number of times in past years, the idea for the Gonzo is to see how many serfs the Czar can subject to a shoulder ache at one time in the North Bay. Shoulder aches less than a good draw, the event has been finessed into a challenge: Are you hearty enough to kayak to 14 bay islands between sunrise and sunset?

The 14 islands: Alcatraz, Yerba Buena, Treasure, Brooks, Bird Rock, Red Rock, Two Brothers (2), The Sisters (2), Rat Rock, Chard, Buckwheat, and Angel. Twelve of these identified on nautical charts as islands and two as rocks, the total of 14 is questionable. Several authorities have suggested Rat and Bird be considered one island, making the total count 13. The issue is yet to be resolved.

Marketed on BASK’s listserv more heavily than Ford Motor Company’s 1957 introduction of the Edsel, the Saturday event drew a record number of kayakers. So alluring the event—it reaching near mythical status online—three additional groups formed, each of the three padding to successively fewer islands: the Classic Gonzo to 10, the Go-With-the-Flow Gonzo to wherever the currents carried them, and the Half Gonzo to 7, maybe less.

A combined total of more than 40 paddlers—kayaking easy on the joints and attracting as many wrinkles as fair—a large portion of Saturday’s 40+ were 50+. Representing the wrinkle end of the spectrum was VT Don, his actual age indeterminate, but rumors suggesting he authored the Rosetta Stone a reliable indication. VT, by the way, paddled all 14 islands.

Numbers alone suggest much can be learned by observing others in an event like this. Consummate kayaker and sometimes Thursday night paddler Don’t Follow Don taught me about maritime signaling Saturday.

Cutting in behind the docks at Chevron to shave a few paddle strokes off the course, Don’t Follow re-emerged into the bay to challenge a tug pushing a large barge, the twin-diesel-engined combo turning directly into him. The tug immediately erupted into a series of 5 short horn blasts. Don’t Follow eluded the barge by a paddle length, the tug’s 5 blasts nautical speak for “You @#$%, you’re fish chum now,” the crew’s loud curses between blasts confirming the tug’s intent.

This type of all-hands-on-deck learning is as good as it gets. Thanks, Don’t Follow, for demonstrating a maneuver I never would’ve thought survivable.

Despite ad hoc shortcuts here and there, the Gonzo was designed by the Czar to ride the flood north to a China Camp lunch meetup, then return with the ebb to the original launch at Horseshoe Cove. The first paddlers to touch all 14 islands in the 37-mile-long circuit finished under 7 hours. The last paddlers may still be out there. We wish them luck.

Stats
Date: Thursday, 28 January and Saturday, 30 January 2010.

Distance: A fair ways.

Speed: Sometimes.

Time: A workday’s worth.

Spray factor: Here and there.

Dessert: Milk chocolate crisps (Thursday), Pilsner Urquell (Saturday).

Comix -> http://web.mac.com/jboeschen/LCM/1.28.10.html

John Boeschen has been writing the Thursday Paddle Report about the weekly excursions into San Francisco Bay with his companions for more than a decade.
Crossing the Ditch

Reviewed by Kerry Howe

Purist sea kayakers are sometimes a bit scornful of the successful 62-day paddle by James Castrission and Justin Jones from Australia to New Zealand in the summer of 2007/8. After all, it was not a “proper” sea kayak because of its size, shape and its living/survival pod. It resembled those boats rowed in trans-Atlantic races, just narrower and paddled rather than oar powered. A “real” sea kayak crossing of the Tasman was better represented by Andrew McAuley’s expedition from Tasmania, even though that ended so tragically just off the New Zealand coast. I remember concern in some quarters that Castrission’s book Crossing the Ditch (Harper Sports Australia, 2009) might have the words “sea kayak” on the cover when it appeared (it didn’t).

From the intense media coverage as they neared their landfall at New Plymouth, plus the slick website with young-person Utube-speak, I was slightly skeptical that any book would be little more than a brash Aussie gloat. But I was very pleasantly surprised. Castrission writes well, with a disarming honesty and a quite mature self-awareness. Along with the expected descriptions of the planning, designing, and building of the vessel, there is also an account of the conflicting emotions, motivational issues, and serious problems with chronic sea-sickness before the paddle started in earnest.

This mind over matter theme is further developed with the journey’s account itself. Running the gauntlet of sharks, storms, contrary winds and seas, hunger and broken equipment, the two lads come across as likeable, earnest, resourceful, and quite devoted to helping each other through their respective bad times.

McAuley’s wife found out she told him in no uncertain terms to go away since he had helped to make her and her husband’s life so terrible due to the media-perceived trans-Tasman race rivalry between the two expeditions. Castrission left Te Anau deeply hurt.

Shortly afterwards it was revealed that McAuley was dead. Castrission and Jones were blamed by some for the loss, and they certainly rode their own emotional ground-swell of guilt. So it’s not entirely a pretty tale, and we only hear one side. But it helps to give this book a good dose of dark realism. Notably Castrission’s book is dedicated to McAuley.

And regardless of the extent of any rivalry the two voyages will always be contrasted. One was a solo effort by a loving family man across the southern Tasman in a basic sea kayak (with only a hood over the cockpit for protected sleep at night). The other was farther to the north, by a couple exuberant youngsters in a two-man vessel with a survival pod. One voyage ended in triumph, the other tragedy. Doubtless people will make a comparison to polar explorers Robert Scott’s and Roald Amundsen’s race to the South Pole.

Those who like reading about major ocean crossings in various kinds of small boats will appreciate the addition of this book to the genre. Who cares whether it’s technically a sea kayak or not. The voyage was a significant achievement.

But the sea kayaker’s holy grail remains unclaimed – will/can anyone paddle solo and unassisted across the Tasman in a “proper” sea kayak (without a sail)?

You can order the book directly from www.crossingtheditch.com (not for sale on Amazon.com)

GET LISTED!
Send calendar listings to ackayak@comcast.net or ACK Calendar, P.O. Box 520, Ipswich, MA 01938.

NORTH ATLANTIC

SYMPOSIA AND SHOWS

March 26-28: Paddlesport 2009 Show, Somerset, N.J.
A kayak, canoe, and outdoor show, Garden State Exhibit Center, Somerset, N.J. Sponsored by The Jersey Paddler. Exhibits include manufacturers of kayaks, canoes, accessories, sportswear, paddling clubs, professional instruction and expeditions. Lectures and video/slide shows of exotic trips and expeditions, plus paddling techniques. For more information, call (888) 22-KAYAK or visit www.jerseypaddler.com

March 27-28: Small Boat Shop Warehouse Sale
Small Boat Shop, Norwalk, Ct. The Latest 2010 models. Used boats. All in-stock boats and accessories at special pre-season prices. Sea kayaks, recreational kayaks, canoes, rowing shells, row boats, paddle boats, and small sailboats. Free admission. For more information, Small Boat Shop, 144 Water Street, Norwalk, CT 06854; (203) 854-5223 www.thesmallboatshop.com

April 24-25: Collinsville Canoe & Kayak Annual Spring Demo Weekend & Storewide Sale.
Saturday 9-6; Sunday 10-5. Free. Major manufacturers on hand; demo equipment; classes, talks, and tips. Friendly staff on hand. Rain or shine. 41 Bridge St. (Rte. 179), Collinsville, CT; (860) 693-6977; www.cckstore.com

May 21-23: Adirondack Paddlifest
Old Forge, N.Y. Sponsored by Mountainman Outdoor Supply Co. More than 1,000 canoes and kayaks on sale. Test paddle kayaks. Lectures and skill sessions. Live music, food, and fun for the whole family. www.mountainmanoutdoors.com

May 23: Contoocook River Kayak & Canoe Demo Day
Contoocook River Canoe Co., Concord, N.H. More than 200 kayaks and canoes to demo, talk to the reps. On-the-hour in-water and on-land presentations. Call (603) 753-9804 or www.contoocookcanoe.com

June 5: World Ocean Day Festival

Point Judith, Rhode Island. Sponsored by Maine Island Kayak Co, and NDK. Focus on intermediate level rock garden play, tidal stream work including trips out to The Race off Fishers Islands, and surfing with a bit of Greenland and BCU. Facilities at a “youth camp” facility on a protected bay on the edge of this small Rhode Island town. Tom Bergh, Maine Island Kayak Co, Peaks Island, ME 04108; 207-766-2419 h; 207-232-6733 c; www.maineislandkayak.com

June 12-13: 21st Annual Atlantic Canada Sea Kayaker’s Meeting

June 25-27: Wooden Boat Show
Mystic Seaport, Mystic, Ct. Enjoy hundreds of wood-crafted boats including kayaks, test paddle, seminars, programs, special events; www.thewoodenboatshow.com

RACES

April 24: 28th Annual Run of the Charles
Greater Boston. Series of professional and amateur canoe and kayak races for ages 12 and up, with more than 1,500 participants. Races wind along the Charles River through Dedham, Needham, Newton, Wellesley, and Waltham to Herter Park, Soldiers Field Road, Allston. Races include the $5,000 Professional Flatwater 26-Mile Canoe Marathon, 24-Mile Canoe Relay Race for teams of ten, and 19-, 9- and six-mile canoe and kayak races. Take note: The six miler is portage-free. Sponsored by the Charles River Watershed Association, with 43
years of improvements to the health, beauty, and enjoyment of the Charles River. Entry fees $40-$55 a paddler. Free Finish Line Festival at MDC Herter Park. Race or Volunteer. Contact: (508) 698-6810 or rotc@crwa.org. Look for on-line information and registration at www.crwa.org

**July 17: Blackburn Challenge**
Gloucester, Mass. 23-mile race on mainly open water, circumnavigating Cape Ann. The race is open to anyone, but there is a half-way checkpoint with a time limit, and a full race pull-out limit of six hours. For race info and online registration, www.blackburnchallenge.com. Or email Donna-Lind@comcast.net or call (978) 764-9407

**CLASSES**

**May 15-16 and May 22-23: Maine Sea Kayak Guide Courses, Lincoln Canoe & Kayak**
Two weekends. The first weekend will be a mix of classroom and on water time, the second will be an overnight trip on Casco Bay.

**June 2-5:**
Full day of classroom prep and a three-day expedition in Muscongus Bay. Designed to provide leadership training for outdoor program trip leaders and to prepare guide candidates for the Maine Sea Kayak Guide Exam. Courses will train and instruct participants in the knowledge and skills required to lead single or multi-day sea kayak trips on the Maine Coast. They are also an opportunity for recreational paddlers to develop paddling expertise. The four-day course content goes beyond the essential skills required to become a Registered Maine Guide. Lincoln Outdoor Center, 8 Varney Rd., Freeport, ME; (207) 865-0455; LOC@padllelincoln.com; or www.paddllelincoln.com

**March 13-14: WMI of NOLS Wilderness First Aid Course put on by Crossing Latitudes**
Sebago Canoe Club, Brooklyn, NY.

**March 20-21: WMI of NOLS Wilderness First Aid Course**
Catts Island Park, Toms River, NJ. Price: $250.00 per person for both. Two days of intense training in Wilderness First Aid. The Wilderness Medicine Institute staff will teach you the skills needed so you can care for an injured friend until the pros arrive. A few spots are open on this Wilderness First Aid course to folks who need to recertify their Wilderness First Responder.

**60% hands-on with realistic scenarios and 40% lectures, demonstration, and discussions. A must for all guides!** Crossing Latitudes, (406) 585-5356 or info@crossinglatitudes.com

**SOUTH ATLANTIC**

**SYMPOSIA AND FESTIVALS**

**April 16-18:**
20th Annual East Coast Canoe & Kayak Festival James Island County Park, Charleston, S.C. One of the premier kayaking events of the year. Lectures, on-water classes, and demonstrations. Four classes run at the same time. Refine your skills in a master class. Learn strokes, rescues, or rolls from H2Outfitters. Demos. For more information www.ceprcevents.com

**EVENTS**

**March 20:**
River Quest 2010. Downtown Beaufort Waterfront Park, 1106 Bay Street, Beaufort, SC, 10:00 a.m. Start Time. Kayak and Canoe races of 3.0 miles or 7.4 miles. www.active.com or www.HigherGroundBeaufort.com

**March 6-April 4: Ultimate Florida Challenge**
This race circumnavigates Florida starting in Fort Desoto in Tampa Bay – 1200 miles with a 40-mile portage. The first stage starts with the Annual Everglades Challenge. At Key Largo you turn north and head for Sebastian Inlet. From there you go to the farthest northeast corner of Florida at Fort Clinch. Then it’s about 90 miles upstream on the St. Marys River to St. George. At St. George you begin the infamous 40-mile portage to the SuwanneRiver at Fargo. After about 220 miles down river you are back in the Gulf of Mexico - next stop Cedar Key. The final sprint from Cedar Key finishes back at Fort Desoto. It’s hard to predict which stage will be the toughest since weather will be a factor. Although the deadlines allow just a bit more than 29 days to complete the Ultimate Florida Challenge, hard chargers might be able to do this in 15 days or so, but the weather would have to cooperate. A more reasonable target is 20 days give. Cruisers may take a more leisurely pace and use every minute of the allowed time. Of course, this challenge is so tough that it is possible that nobody can complete it in the allowed time limits. For more information www.waterrite.com

**GREAT LAKES**

**SYMPOSIA AND SHOWS**

**March 12-14: Canoecopia**
Alliant Energy Center, Madison, Wisc. One of the biggest paddlesports shows in the country. Sponsored by Rutabaga. www.canoecopia.com

**July 15-18, 2010**

**Aug. 26-29: Lake Superior Goes Greenland**
Naturally Superior Adventures hosts Ontario’s only Greenland-style sea kayak symposium on Lake Superior, Wawa, Ontario, Canada. Instructors include Bonnie Perry and Doug Van Doren, two of North America’s finest Greenland-style paddlers. Perfect for first-time and experienced Greenland-style paddlers alike, registration includes the use of a handmade paddle. Contact: Megan Gamble (800) 203-9092; info@naturallysuperior.com

**INTERNATIONAL**

**May 29-31: 10th Jersey Sea Kayaking Symposium**
Jersey, Channel Islands, England. Highly experienced local and visiting coaches. Featured speakers. Four-day post symposium program with trips to offshore reefs and other islands. www.seapaddleruk.blogspot.com
Klassifieds

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BETTIE BAY ARAL. Greenland style kayak 18’ X 20 1/2” 33 lbs. Purchased new Jan. 2007 and is in excellent condition. Located in Grand Rapids, Mich. Asking $3,500. Contact Dale @ 616-868-6745 or email: dreidsma@buistelectric.com (3)

EPIC 16. kevlar touring with SmartTrak rudder only 39 pounds. Near new yellow/ white plus new fitted neoprene skirt. Super woman’s boat. $2000 / (860) 334 9433. (3)

SEDA IMPULSE. Kevlar. Rudder. 18 feet X 21 inches. White deck with clear hull. Older model, but like new. Used approx. 6 times. $1,200. SealLine Smart Track pedal system goes with it, but you install. Call Paul at (978) 452-4154 or email cp1939@aol.com. (12)

FENN MAKO XT surf ski. 19’x19”, near new condition, adjustable foot braces, two rudders and boat cover $1400

FUTURA “SPEAR” surf ski 16’x19”, very good condition, adjustable foot braces, over-tern rudder, $800. Both boats located in Wilmington, NC. Michael (910) 617-9425 or email yobospop@aol.com (12)

TWO KAYAKS FOR SALE because of shoulder injury. VALLEY NORDKAPP. 18’x21”, skeg, fiberglass, yellow over white. Used only 7 days. $2,600. NECKY ARLUK 1.9. 18’x22”, Kevlar, rudder, red over oyster, used in fresh water, $1,700. Both kayaks are comfortable, fast touring boats. Skirts and all needed gear available at very reasonable prices. Bill, Aiken, S.C. (803) 648-6087. (11)

NDK ROMANY. Yellow over white, black seam, skeg with string pull. New rear hatch cover. Original seat in good shape. Hull Identification number ends in 99. Approximately 60 pounds, about 16 ft X 21.5 inches. Must be picked up in CT $1,600.00 or best offer. For sale as it is. This is my favorite boat. Only reason I’m selling it is because I got a new Romany. (203) 606-9459, jeantrapani@optonline.net. (4)

KAYAK CAMPING on Cross Island Farms, 102-acre organic farm. Just one mile from launch into St. Lawrence River on beautiful Wellesley Island, N.Y. Paddle around pristine Canadian islands in fresh water. Run by kayaker and ACK photographer Dani Baker and David Belding. Refuel on organic veggies and pastured pork. Call or email (315) 482-FOOD (3663), organic@crossislandfarms.com or www.crossislandfarms.com (8)

SEA KAYAKING ALONG THE NEW ENGLAND COAST 2nd edition and Sea Kayaking Along the Mid-Atlantic Coast, by Tamsin Venn, published by Appalachian Mountain Club BOOKS. Send $18.95, plus $1.50 postage and handling to Tamsin Venn, POB 520, Ipswich, MA 01938.
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