

California Kayaker



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Spring 2010
Volume 1, Issue 1

On The Rocks

Skills:
Brace for Success

Launch Point:
Bolinas Lagoon

Pennyisms
An interview with Penny Wells



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Chuck Espiritu, Kokatat Kayak Fishing Ambassador with a 39 inch, 19 pound striped bass caught using live sardines just behind the surf line near Pacifica (CA), wearing a Supernova Angler and Bahia Tour life jacket. Photo: ©Ariel Cuna

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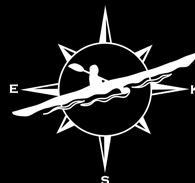
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California Kayaker is an independent magazine available for free at paddling shops, sports retailers, outdoor stores, fitness clubs, marinas, and events, and available for download from the web. Also available for subscription.

Kayaking can be a dangerous sport. Dress appropriately, always wear your PFD, and paddle within your skill level.

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Cover Photo - A group of Risso Dolphins flying by a group of rental kayaks in Monterey. You never know what you will see when you are paddling.

Photo by Bart Selby
Camera: Nikon D-300



Editor's Note



Welcome Letter

The idea for this magazine came after I wrote an article for *Wavelength Magazine* (a magazine similar to this, but focusing on paddling in the Pacific Northwest) about my trip down the Columbia River. I was surprised at the number of kayakers in California who had read the article. If a magazine from out of our region was so well-read here, it seemed a local magazine would be very popular. We do have some of the best kayaking in the world in our vicinity, and California is one of the top two states for kayak sales, so I guess it shouldn't have been a surprise.

California Kayaker Magazine's goal is to be the resource for kayak information for Northern California. We are dedicated to promoting fun and responsible kayaking and advocating for increased paddling opportunities in this region. The magazine will be published quarterly and available for free at various kayaking, sports, and boating outlets in Northern California, or as a downloadable PDF from our web site (www.calkayakermag.com). The content will cover all forms of kayaking and be for readers of levels varying from just entering the sport to five star paddlers.

We are starting small but plan to grow the publication. We decided to bite the bullet and go with expensive glossy stock right from the start. The trade off is that the first issue is a bit thinner than we would like. But the magazine will grow in page count over time.

A few special thanks:

To Bob Mack and Tracy Corral of *Cycle California! Magazine* (www.cyclecalifornia.com), for providing a lot of inside information on the world of magazine publishing.

To Laura Ramos for taking time out from her marketing consultancy (Portal Creative Marketing www.portalcm.com) to do the layout for this issue.

To Brian Warkentine for designing the logo.

And especially to the shops, tour companies, events, and manufacturers who have stepped forward and bought ads. They feel that this magazine is good for the industry, and they want to support that (even in these tough times). And they stepped up before the first issue is out, so they made the decision before they could look at a copy to know if it would be good for them. These are the folks who are forward looking and growing kayaking in our area as a whole, so are well-worth supporting with your business.

My background is not in publishing so I am learning a lot as I go. Just like how the first wooden or skin on frame kayak one makes is not perfect (at least mine wouldn't be if I had the patience to try to make one), this magazine likely has areas that can be improved. My apologies in advance for these shortfalls, and let me assure you that we will keep improving the magazine with each issue we put out!

I hope you enjoy reading this first issue as much as I enjoyed bringing it to life.

Peter Donohue

Editor in Chief

editor@calkayakermag.com

► NEWS

Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) North Central Region going into effect on April 1

On August 5, 2009, the Fish and Game Commission voted to adopt a proposal for the MLPA north central coast study region that establishes 21 marine protected areas (MPAs), three State Marine Recreational Management Areas, and six special closures, in total covering approximately 153 square miles (20.1%) of state waters in the north central coast study region. This region extends from Alder Creek, near Pt. Arena in Mendocino County, to Pigeon Point in San Mateo County.

There are a few closures to all boating (impacting kayaking) in this, including at Point Reyes between Chimney Rock and the lighthouse, Point Resistance and Stormy Stack areas on Drake's Bay, and Egg Rock off of Devil's Slide.

More closures exist for all fishermen, including kayak fishermen. Approximately 86 square miles of the 153 square miles are designated as "no take" state marine reserves (so no fishing is allowed), while different take allowances providing varying levels of protection are designated for the rest.

These adopted MPAs are scheduled to take effect on April 1, 2010. Maps and GPS coordinates of closures are at www.dfg.ca.gov/mlpa/nccmpas_list.asp.

This is the second region of five to be adopted. The first being the Central Coast, which covers from Pigeon Point to Point Conception, that went into effect in September, 2007. That region did not have any specific closures to boating, but did have its share of closures to fishing. More details on MLPA process can be found at www.dfg.ca.gov/mlpa.

California Kayaker Magazine is still trying to comprehend the government-speak legalese of the regulations to better ascertain what the direct impacts are to kayakers and will report back more on this if needed.

Bair Island Development

Minnesota-based agribusiness company Cargill, and their development partner, Arizona-based home builder DMB Associates, has submitted a proposal to fill in more than 1,400 acres of restorable salt ponds in Redwood City with up to 12,000 new units of housing. At the time of publishing, it looks like Redwood City will agree with starting the environmental impact report process, though many local towns and environmental organizations are lining up against this project.

These salt ponds are right next to Bair Island, an area of some 3000 acres that were also salt ponds, but are now well into the process of being restored back to tidal marshes, and an area that already has excellent nature viewing opportunities from kayaks. The 1400+ additional acres of Cargill lands would definitely add to the paddle experiences possible in this area if they were restored, rather than developed.

For such a large project, the environmental impact process will take years to complete before any development would happen, and *California Kayaker Magazine* will keep you informed as the process continues.

Oregon Permit Requirement

For 2010, Oregon has instituted an Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Permit requirement. Along with power boats and sailboats, this permit requirement will apply to paddle operated crafts longer than 10 feet and operated by someone 14 years old or older (surf boards are exempt, but stand-up paddle boards are not).

In the case of paddle operated crafts, the permit must be carried by the operator and can be used by that person on any paddle operated boat.

A \$7 annual permit can be obtained at any Oregon Department of Fish and Wild Life license agent or reseller.

The permit is required for out-of-state residents who are paddling in Oregon, even if you or your boat has a similar permit from another state.

► EVENTS

Bay Area Paddlefest

May 1-2, 2010

Fremont, CA

www.thebayareapaddlefest.org

See ad on inside back cover

Reno River Festival

May 7-9, 2010

Reno, NV

www.renoriverfestival.com

AquanFest

June 12-13, 2010

Foster City, CA

www.aquansports.com

See ad on the inside front cover

The Great Race #37

July 17, 2010

Rancho Cordova & Sacramento, CA

www.thegreatrace.org

US Surf Ski Championships

August 21-22, 2010

Sausalito & Berkeley, CA

www.ussurfski.com

To submit an event for consideration to *California Kayaker Magazine*, please send basic information to editor@calkayakermag.com.

Brace for Success

by Roger Schumann



Using a brace to land safely in the surf after broaching.

Photo by Christopher Manchester.

After landing for lunch on a beautiful pocket beach near Carmel recently, my wife and I sat on the bleach-blond sand between granite boulders, munching tuna sandwiches while watching another couple of kayakers cautiously head our way. Their kayaks teetered on each small swell that approached the beach before it steepened and crumbled in a line of creamy foam. While not a particularly challenging surf landing, it was still a surf landing, and they didn't look comfortable in the bumpy water.

Nearing the surf zone, the woman held back, watching as her paddling partner put his head down and sprinted shoreward, trying unsuccessfully to outrace a wave, which broke at his stern, quickly broached his boat sideways, and tipped him toward shore. He froze as the wave hit, holding his paddle up over his head like a kid on a roller-coaster before letting it fly as he was tumbled in the wave. A few moments later, she too got hit from behind by a wave and knocked sideways. But instead of freezing up, she slapped her paddle blade flat against the foam and leaned on her brace, looking shaky but remaining upright

as the wave washed her sideways up onto the sand.

Whether you paddle a touring sea kayak, a sit on top or whitewater kayak, learning to brace well not only expands your comfort zone and safety, it can greatly expand the range of areas you can explore along our areas amazing coastlines and rivers. Even if you are the type who does your best to avoid surf landings and other rough spots, a sudden squall or even a simple boat wake can turn even the best-planned flat-water cruise into either a nice thrill or a nightmare, depending on your ability to brace.

Bracing Basics

Essentially bracing is slapping your paddle blade flat against the water, using the water's surface tension to produce momentary support, before snapping your boat back into balance beneath you with your lower body. But liquid water doesn't offer very solid support, and there are many subtleties involved in effective bracing. A basic concept to keep in mind is that no matter how much a brace may look like a way to use your paddle and arms to push your body

back up over your boat, a more effective way to look at it is that you are actually planting your paddle and using your knees to pull your boat back under you. This is a subtle but important distinction, requiring that you first master the fundamentals of the “hip snap” or “hip flick.” One way to practice this without having to worry about tipping over is to brace the face of your blade against a partner’s bow, in the “high brace” position. There is also a low brace, using the back of the blade, but the high brace is a good place to start. Practice using your knees to rock your boat up on edge while trying to keep your head balanced over your knees (instead of leaning it out over the side of your kayak), so that your torso bends into a sideways “C” position with your head on your shoulder. Then pull down on your paddle as you quickly lift your lower knee, snapping your body into a “C” on the other side as you rock the kayak back under you.

Once you feel comfortable with the hip snap part of the technique, try slapping your paddle flat on the water to get a feel of the momentary support it can give you. The trick is to time your hip snap just as your blade slaps the water. You may want to practice this in very shallow water at first, less than one foot, so you can push off the bottom if you don’t time it right. To avoid injuring your shoulder, make sure to keep your hands in front of you and below the level of your shoulder. Reaching up and behind you puts your shoulder in an unstable position.

Once you have a feel for the timing and support, and you are ready to try it for real in deep water, it is a good idea to be prepared for a capsize both physically (dressed for immersion in a wet or dry suit if the water is cold) as well as mentally. To really learn to brace well typically involves an unplanned capsize or two while you’re refining your technique.

There are four steps: edge, slap, snap and recover. From a normal paddling position, twist your wrists back to get the face of the blade parallel to the surface, then use your knees to rock your boat up on edge, crunching your body into the “C” shape you practiced before (see photo 1). See how far on edge you can get using just your balance, but keep your paddle horizontal and ready. The next step is to let yourself tip off balance, and slap the water with your blade flat (photo 2). Then hip snap the kayak back under you, crunching into a “C” again on the opposite side, as you practiced in the shallows (photo 3). One final step used to recover your paddle blade which is probably now well below the water, is to twist your wrists back up into the normal paddling position again, slicing your blade back to the surface, ready for the next brace.

In order for it to work in real conditions, like a surf landing,

Continued on page 8



Photo 1 - Edge



Photo 2 - Slap



Photo 3 - Snap and Recover

you'll need to practice it often—edge, slap, snap and recover—until it starts to feel reflexive on both sides. Eventually you'll also want to get comfortable using the back of your blade in a low brace position as well.

More Advanced Techniques

As you advance, or if you are a more advanced kayaker, there are a variety of reflexive bracing exercises you can practice to improve your bracing in rougher water. One I use when teaching my more-advanced classes is paddling on the back deck. In the shallows, straddle your back deck and sit right behind your seat. Lift your feet off the bottom but leave them in the water for balance at first and try paddling around, slapping high and low braces as necessary. If you start to fall in, simply put your feet down. Typically quite awkward at first, most people get comfortable fairly quickly, so the next step is to practice spin turns and paddling backwards. For even more challenge, lift your feet out of the water completely or play a game of tag with your paddling buddies.

Other ways to practice reflexive bracing, again in the shallows, is to have a partner sit on your back deck while you paddle around from your normal position in the cockpit, or have someone grab your bow and try to tip you over while you brace to remain upright. But probably the best way to learn reflexive bracing is to spend some time playing in small surf or in an easy whitewater river. It is essen-

tial that you wear a helmet and get some competent, professional instruction first to learn what dangers to avoid before trying this on your own, however.

Another advanced skill I call deep bracing is where you tip so far that your body actually hits the water. The key is to let your body hit the water first, briefly stalling the capsize motion, before you engage your paddle blade. If you hit the water with your blade too soon, by the time your body hits the water, your blade will be too deep to do you any good. Also the sculling brace, where you use your paddle to skim the water in a sustained brace, is a super useful skill to have in your quiver, but that will have to wait for a future article. In the

White water paddler on Cache Creek bracing.

meantime, even practicing the basic high brace can help you be safer and more comfortable on the water, which will allow you to go more places and have more fun. ♦

Roger Schumann is award-winning co-author of Guide to Sea Kayaking Central and Northern California and Sea Kayak Rescue and the owner and lead instructor of Eskape Sea Kayaking (www.eskapekayak.com) in Santa Cruz, CA. As an ACA-Certified instructor-trainer, he's been teaching classes and leading expeditions for over 20 years on our local shores and beyond—from Alaska to the Galapagos and from Baja to Brazil. He has a video showing bracing skills on his web site at www.eskapekayak.com/ACA_SkillsDrillsVideo.htm#braces. Photos by Sandy Schumann.





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<http://www.calkayakermag.com/facebook.html>

Successful Golden Gate Sea Kayak Symposium

The very successful 2nd annual Golden Gate Sea Kayak Symposium was held on February 26 to 28. There were some 95 registrants and over 30 instructors. Many different accents were heard, not just from around the U.S. and Canada, but from overseas also.

The symposium is a training opportunity for intermediate to advanced kayakers. Most of the classes are aimed at sea kayakers, but there are also classes for surf skis/racers and kayak surfers.

The event is timed with the strongest spring tides, so that additional teaching opportunities open up at some of the tidal races. But late-winter also provides some interesting weather conditions, varying from mild to wild, including 50mph winds combined with horizontal hail, 20ft swell and a tsunami warning.

Sean Morley, symposium organ-



Students listening to the pre-paddle safety talk.

izer, reported "I witnessed the most extreme weather event I have ever witnessed since moving to California when a wind shear came through at the back end of the storm on Friday. The wind was strong enough to blow the tops off the waves at yellow bluff and it knocked two kayakers over. I observed one of the finest rescues I have ever seen in these extreme

conditions. Instructor Roger Schumann [author of this issue's article on bracing] performed a T-Rescue on the student whilst Instructor Paul Kuthe [filmmaker of the Pacific Horizons and Eastern Horizons kayak porn] towed

them into the eddy. We stood by with the safety boat but we weren't needed. This incident was evidence of the caliber of instructors we had available and the tremendous experience that students gained from the weekend."

In addition to the classes during the day, there were presentations each night. The keynote was Freya Hoffmeister, who gave a presentation about her recently completed circumnavigation of Australia – paddling 8565 miles in 332 days.

California Kayaker was there Saturday and Sunday, and did not experience these wild weather conditions, but did have to deal with the tsunami warning from the Chile earthquake. Great weekend, and one that helped improve my skills. ❖



Demonstrating how to use your boat to transport a capsized paddler back to their boat

ON THE ROCKS

by Cate Hawthorne



Most paddlers don't want to end up with their kayak on the rocks, but there is definitely an allure to paddling around them. Imagine paddling through labyrinths of coastal rock gardens comprised of rock islands, sea stacks, arches, and caves and exploring hidden coves only accessible by kayak. California has many stretches of enchanting rocky coastline.

The Mendocino Coast is one of these magical stretches. Paddling an area of this coastline is a unique experience every time. Tides cover and uncover rocks and expose tide pools, ocean and weather conditions create fluctuating currents and waves, and wildlife me-

ander and migrate. On and around the rocks, there are opportunities for special wildlife encounters like spotting camouflaged black oyster catcher chicks or peregrine falcons. Even deer can be seen on the coastal rocks. Below the surface, lichen-lined rocks, iridescent kelp, orange and purple sea stars, green anemones, abalone and beds of sea urchins inspire intrigue and wonder.

This is a dynamic environment. Watching wave action on the rocks inspires notions of how the coastline was carved and shaped over thousands and thousands of years. Even on a calm day, one realizes the ocean is in constant motion as the tide rises and falls. Kayaking is a fun way to explore this environment, offering paddlers opportunities to interact with moving current and rocks and challenge their paddling skills.

Several years ago, I started paddling with more advanced paddlers and was intrigued by how they would patiently wait for a moment and then glide through the rocky channels riding the ocean currents; in contrast,

I would often strong arm my way against the current. I was envious of their graceful and effortless paddling so I watched. I became a pupil of the moving water trying to read it and learn its language. Eventually, I learned to catch those free rides surging through rocky passages and realized the joy of going with the flow and being one with the water.

I was sliding down its green face over the rock and into a watery pit below. The bow of my boat buried but then resurfaced, and I was sitting in a calm pool of water on the other side of the rock.

My heart was in my throat as I was overcome with adrenaline and relief. My paddling buddies were cheering. I couldn't believe it—I was upright and in one piece—so paddled back for another ride.

Paddling around the rocks definitely has an allure for beauty and intrigue, but also the opportunity to hone water reading and precision paddling skills. One's perspective changes after experiences in this dynamic environment; whether it is a unique wildlife sighting or the notion of riding a wave over an exposed rock reef. Over the past two years of guiding on the Mendocino Coast, I have seen several deer on rocks in the ocean, taken countless rides on waves, and guided kayakers over and around the rocks. Each experience continues to be extraordinary and keeps me going back out paddling. ❖



A guided tour of the rocky Mendocino shoreline.

Feeling elated by being able to work with the water, I started paying more attention to my friends' paddling feats which I had previously deemed superhuman and crazy. They would surf the ocean waves over the rocks – similar to how whitewater kayakers paddle over drops or waterfalls. Initially my thoughts were “No thanks - too crazy, too extreme,” but now my perspective was changing.

One day it happened. I had been flirting with the rocks, riding little surges through the rocky channels and over the rocks for a month or so. We came to a rock that I had paddled over before on calm days that resulted in about a 2 foot drop. This was fun and stretched my limits. This particular day seemed like previous days – a medium tide with relatively calm ocean conditions.

I lined up on the ocean side of the rock like I had before and watched for the surge to hit the indicator rock to give me the timing. It looked a little bit bigger than what I had ridden before, but I didn't give it much thought. Too late, I realized that it was a lot bigger than anything that I wanted to ride. In a fraction of a second, the wave elevated about 8 feet with me on top of it. In an instant,



The author riding over some rocks.

Cate Hawthorne is a teacher who has moved out of the classroom and onto the water. Cate and her partner Jeff Laxier teach and guide sea, river, and surf kayaking on the Mendocino Coast through their business Liquid Fusion Kayaking (www.liquidfusionkayak.com).

Photos by Cate Hawthorne and Jeff Laxier.

Center



Paddlers from the Bay Area Sea Kayakers (bask.org) and Environmental Traveling Companions (etctrips.org) forming a 350, in honor of 350.org. 350.org promotes the idea that we should have a maximum of 350 parts per million of carbon in the atmosphere to prevent catastrophic climate issues. In December 2009, the earth averaged 387 ppm.

Photo by Scott Munson

Camera: Canon EOS 20D

Have a photo that shows the beauty of kayaking or otherwise makes people think? Send submissions to editor@calkayakermag.com. Include the background story and what camera was used.

Hatch



Roger Schumann demonstrating that “rocks are your friends, so long as you stay on their good side”. The rock in front of him that the wave is crashing on is using up most of the wave’s energy, making it safe for Roger to stay there.

Photo by California Kayaker

Camera: Pentax Optio W20



Pennyisms

An interview with Penny Wells

Penny Wells is one of the founders of the Bay Area Sea Kayakers, a sea kayak club based in San Francisco and the surrounding areas. She has a long history in paddling, and her efforts have had a lot of impact on Bay Area paddling. Below are excerpts from a two-hour conversation we had a few weeks ago.

CKM: Did I hear correctly that you were whitewater canoeing before you got into kayaking?

PW: Yes. I got to the point where I was never going to be better than class 3. Class 4 was just too scary for me. And you had to drive long distances to get to white water. The nearest white water around here is Cache Creek, and even Cache Creek is an hour and a half to two hours away. But the ocean is right here. Everything I have done in my life has been ocean oriented. I've always lived near the beach. I sailed and I dove.

CKM: Why sea kayaking versus just taking a canoe out on flat water?

PW: Canoes catch wind. Kayaks are more efficient boats on the ocean. Canoes are not really sea-worthy when you get on the ocean.

CKM: What were kayaks and gear like when you first started? I imagine there has been a lot of change.

PW: I don't remember that we had lots of choices. We didn't worry about that. My first boat was a Klepper folding boat. And I only got that because I had friends who were going to the Klepper factory in Germany and made a deal. Every time I paddled it I put it together, I washed it, I dried it – I can't believe I did all that work!

And we did some real kind of exploring, as none of us were paddlers on The Bay before that. The first time we went to Angel Island, we planned to go over there to camp. A whole bunch of us went from Horseshoe Cove after work on a Friday. At that time, I didn't even know where Angel Island was. I went with my friend Elsa, and



Penny whitewater canoeing on the South Fork of the American River circa 1983.

everyone else left us at Horseshoe Cove, as we were still putting the boat together. So we took off after dark and we knew that Angel Island was out there somewhere. We got there eventually. We found Perle's Beach, where we were supposed to go, by complete accident.

There was some surf at Perle's Beach. We knew what we were supposed to do to land in surf, as we had read it in a book. And the way you land in surf is you point to the beach, pull up the rudder, and paddle fast.

CKM: How did that work out?

PW: Well, in Kleppers, there are only 2 speeds – slow and stop. So paddle fast didn't happen. And when you pull up the rudder, you can't control the direction of the boat. The boat went sideways and flipped over in the surf. Lots of people say you can't flip a Klepper, but we proved you can. We did this in jeans and t-shirts (she now religiously wears wet suits). So we were sopping wet, covered with sand, but knew we got to the right place because there were a lot of people standing around laughing.

CKM: What type of things did you do in the past that you are not doing now?

PW: I don't do a lot of rock garden paddling or surfing any more. I used to do that a lot. You get to a certain age, and start questioning "should I be doing this"? The answer is "well, it depends".

CKM: What is the most exciting or interesting trip you had kayaking?

PW: There isn't any one. Coastal exploration and finding new places to go and using your kayak as a means for

getting there is the whole reason I like to kayak. And expedition paddling is one of the things you do when you like that. The things that have been most exiting have been expedition oriented.

CKM: What trips have you done?

PW: I have paddled, and it took 15 years to do it, the entire inside of the Sea of Cortez. All of it is beautiful. All of it is wonderful. Going out there for a couple of weeks without ever seeing another human being just cannot be beat.

Spectacular trips; I paddled Nepali Coast of Kauai five times now. Because it is incredible. And every time I paddle it, it takes longer to do it. The last time I did it, it took 5 days and I felt rushed at the end. It's 17 miles long [Editor note – a moderately strong paddler could complete this distance in a day]. And it is just gorgeous.

I paddled in Alaska. One summer I spent 3 weeks in Prince William sound, and that was after the Exxon Valdez. The motto of the trips I have done there was "I am not cold, I am just wet. I am not cold, I am just wet". Even the inside of our tents were wet. I took the Tsunami boat to Tahiti one year.

CKM: What are "Pennyisms"?

PW: Well, I guess I get quoted every so often when I am trying to explain things. For example, married people wind up putting all of the lunch in the wife's boat and we go off paddling. They get separated and someone has to beg for food because their lunch is not there. Happens all the time. So the Pennyism became "always carry your lunch in your own kayak"

CKM: We should always have a back up plan, but it is just as important to have a fall forward plan?

PW: Oh, yes, and that happened



*Penny Wells paddling in the Yellow Bluff tide rip.
Photographer: Peter Lyons, Lyons Imaging*

because we went some place, I think Mendocino, where because it was possible that the weather and conditions would be terrible, and we wanted to make sure we could get out of wherever we were. But it turns out that the conditions were not just fine, but had never been so fine, so we were able to go through caves and nooks and crannies where you couldn't go if there were any swell. That was when we decided we needed a fall forward plan, just in case conditions were better than expected.

CKM: Be sure you have a bottle of red wine... in case you get stuck in the mud during a falling tide. You can just drink the wine while waiting for the water to return and float you?

PW: That happened! We were in Estero Americana. A fellow who is now passed away, Rich Warren, and I paddled from Valley Forge to the mouth. We had a picnic on the beach and then started back. But we couldn't get back. We were sort of stuck in the mud. So we drank the rest of the wine until the water came back. It wasn't that long to wait.

CKM: Outdoor Unlimited (OU) was a UCSF group?

PW: The story of OU is very interesting, because it is how BASK evolved. Originally, the organization was set up some 30 years ago because as

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A photograph of two people in kayaks on a calm body of water. The person in the foreground is wearing a blue shirt and a cap, while the person in the background is wearing a red shirt and a cap. They are both using paddles.

Bolinas Lagoon

by Meade Fischer



Any trip, even a brief one, to Bolinas is an escape from the rush hour, fast food rat race of contemporary California life. If you can fit in a couple of hours of paddling, you've had a perfect getaway. However, before you go, make sure you have a tide table.

On a very high tide you can paddle pretty much anywhere in Bolinas Lagoon without concern. At low tides there are mud flats that can get the unwary paddler stuck in something resembling black glue. I learned that the hard way on my first trip. The deeper parts of this shallow lagoon are along the highway and the beach, so approach the middle of the lagoon with a wary eye.

As the lagoon narrows to the south, it becomes a channel that lead almost into Stinson Beach, and only a few yards from Highway 1. This is a great area for up close bird watching, with egrets standing along the banks.

The paddle back along the ocean side takes you past some lovely beach-front homes.

Paddling in from the mouth, you can either turn right toward Stinson Beach or continue east toward Highway 1. Going east will take you along a large mud flat usually lined with seals, gulls and pelicans. This mud flat recedes as the tide goes up, but part of this island, north of the mouth, is always above water and has a permanent stand of trees. However, just inside the entrance channel, you can turn left and paddle the deep channel alongside the town of Bolinas, with boats tied up behind houses, it gives you an alternate view of this quaint town.



Paddlers enjoying time in Bolinas Lagoon.

Shortly, the houses give way to a wooded area that eventually opens up to typical wetlands vegetation. Ideally, on a high tide, you can paddle almost to the northern end of the lagoon and return along Highway 1 in a long loop. This, however, is where I got in trouble on my first visit.

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Directions:

From Stinson Beach, go north on Highway 1 along the lagoon and to an unmarked left (Olema Bolinas Road). Turn left and left again in a few yards. Continue to the intersection with Horseshoe Hill Rd., and turn left and continue on Olema Bolinas Rd. into town, then continue through town on Wharf Road to the end at the beach and entrance to the lagoon.

On weekends, parking at the end of Wharf Road can be full, requiring a bit of a walk. However, the road ends at the beach, and just a few feet past the end of the road is a perfect place to launch, far enough in to avoid any wave action.

There are alternate launch areas along Highway 1, just north of Stinson Beach. Look for places on the lagoon side of the road directly opposite the mouth and that are wide enough to pull out and park. While this saves the drive into town and avoids the current at the mouth, it doesn't save you from watching for the low tide mud.

Facilities:

Closest public restrooms are next to the tennis courts on Brighton Ave. There are no showers or boat washing facilities. Food is available from a selection of restaurants along Wharf Road.

Cautions:

The currents at the mouth can be strong, due to all of the water required to fill and empty this 1100+ acre lagoon during tide changes having to funnel through the channel.

Water can be quite cold year round – dress appropriately. There are waves and surf outside of the mouth.

The Marine Mammal Protection Act requires that we keep our distance from all marine mammals, including seals. If you cause the seal to flush from land into the water, you are too close.

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The tide was dropping as I passed the houses, the wooded area and into the northern branch of the lagoon. Then, as I could see it getting shallower, I turned toward the highway. I could see obvious deep water just ahead, but there was a patch of 50 to 70 yards that looked dicey. I thought, having a shallow draft, that I could pick my way through this short section. I was wrong.

I had to climb out and drag the boat some 50 yards through knee-deep mud, losing a sport sandal and getting my clothes permanently stained with peat. Once on the east side of this mud, the paddle back along Highway 1 was pleasant and uneventful.

There is one other thing that can make a fun day unpleasant. Sometimes a stiff wind comes up in the afternoon, as it did on my trip last July. The day was sunny and calm

when I led my friends into the channel for some bird watching, but as we headed back, a howling wind suddenly came up, and our relaxed chatting gave way to some serious paddling against a rising chop.

On a day when the ocean swells are small, an option is to also paddle out and play in the long rolling waves that break just out from the mouth, but remember that you will flip over often. If the ocean is very calm, you can paddle a couple of miles north to Duxbury Reef, which shelters the beaches of Bolinas. I did this once at low tide and was able to explore the extensive tide pools in this long reef close up, while waves crashed against the outside of the reef, just a few dozen yards away.

While Bolinas is getting more popular in recent years, it is still likely that you'll have the entire lagoon to yourself on any given summer day.

The most crowded day I experienced was when I passed another group of three. You can make a circuit of this 1,100 acre wetland for an aerobic workout or just wander around enjoying the abundant wildlife and the magnificent views of the green west Marin hills, rising almost straight up to the east.

Before you leave, stop in town, walk around, check out the arts and crafts, stop at Smiley's for a light lunch and a drink or take a meal at one of the other restaurants along Wharf Road, where all the eateries are located in one block. It's a long drive from anywhere, so don't be in a hurry to leave. ❖

Meade Fischer is a freelance writer, radio commentator, part-time educator, artist and environmental activist.

Photos by Meade Fischer.



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Pennyisms

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the university was expanding, the neighbors were pissed, because the university people were taking all the parking spaces on the street. So the group was set up as an outreach program.

OU was an outdoor co-operative. It was designed to bring the neighbors in and make them feel warm and fuzzy about the University. People would come and take a clinic from somebody who had learned before. They had white water kayaking, rafting, skiing, mountaineering, kayaking—all kinds of high-risk things you can learn and then go do. It was really good.

Back when I was canoeing, we went over to OU to find more people whom we could canoe with. That was where we met Clyde Winters. He had taken an early-model white water kayak and cut apart and expanded it and used it to paddle the Inside Passage in. We met him at a slide show he did. The trip was strictly by the seat of his pants. After we saw the show, we wanted to do that too. And that got us into sea kayaking.

In December of 1985, 11 people met at OU and started BASK. Steve Leonoudakis, who was then the head guy at UCSF's outdoor program, enthusiastically supported us by providing meeting space at UCSF and publicity. We used the OU model of cooperative adventure for BASK. We must have done something right because we went from 11 members in December 1985 to 200 in December 1986 and grew at a pretty consistent rate until we hit a peak of about 800 members just before the dot-com bust.

I was the founding president mainly because I was away on a business trip when elections were held. "Be there or be President" became the BASK motto. I had so much fun paddling that I had to quit my job. "Life is

too short for a full time job" became another BASK motto and appeared on a tee shirt. Yes, I've done quite a few of the chores that needed to be done for BASK because it was fun and I'm sort of like the Mother Superior with the institutional memory.

CKM: Besides BASK, you are also involved with Bay Access and the Water Trail?

PW: Bay Access is not my baby. It is Casey Walker, Bo Barnes, and Paul Nixon who started Bay Access basically drinking beer and eating pizza and complaining. I think they got kicked out of some place they wanted to go, so got mad. But they stayed mad. And decided that something needed to be done about this. Because Casey is an attorney, they turned Bay Access into a 501c3 non-profit.

They asked me at the start to be involved, but I couldn't do it as I was too busy at the time. I got rid of whatever it was, and did join them early on.

We want places around The Bay where we can access the water. And the traditional places need to stay there. Many of these places are not boat ramps or parks, but just places where you can park and carry your boat down to the water.

Casey came up with the idea that if there was a regional water trail in San Francisco Bay. It would be the umbrella that would create and

preserve access places all around the bay. The water trail would also include camping. Up till then, there were only two places you could camp on The Bay—one at Angel Island and one at Kirby Cove.

So we sat down and wrote legislation. When it was voted on, it went through the assembly and senate with almost unanimous support. There were only two people from Southern California in both the assembly and senate that voted against it.

Unfortunately, the government budget crash has the water trail stuck in environmental review process. But what happened is that a lot of people who had gone through the process were really enthused by the idea of a water trail and having human powered boats come to their facilities. It would increase business and visibility. So a lot of places have moved ahead and done stuff without the water trail.

For example, East Bay Regional Park service decided that having camping at Point Pinole was a good thing. They went ahead and put it in. They had the grand opening in the fall. ❖

For more information on BASK, see www.bask.org. For more information on Bay Access/San Francisco Bay Water Trail, see www.bayaccess.org.



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Paddle California Video

Okay, I admit it - I love kayak porn. Enough so that my girlfriend probably thinks I have an addiction. I have all four volumes of TITS (*This Is The Sea*), along with both *Pacific Horizons* and *Eastern Horizons*. But, except for a few short scenes, I was always disappointed that they didn't feature much of California. We have some of the best kayaking in the world in our backyard, which made it surprising to me that so little of it showed up in these videos. So when I heard that there was a video coming out focusing on California, I knew I had to get a hold of a copy.

This new video is called *Paddle California*. It covers some of the best of the Golden State's kayaking. There are segments on the excitement of whitewater kayaking on both the Kern and Feather Rivers, including some interesting side trips. For sea kayaking, it has segments on the caves and rock gardens of Mendocino, the crossing from mainland to explore the Channel Islands, and the grandeur of paddling Lake Tahoe's crystal clear waters in the late fall after the crowds leave. These are all beautiful locations that are well worth being covered in a video like this. Added bonus, it also has an introduction to kayak polo, as played at the Championships matches last year.

Filmmaker Bryant Burkhardt has been filming his paddles for years. Starting in the spring of 2009, he set out with 2 cameras to try to make a video showing what he liked about kayaking. At first, he thought about doing a road trip to the Pacific Northwest, but then he decided that California had all of the beauty and great paddling he wanted to show in the video.

Bryant has the qualifications to handle almost any kayaking conditions you can throw at him—he's an ACA



(American Canoe Association) Certified Instructor Trainer in coastal kayaking and advanced whitewater, and former head instructor for the UCLA Marina Aquatic Center. In 2006 he captained the USA Kayak Polo Team at the World Championships in Amsterdam, Netherlands. For his current day job, Bryant teaches sea and river kayaking for California Canoe & Kayak. These qualifications allowed him the opportunity to be on the water and get a lot on film—enough so that he was able to put it all together into this 75-minute long video.

The video quality is much better than my home videos but not at the same level as the other kayak porn out there, although to my eye not that much behind the first *This Is The Sea* video. An example of this is that you get to watch and hear the camera scraping loudly against some rocks in one Mendocino scene. But the paddling is captivating, and the regions featured are covered in more detail than the other videos out there.

On the whole, this video is well-worth adding to your library. The minor flaws in filming and sound are more than made up for with the high quality paddling, all here in California! This video can be purchased at select kayak retailers or online at <http://paddlecalifornia.blogspot.com/>.

Bryant says that his financial goal from this movie is to make enough money to buy better equipment. Given the improvements the other lines of videos have seen as they progressed to second (and beyond) versions, this bodes well for the second edition of *Paddle California*.

Oh, if you are not offended easily by the rough language in the background music, make sure you watch the additional footage clip found at the end, which shows a challenging time that Bryant had on one of the river runs. ❖

Dagger Kaos 10.2

Surfing is very popular in California, as you would immediately notice if you drove past any surfing spot. And you don't need to use a surf board – kayaks also can give you that same rush of riding a wave.

Essentially any kayak can be surfed, but the hull style will greatly influence performance. For this review, we put an entry-level sit-on-top surf kayak by Dagger through the wringer.

First Impression

(PD) When I first saw this boat, I wanted to try it. I have been surfing my sea kayak some, but surf rides

in long boats without edges generally involve going straight down the wave. Major effort is spent to avoid turning, as slight turns will normally cause you to completely broach. Surf boards and surf kayaks are designed to be able to carve back and forth along a wave, which looks like a lot more fun. With a suggested retail price of \$575, this looked like a great entry into the world of carving waves.

(EV) When I first saw the Kaos, I thought that it was a boat that was going to make surf kayaking very accessible. With this boat, I could take friends out surfing with me.



Manufacturer's Marketing Speak

With a hull design that shares a page in the longboard surfing playbook, this sit-on-top dominates the ocean waves. With quick acceleration and turning, carve waves or rush surging breakers with confidence. Additional outfitting like comfort carry handles for getting out of the surf, adjustable backband, and a day hatch make for the wildest pleasure cruise ever. www.dagger.com

Suggested retail price: \$575

Specifications:

Length: 10' 2" / 314 cm

Width: 26.5" / 67 cm

Max Capacity: 250 lbs. / 113 kg

Deck Height: 8.5" / 22 cm

Weight: 43 lbs. / 20 kg

Cockpit Length: 51.75" / 131 cm

Cockpit Width: 19.25" / 49 cm

About the Reviewers

EV – (6' 160 lbs.) not a pro, but experienced surfer - in long boats, short boats, whitewater, stand up paddle boards, and surf boards.

PD – (6' 210 lbs.) done some long boat surfing, but basically a surfing newbie

How We Tested

We took the boat out to Pillar Point, which has a couple of locations that attract kayak surfers. The swell was generally running about 6-7 feet, and some significant wind waves forming into a somewhat confusing chop – not optimal, but also not unusual for late winter, when we did the tests.

Paddle Experiences

(PD) On my first try, I discover that this boat is a bit challenging to paddle, let alone surf. The boat is made to be low volume in the back so that when you ride a wave, you don't pearl (the term for when you bury the nose of the boat into the water). But this feature caused me to fall over backwards from time to time.

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Dagger Kaos Review

Continued from page 21

Added to this, I found it challenging at first to get back on after a fall. For sit-on-top kayaks, I am used to sliding up the side to get back on. When I tried that with this boat, it would flip right over. To get back on the Kaos I needed to slide up from the back, as you would do for a cowboy rescue on a sea kayak.

On the second day we tested the boat, I felt much more comfortable after starting out with some rescue practice. First I practiced recoveries in calm water, then in chop outside of the break. The practice improved my confidence that I could get back on the kayak and I was not worried when I did capsize again. This let me relax and catch waves, and even started getting some carving in (something I had never done before).

(EV) The Kaos is faster than I thought it would be. It holds a rail very well – I thought it would be mushier than it actually was [Editor's translation – it comes down the face of the wave on an edge very well without sliding sideways].

In comparison to dedicated surf kayaks, like the Valley Rush, the Kaos has a more user-friendly hull design. In the same way that you can catch an edge with a snowboard or skis, a kayak can do the same. The softer edges on the Kaos (as compared to a higher performance surf kayak) make it less likely to catch an edge. This is a feature that will make this boat fun for less experienced paddlers.

Also, the difference between a sit-inside boat and the Kaos sit-on-top show up in the outfitting. Although I did not feel as connected to the Kaos as I do in a decked boat, the optional thigh straps were more than adequate and allowed me to recover from a capsize by rolling back up.

The Kaos has a sitting position that is farther back as compared to a white water boat (which some paddlers also use in the surf). This stern heavy design, along with the optional fins, allow for better carving than most white-water kayaks. But, where many white water kayaks can be used to surf, the opposite is not true – you would not want to use the Kaos on a river.

Our Findings

The Kaos handles best with the optional thigh straps and fins. A paddle leash may also be good, if you tend to let go of your paddle when you get knocked over by a wave.

The Kaos was more performance-minded than we had expected to find from a sit-on-top kayak.

It is user friendly, in user friendly conditions – in larger surf or less well defined surf, we would not suggest this as a boat for someone who is new to kayaking. There are some skills, like bracing [see the *Brace for Success* article on page 6] and recoveries, would be required to keep you from swimming more than surfing.

Keep in mind the boat's weight for transport purposes. At 43 pounds, it is about twice the weight of many dedicated surf kayaks (but half the price).

Who Should Consider This Kayak

It is a very affordable boat, so something that allows kayakers on a budget to give surf kayaking a try.

Budget issues or not, this boat would do well for someone who doesn't have a bombproof roll, which would be almost required for a sit-inside surf kayak.

Even for people who have a roll, this could be a good entry-level boat into surfing, providing some surfing benefits over using a white water boat.

Cautions

Before trying to ride your first break, please make sure you understand the surfer's etiquette. There is information on the Santa Cruz Surf Kayak festival site at www.asudoit.com/kayak_fest/surf_etiquette.html

Better yet, as you are learning, try this away from anyone else in the water. An uncontrolled boat in the surf can be very dangerous. ❖

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