

California Kayaker



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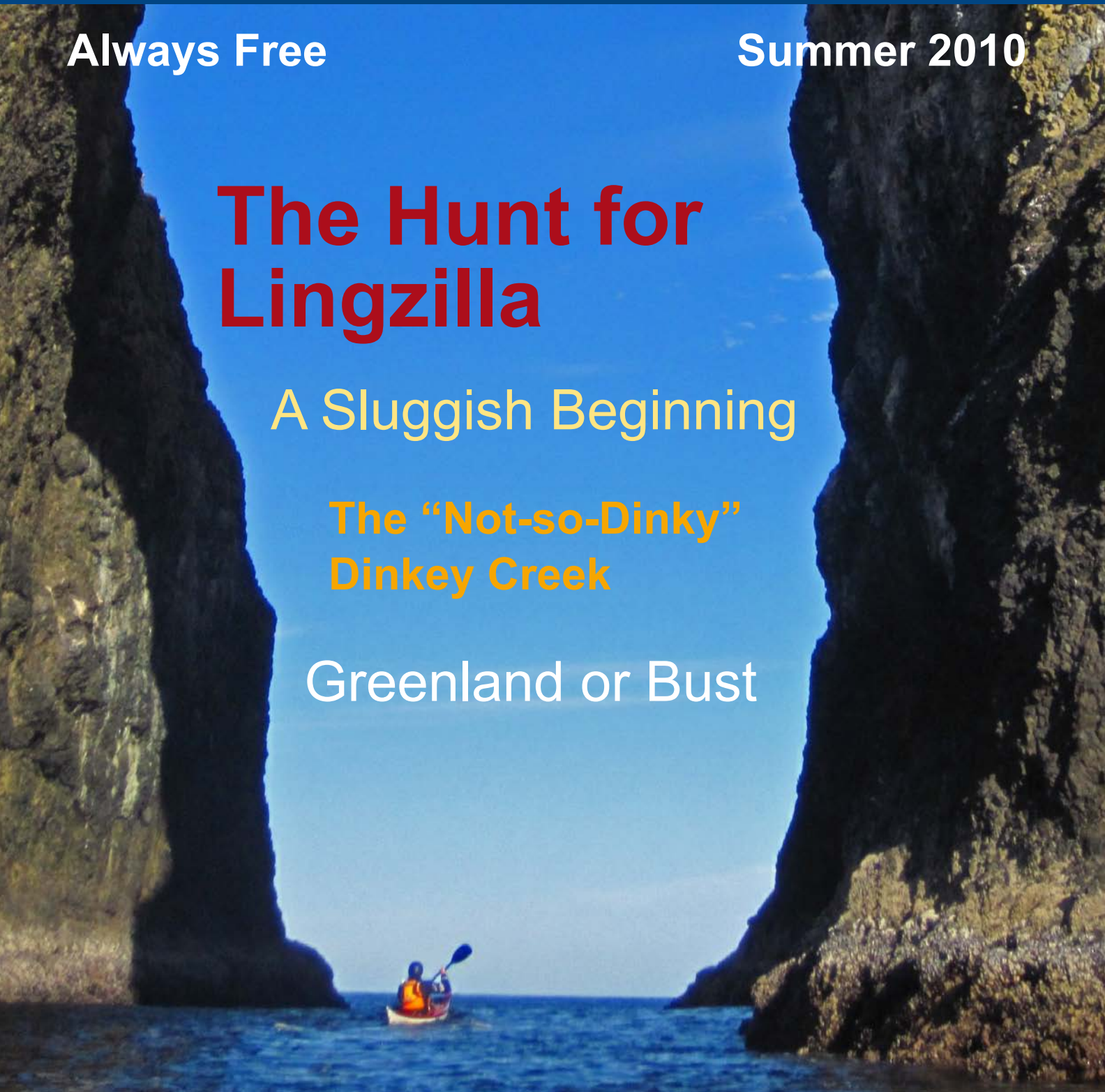
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The Hunt for Lingzilla

A Sluggish Beginning

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Dinkey Creek

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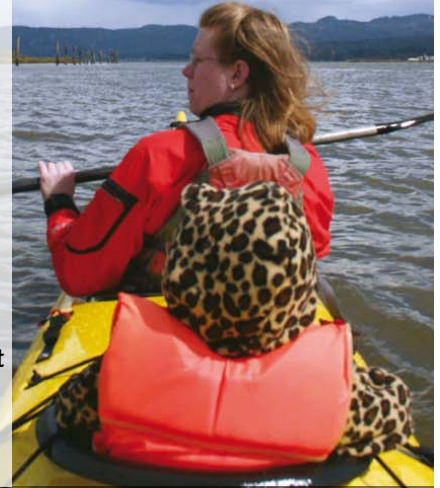
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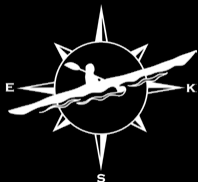
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California Kayaker Magazine is an independent magazine available for free at paddling shops, sports retailers, outdoor stores, fitness clubs, marinas, and events, and available for download from the web.

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



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Cover Photo - photo of Three Arch Rocks, Oregon, demonstrating that you can take your camera with you (see article on page 12).

Photo by Neil Schulman

Camera: Canon Powershot D10



Editor's Note

Welcome Letter



California Kayaker Magazine is expanding!

Issue 1 proved to be very popular – with some stores running out of copies within the first month. And the PDF version was downloaded over 500 times in that same first month. So we are increasing the number of copies we print for this issue.

California Kayaker Magazine is also getting thicker. The first issue was limited in how much content we could provide, so it didn't have the broad coverage of a wide variety of types of kayaking I would have liked. For this issue we added eight more pages. Critters from Kayaks, Fishing, and Whitewater are subject areas I hope to include from here on.

There is even more expansion coming over the next few issues. One major area is that we are planning a geographic expansion. This magazine started with a focus on northern California, but I am getting a lot of interest from our friends down south plus border communities in neighboring states. There will be additional distribution of this issue in these areas, and we plan for complete coverage with the Fall issue.

Wanted to give a special shout out to Matthew Krizan, Karen Lapinski, Lisa Ouellette, Laura Ramos, and one who wished to remain anonymous for taking time to proof read the articles for me. It is amazing how many errors I miss no matter how many times I read something – their fresh sets of eyes have saved me more than once.

Enjoy!

Peter Donohue

Editor in Chief

editor@calkayakermag.com

► NEWS

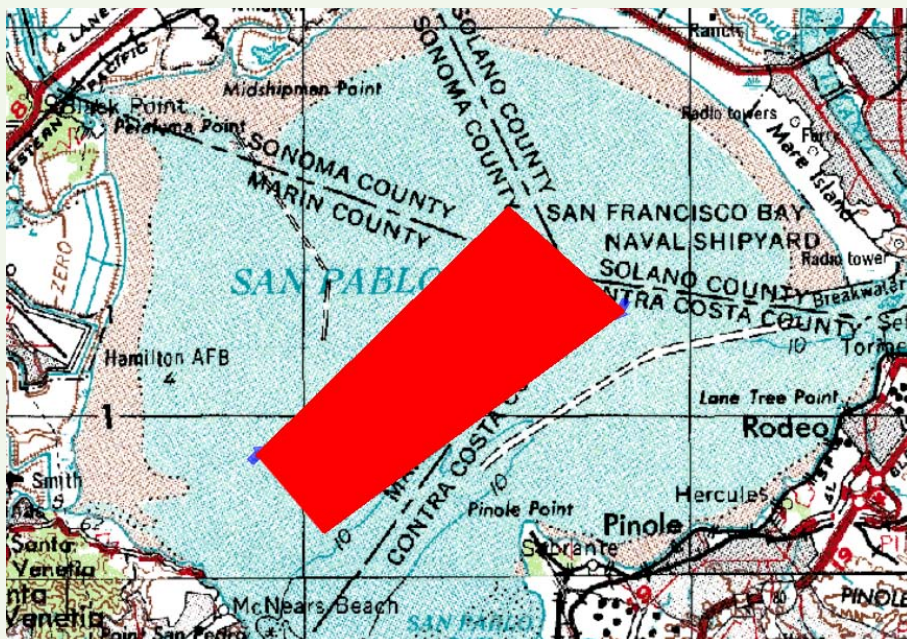
Proposal to close parts of San Pablo Bay for Homeland Security Training

The Department of Homeland Security is working on implementing a safety zone in San Pablo Bay that they could use for training purposes. An example of their training would be a Coast Guard helicopter chasing a fast boat and using a gun firing blanks. Definitely would be exciting to see, but not something that we would want to be in the middle of.

The proposed area is roughly a rectangle out in the middle of San Pablo Bay (the red box shown in the map below). If your route took you through there, it could require a long paddle around the area.

This zone would be closed to all boats when they needed it for training purposes. These trainings would only occur on Tuesdays, Thursdays, or Fridays, and can occur at any time during the year. In 2009, they had a temporary permit to train in that area, and they closed the zone an average of two times per month.

Red box is proposed closure area



More information can be found in the document at www.smartpdf.com/register/2009/nov/06/E9-26792.pdf. This was a call for public comments, and currently they are working through the comments they received. They hope to be operating on a temporary permit again in the next few months, and then work on getting the permanent permit.

Current boundaries of the box are:
 38°05'11" N, 122°22'10" W;
 38°03'44" N, 122°20'12" W;
 38°00'41" N, 122°25'28" W;
 38°01'45" N, 122°26'38" W

The San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission has been working with the Coast Guard to determine if the boundaries of the box should be adjusted to avoid a section called "the Sturgeon Triangle", an area with a reputation as being good for sturgeon fishing.

The Coast Guard will announce when the safety zone is closed to boaters by a "Broadcast Notice to Mariners", which is a "Securité" call over VHF Channel 14. Securité calls (pronounced "secure e tay"), are non-emergency situations where there are potential navigational hazards such as a boat sitting in a fog bank.

Persons and vessels may also

contact the Coast Guard to determine the status of the safety zone on VHF-16 or the 24-hour Command Center via telephone at (415) 399-3547.

Nautical Charts and Google Maps combined

Web firm GeoGarage has overlaid the nautical charts for the United States over Google Maps, and provides access to these as a free service. This allows you to view nautical charts using the intuitive Google Maps interface. Added to this, you can insert waypoints and create routes, which are then downloadable to your Garmin GPS using the Garmin Communicator Plugin. marine.geogarage.com

News Continued on Page 21

► EVENTS

Aquanfest

Foster City, CA
 June 12-13, 2010
www.aquansports.com

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
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Traditional Arctic Kayak Symposium (TAKS)

Trinidad, CA
 October 15-17, 2010
www.shamankayaks.com/shaman/taks

Lumpy Waters Symposium

Pacific City, OR
 October 15-17, 2010
www.lumpywaters.com

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

Turning Tips for Better Control

by Roger Schumann

One of the big attractions to paddling kayaks is their maneuverability compared to other boats, that feeling of being in command as captain of your own ship. These small, nimble crafts make it possible to wind your way along the narrow channels of California's bird-filled estuaries and slow moving rivers, explore the mazelike tunnels of sea caves off our world-famous coastline, and weave your way among the rocks and whitewater of a scenic Sierra stream. At times, however, this extreme maneuverability may feel more like a liability, and making your kayak go where *YOU* want it to go—rather than where *IT* seems to want to go—can feel like a game of tug-of-war. Instead of fighting with your kayak, understanding a few key concepts of how it turns and what you can do to keep it in control can help put you back in the driver's seat instead of feeling like you are being taken for a ride.

Sweep Stroke

A common mistake novice paddlers tend to make when their kayaks veer off course is to do a braking back-stroke on the opposite side. This may turn the kayak back on course but it kills your forward momentum. A much more efficient steering stroke is the *forward sweep* because it both turns your kayak and maintains momentum. The basic technique is to sweep your paddle in a wide, long arc from your feet, out away from your kayak, reaching all the way back to your stern (see photos on facing page). My daughter calls this the "rainbow stroke."

Here are a few tips to make your forward sweeps more effective. First off, keep your regular forward strokes closer to the boat and in front of you, ending at the hip, which

will help keep your kayak tracking straighter in the first place. Pick something on the far shore to aim at, and as soon as your kayak starts to yaw (that's boat-speak for veering off course) do a sweep stroke on that side to bring your kayak back on line. The key is to catch it early and try not to let yourself get more than one sweep stroke off course. Your goal is to make a lot of small corrections to *stay* on course, rather than fewer big corrections to *get back* on course. (Of course, you could always drop your rudder if your kayak has one, but rudders tend to break at inopportune moments, so it is good to know how to control your kayak without one.) If you happen to get more than one sweep stroke off course, another tip is to try to keep your right-left paddling rhythm, instead of taking several sweeps on just one side; for example, to turn left, combine a wide, long sweep on the right, followed by a short forward stroke on the left. If you do the math, you'll quickly see that paddling on both sides will be twice as efficient as paddling on just one side. Your turn may happen a little slower, but you'll maintain precious momentum. If you are still off course after two or three of these *sweep right, forward stroke left* combinations it is time for other measures.

Stern Rudder and Reverse Sweep

When you are far enough off course that the forward sweep isn't working, it's time for a *stern rudder* stroke. This is similar to the braking back-stroke discussed earlier—the one you're trying to avoid—but the stern rudder stroke is light and streamlined (see photo on page 8). If you were still trying to turn to the left, reach back and plant your left blade next to your stern (that's the back) of your kayak. Instead of pushing

hard out to the side and creating a braking action, however, push gently on the back of the blade, trying to drag it alongside your stern as much as possible. You will slow down a little, but you want to go as light on the brakes as possible and allow your forward momentum to create a gentle turn. As soon as you feel your bow starting to turn left, you can back off the rudder and do a forward sweep on the right to continue your turn and regain some lost momentum.

If you need to turn all the way around, for instance to go back for a dropped hat or a capsized paddling partner, many paddlers tend to do a bunch of forward sweeps on one side, but there is a much more efficient way. Taking advantage of your forward momentum, you can start with a stern rudder (on the left again). Then as your speed dies out, sweep the rudder stroke in a wide arc from your stern all the way up to your bow in a *reverse sweep stroke*. Then alternate forward sweeps (on the right) with reverse sweeps (left) on opposite sides to create a quick "spin turn" in place.

Special Considerations: Whitewater vs. Touring Kayaks and Wind

Whitewater kayaks are designed to spin, unlike touring kayaks which are designed to track in a straight line. Most modern whitewater designs turn more effectively from the stern. In other words, instead of using the full rainbow sweep stroke, you'll probably find that you'll have more control by focusing on the last half or two-thirds of the rainbow.

Sea kayaks are designed to track straight when they are flat and to turn when put on edge. Depending on hull shape, some recreational kayaks and sit on tops may also turn



Starting a sweep stroke at your feet.



Continuing to sweep from your feet around to your stern. Note how the boat is edged to one side to help it turn faster.



Finishing the sweep stroke by pulling your paddle all the way to your stern. As with many things in kayaking, rotating your torso is more efficient than using your arms.



Stern rudder can also be used to keep your boat pointed straight when surfing.

Photo by California Kayaker

more effectively when edged. It can be confusing to remember which way to edge, however, so here is a trick. Let's continue with our example of turning to the left by sweeping on the right. With longer touring-type kayaks, getting more leverage on the sweep is key. So when sweeping on the right, reach out as far as you can to the right. This will automatically put your kayak over onto its right edge (*right* both in terms *right hand* as well as *correct*), helping it to carve a turn to the left. If you have a sea kayak with good thigh braces or a sit on top with thigh straps, you will have better control over your edging and better balance by lifting your left knee and inclining your head toward your left shoulder as a counterweight.

When paddling in wind, most kayaks tend to weathercock, that is, they seem to turn into the wind like one of those old weathervane roosters

on barn roofs. Actually it's not the bow that's turning into the wind. As you paddle forward the bow plowing through the water creates a lot of friction, which anchors it. Then the wind is able to blow the stern downwind, since it offers less resistance. One trick for paddling across a wind blowing from the right would be to sweep and edge your kayak to the right. Since you're trying to control the stern, you can focus more on the last half of the sweep as described above for paddling whitewater kayaks. You can also cheat your paddle out to the right, choking up on your shaft by sliding your grip to the left, so you have more length, and thus more leverage, on the right.

If you stop paddling in wind, your kayak will tend to get blown sideways. In a strong enough wind you can get stuck sideways to the wind "in irons" as sailors say, unable to turn. Many kayakers struggle to turn against a wind using sweep strokes alone. But, remembering that your kayak will turn into the wind when paddling forward, it is more efficient

to simply paddle forward and let the wind turn the kayak. If you want to turn downwind, paddle backward across the wind and let it blow your bow downwind. In terms of going straight, paddling downwind is the most difficult direction, so expect to use a lot of rudder strokes and sweep strokes to maintain your course. Since you are getting pushed along by the wind anyway, using rudder strokes won't slow you down that much as long as you remember to go light on the brakes. More advanced paddlers in touring kayaks can also enhance turning by edging away from the rudder stroke to carve a turn the same way they did before with the sweep stroke.

Another more advanced turning maneuver is using a rudder at the bow, but this *bow rudder* technique is complex enough to warrant its own separate article.

As much as it can seem like it at times, your kayak really doesn't have a mind of its own, and you can use various stroke combinations to make your kayak mind you. Combine a sweep with your forward stroke to go straight efficiently or to change directions. Alternate forward and back sweeps to spin around. Use a stern rudder with forward sweeps to maintain a course in the wind. Learning to work with the wind and your kayak's design and figuring out the appropriate stroke combinations for your craft and the conditions, can help put you back in command. ❖

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.

Photos by Sandy Rintoul-Schumann

A Sluggish Beginning

by Matthew Krizan

In this first edition of *Critters from Kayaks*, I wanted to ease into writing for *California Kayaker* and I am excited to have found the perfect animal to match that sentiment. Rather than write about any of the fluffy, feathery, or humongous marine critters that already get pretty good press, I want to focus on the salt-water equivalent of backyard slugs: the nudibranch! Why the lowly sea slug? With over two thousand documented species, over eighty of which live along California's coast, it is easy to paddle out and find a nudibranch on your own. In addition to living where we paddle, nudibranchs are also some of the more colorful and visually dynamic animals on earth. Beauty aside, nudibranchs are marine invertebrates with a variety of adaptations that make them unique and interesting to observe.

Chances are your salt-water paddling adventures have already brought you close to a nudibranch. They tend to live close to what they eat, and what they eat are other animals like sponges, anemones, hydroids (a relative of anemones that look like they would be at home in any Dr. Seuss book), and bryozoans (tiny creatures that form

The nudibranch Janolus fuscus feeding on an arborescent bryozoan colony on a dock in the Travis Marina at Fort Baker, Sausalito, CA

colonies that appear like a colorful crust or as a seaweed to the naked eye). These animals are collectively known as fouling organisms because they grow in massive quantities, carpeting or “fouling” the surfaces they live on. Since these organisms can be found wherever we kayak, so too can their predators.

So, unlike the vegetarian slugs in your backyard, nudibranchs are carnivores. Yet because we are still talking about slugs—animals not known for their sudden ambush techniques or dramatic capture of prey—their food must be slower than they are. Fortunately for them, their prey is sessile [fixed to one spot], so nudibranchs are free to chase down their food at their own pace. Once a nudibranch gloms on to its prey, it rips or scrapes off digestible chunks using its radula, a tongue-like part of their mouths serrated like a rasp. One important aspect of the nudibranch's radula is that its shape forces it to specialize

in one type of prey. Each species of nudibranch has evolved to eat one primary type of food, and its radula is a species-specific adaptation. Biologists can determine the exact species of a nudibranch by dissecting it and observing its radula through a microscope.

Fortunately for us here in northern California, the nudibranchs we'll see while paddling are identifiable by their outward appearances. Looking at the picture of the Lemon Dorid nudibranch *Peltodoris nobilis*, its head is on the right and the tail at left. On its head are two ear-like projections: these are called rhinophores and function as chemoreceptors, similar to what our nose and sinuses do for us. The nudibranchs in northern California waters have two rhinophores, though some species have three. Nudibranchs do not have eyes that function as ours do, instead they have eye spots which differentiate light and dark only. Difficult to see, eye spots are typically located on the animal's head near the rhinophores. The feathery-looking appendage at

the tail is the branchial plume and is used for breathing. This is what gives the nudibranch—naked gill in Latin—its name. The Lemon Dorid in the picture was 11 centimeters (4.25 inches) in length, but they can be longer.

Besides the Lemon Dorid, several other species of nudibranch found in our waters are also in the Dorididae family and have a similar body shape, but vary in size and coloration. You'll likely find Dorids in rocky tide pools or along rocky shorelines. The variation in color between Dorids has to do with the type and color of sponge that they eat, because they digest and absorb the colored pigments from the body of the sponge and incorporate them into their own flesh.

The Opalescent Nudibranch (*Hermisenda crassicornis*) has a different morphology, or body shape, from the Dorid. Growing to about five cm (2 inches) in length, the Opalescent Nudibranch is in the sub-order Aeolidina, which all have a hedgehog-like body form. In addition to the rhino-

phores, two appendages shoot out to the sides of this nudibranch's head: these are tentacles with chemoreceptors and tactile (touch) receptors. The finger-like projections protruding from the back of this nudibranch are collectively called cerata (singular cera), and are functionally similar to the Lemon Dorid's branchial plume. Not only does gas exchange happen through the cerata, they also contain part of the animal's digestive tract. The favored food of the Opalescent Nudibranch is hydroids—the aforementioned Seussian critters—and both the hydroids and this nudibranch are commonly found on the dock skirting, pilings, and sea walls in any harbor, in addition to rocky crags and tide-pools along the coast.

Notice the bright fluorescent coloring of the Opalescent Nudibranch in the picture. Given its colorful, tender, even tasty appearance, you may wonder why it has evolved such high-visibility markings that might

A lemon dorid (Peltodoris nobilis) at Fitzgerald Marine Reserve, Moss Beach, CA





For more information on Nudi-
branches:

The California Academy of Sci-
ences Opisthobranchs of SF Bay
web page:
[researcharchive.calacademy.org/
research/izg/SFBay2K/Opistho-
branchs_of_SFBay.htm](http://researcharchive.calacademy.org/research/izg/SFBay2K/Opisthobranchs_of_SFBay.htm)

The Sea Slug Forum:
www.seaslugforum.net

*The Opalescent Nudibranch
(Hermissenda crassicornis) on a
dock in the Travis Marina at Fort
Baker, Sausalito, CA*

attract the attention of larger predators. In reality nudibranchs have also evolved very functional defenses. Dorids produce chemicals that make their flesh unpalatable to potential predators. The anemone-eating *Aeolida papillosa* (not pictured) is not only colored like the anemones it eats, but with its rows of cerata, it is almost indistinguishable among the tentacles of the anemones—a very effective camouflage. Anemones and hydroids have what are called nema-

tocysts, or stinging cells, that they employ along their tentacles for prey capture and self-defense. Anemone- and hydroid-eating nudibranchs have another unique defensive ability: they are able to digest the nematocysts of their prey intact and then incorporate them into the tips of their cerata for their own defense!

In your own search for a nudibranch you might first see evidence of them in the form of small (one centimeter

in diameter or less), flat, circular deposits of what looks like white ribbon or string. These are fertilized egg deposits. Nudibranchs are hermaphrodites but do not usually fertilize their own eggs. Instead they join together to transfer or trade sperm, and then will part company and deposit their fertilized eggs elsewhere.

I hope you are now motivated to look for these critters as you go about future paddles. They live wherever we paddle, and aren't fast-enough that you'll miss getting a few good pictures before they glide off into the depths.

Good luck and good hunting! ❖

Matt Krizan is an avid kayaker, kayak instructor for California Canoe & Kayak, and marine biologist who likes to share the beauty and glory of the great outdoors. Matt lives in Pacifica, CA

Photos by Matt Krizan



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Make the Most of Your Point-and-Shoot

By Neil Schulman

Surprisingly, most point-and-shoot cameras have enough control to capture stunning but difficult light. Storm on the Columbia River.

It's 1996. Spray stings my face as I propel my kayak under a stunning waterfall pouring directly into the Columbia River amidst a spectacular bowl of cliffs. I pop my sprayskirt, open the dry bag between my legs, and unwrap my old 35mm SLR from inside a towel. I take a few hurried shots before cramming it into its dry bag.

Now it's 2001. I'm on a long trip in British Columbia, and we're visited by a pod of Orca whales. On my deck is the "splashproof" Pentax IQ zoom, which can handle occasional submersion. I pull it out from my deck bungies in time for a great shot, only to realize that I'm out of film and don't want to open the camera with wet hands.

It's 2005, and I'm paddling in the tidal races of Deception Pass, Washington. My paddling camera is a digital Canon Powershot in a waterproof housing. I'm eager to capture my friends jostling among the whirlpools and

waves. In its housing, the camera is about the size of a brick, so it's in my day hatch. Since I need both hands on my paddle, it stays there. I miss the shot.

Now it's 2009. I'm bucking up and down in swells off the Brooks Peninsula, when I realize there's a school of jellyfish right under me. I pull my palm-sized submersible camera out of the pocket of my life jacket, shove it underwater, and start shooting away.

For years, kayak photographers have been stymied by the demands they place on cameras. It's only in the past year or two that small, submersible, and halfway-decent cameras became available at a reasonable price. Those shots of undersea life or your friends in the surf no longer carry the risk of destroying expensive equipment. Better yet, these new cameras are about the size of a deck of cards and surprisingly durable. They do, however, have their limitations...but not as many as you might expect.

Like many photographers, I grew up in the age of film and darkroom. I love the speed and versatility of my digital SLR, the precision of my hand-held spot meter, and the ability to control shutter speed and aperture to blur motion or manipulate depth of field. Obviously, if you're a kayaker, these set-ups aren't always feasible. Here's how you can use these little waterproof wonders to unlock some serious photographic potential.

Zone Defense

The single greatest tool in photography is controlling exposure. Imagine the silhouette of a kayaker on a golden dawn, or a beam of light bursting through storm clouds—situations that fool auto-exposure meters. Since most point-and-shoots use auto-exposure, this is a difficult situation to expose properly, right?

Wrong. In a recent class, I showed my students how their inexpensive point-and-shoots have a spot meter that



Waterproof cameras give you plenty of opportunities to photograph life under the sea. Jellyfish off the Brooks Peninsula, Vancouver Island.



To make the most of the camera's ruggedness, swim in the surf and change your default camera settings to capture action. Colm Lenaghan in the surf at the Lumpy Waters Symposium.

allows you to meter off a tiny section at the center of the frame, just like spot meters of old. And they all have exposure compensation [sometimes listed as "EV Compensation"], which allows you to make the photo as much as 2-3 stops lighter or darker. Now you can control exposure just like a big DSLR. You can use the Zone System, one of the classic imaging techniques developed by Ansel Adams, to get precisely calculated exposures. Here's a simple overview of the digital Zone System: spot-meter off the most important highlight. Use Exposure Compensation to make it one stop or so lighter, depending on your desires, than the metered value. Make sure the mid-tones aren't too dark. Then shoot.

[More information about the Zone system can be found at www.outdoorphotographer.com/how-to/shooting/the-digital-zone-system.html]

Delay of Game

One of the most persistent complaints about small cameras is the shutter lag. Sometimes it's as much as a second between hitting the button and the actual image capture, by which time the subject has moved or left the frame entirely. While my point-and-shoot will never be as fast as my DSLR, I've made it operate significantly faster. The secret lies in changing camera settings.

First turn off the automatic review function and the flash. This will give the camera less to think about between shots, and will vastly extend battery life. Then set your camera on "burst" or "continuous" mode. Different manufacturers will call it different things, but basically it shoots continuously while the button is held down. Lastly, put the camera in "Action" or "Sports" mode. This sets it on a fast shutter speed. Now it should click away faster. With my Canon Powershot D10, I get about 1-2 shots a second. Slower than 8 frames/

second to be sure, but fast enough to catch some kayak surfing action.

You're Smarter than the Machine

The hallmark tools of creative photography are controlling shutter speed and F-stop. They control how the camera perceives motion and visual depth, respectively. And they're absent from the submersible, consumer-oriented point-and-shoots, in favor of various automatic settings. Purists who grew up shooting in manual mode often think of automatic settings as blasphemy. However, once you know what they mean, you can outsmart the camera and exert some creative control.

My D10 has auto modes like "sports", "landscape", "portrait", and so on. These modes are basically pre-set parameters. Sports mode is generally a fast shutter speed (as fast as the ISO you've selected will allow) and a wide aperture that creates a shallow depth of field. Landscape is the reverse: a small f-stop to hold foreground and background in focus, with a slow shutter speed. Portrait is often the same as Sports mode, but with a less contrasty and saturated color balance.

Sometime both speed and depth of field are essential. When you need both, raise the ISO. Canoeists on the Umpqua River, Southern Oregon.



Five Legs Are Better Than Two

Another way to get the most out of your point-and-shoot is to pretend it's not a point-and-shoot. Digital sensors are good enough to be capable of great images regardless of the camera. When I encounter a scene that moves me, I take it slow. I take in the scene, visualize the final image, set my tiny camera on a tripod and pretend it's an old-school clunky medium format camera. This does more than allow slower shutter speed and greater depth of field. It helps me slow down and think. I'm far more likely to get a clean shot, without distracting elements in the composition that I didn't see. And of course, with a tiny camera, you can get away with a very small and light tripod.

Filters

The fact that your point-and-shoot doesn't have a thread for screwing on filters doesn't mean you can't use filters. In fact, I often use a polarizing filter with mine—just hold it in front of the lens. Keep in mind that if you're in wide-angle mode, the camera may try and focus on the filter if it's not close enough to the lens. Unfortunately, you can't use split neutral-density filters that have to be positioned directly on the lens.

You Can Take It With You

But by far the greatest benefit of these small cameras is their size. They don't just fit in a PFD pocket, they fit in any pocket. Mine is almost always with me, even on my trips to work or walks to the supermarket. You never know what you might see, and now I have no excuse for not wanting to lug a camera around.

The RAW Truth

Of course, point-and-shoots do have limitations. A big one is that the submersible cameras are aimed at the consumer market, and only capture JPEG files. Your shots will be lower resolution, and you'll miss out on some nifty RAW file processing options as a result.

Lens Loss

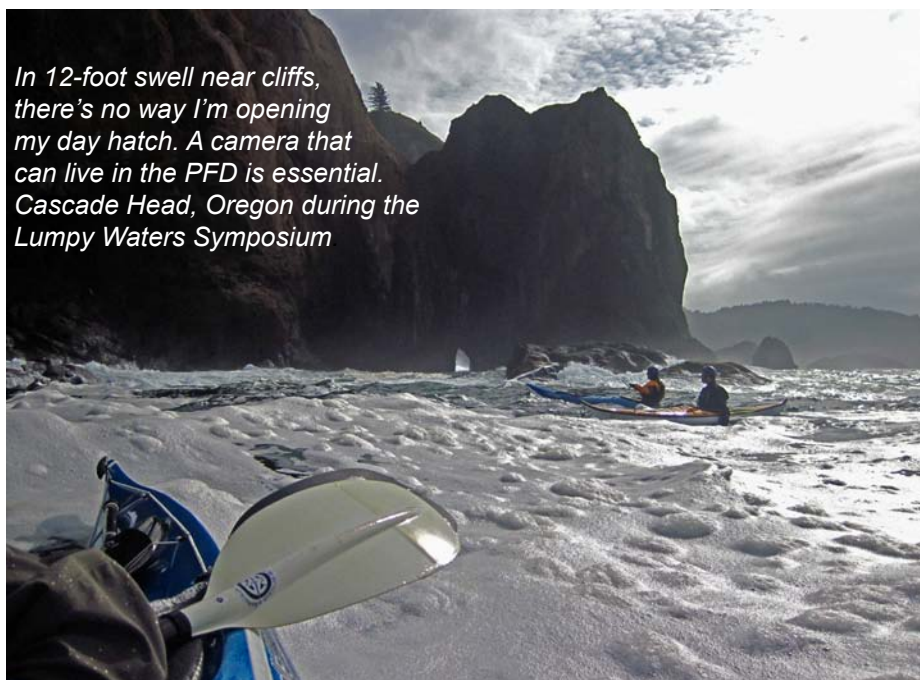
The other area where DSLRs shine is the versatility of lenses available. Submersible point-and-shoots generally have focal lengths of around 35-150mm (roughly equivalent to a 35mm film camera). I miss the wide-angle end more than the telephoto for kayaking, since long focal lengths also magnify the instability of bouncing around in the waves.

But that's a trade-off I'm willing to make for something I can use underwater, fits in my pocket, and can take a beating. To make the most of your waterproof camera, get it wet. I've swum around in the surf with mine, shooting from the top of the wave at my friends surfing below me. I've captured spawning salmon, swarms of jellyfish, and split-images of both sky and sea.

And remember that photography is about light and vision. If you have great light and a well-crafted image, it won't matter what kind of camera you're using. Nobody asked Picasso what kind of paintbrush he used, did they? ♦

Neil Schulman is a photographer, writer, and occasional instructor living in Portland, Oregon. Someday he hopes to take his waterproof camera into the shark tank at the Monterey Bay Aquarium.

Photos by Neil Schulman



In 12-foot swell near cliffs, there's no way I'm opening my day hatch. A camera that can live in the PFD is essential. Cascade Head, Oregon during the Lumpy Waters Symposium

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Coverage at www.surfski.info



Center



Competitor Wayne Waddington during one of the International class heats at the 2010 Santa Cruz Surf Kayak Festival. This particular section is a bit tricky to take off on. The wave jacks up suddenly on the rocky reef below and throws off your balance. Especially tricky in a surf kayak.

Photo by Vincent Shay Media

Camera: Cannon EOS 50D

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

Hatch

German tourist making a lap of Lake Tahoe in an inflatable kayak.
Notice that he has his suitcase strapped on the back deck.

Photo by California Kayaker

Camera: Pentax Optio W20



Greenland or Bust

An interview with Helen Wilson



*Helen paddling in Greenland
Photo by Dubsida*

I first saw Helen Wilson at the 2009 Golden Gate Sea Kayak Symposium. At the hostel they had set up a rope between two pillars, and people were trying “Greenland Rope” tricks. Though she was probably one of the better people at it, Helen was sitting in the corner watching – doesn’t seem to be her style to show off.

But show off she can - she has competed in the 2008 Greenland National Kayaking Championship, in which she received three first place medals. I sat down with her over lunch in Arcata to get her story.

CKM: How did you get into kayaking?

HW: I moved to Arcata. I love water. I did synchronized swimming and diving and SCUBA diving. There is just so much water here, and I just wanted to be in the middle of it.

I started looking into boats. My very first kayak was a 2-person Perception Acadia 2 so I could take my son out in the lagoon.

But, I wanted to go out into the ocean, and with the big 9-foot cockpit I couldn’t do that. I had joined a local kayaking club, so looked at what the majority of the members were paddling and bought the same thing. In the store I had two choices, the big or small one. The larger had way more room to move around and I could put

a lot of stuff in it. They were the same price, so why would anyone want the smaller one? I bought a cheap aluminum paddle and a friend gave me a massive deck bag, which I placed as a permanent fixture on the front deck. I was ready to explore the ocean.

CKM: How did you go from that point to winning Greenland kayaking competitions?

HW: Over the next few months I learned a lot about kayaking. I took every class that I could, read every book, watched every instructional DVD. The skill that I had the hardest time with was the forward stroke. A club member told me that I “needed” a better paddle, so I splurged and upgraded to a fancy carbon fiber, bent shaft something-or-other. Still, my stroke just didn’t feel right. One

afternoon a friend put a Greenland paddle in my hand. The awkwardness was immediately gone, and although I hadn't become a better paddler, I liked the simplicity, the organic feel and the lack of "rules" that this piece of wood provided. So my friend, Michael Morris, made me one.

Of all the skills that I'd been working on, I enjoyed rolling the most. I loved the feeling of moving through the water and enjoyed playing with my body and hand position, trying to make my moves as graceful as possible. I learned of the "Greenland rolling list" and immediately began working through it at least four times a week, thrilled with each new roll that I developed. At this point I was beginning to wish that I'd picked the smaller of the two kayaks, because every time I would capsize, half of my effort was to stay in the kayak and the other half to actually perform the roll.

Michael suggested that I attend a kayaking event in Washington called South Sound Traditional Inuit Kayak Symposium (SSTIKS), and with enthusiasm I went. I was immediately intrigued by the homemade, traditional kayaks on the beach and the friendly people. My bright yellow, plastic kayak with an even brighter yellow deck bag looked very out of place amongst the beautiful hand-crafted boats. What intrigued me the most were the discussions about the long history that is associated with the sport... an aspect that I hadn't previously thought about.

That evening I sat alone amongst the oyster shells and skin-on-frame kayaks. It was at that moment that I realized that I wanted to learn everything that I could about the tradition of kayaking. I decided to go to Greenland... but first I needed a real qajaq (this is the traditional spelling for kayak). The overwhelming feeling stayed with me, and a few weeks later I won some money in a raffle drawing at an event and immediately emailed Bob Kelim, a boat builder that I'd met at SSTIKS.

He asked a lot of questions, and needed a lot of measurements. I wanted a low volume qajaq that would roll easily, but would also be a good ocean boat. Bob worked on that qajaq for several months, and meanwhile I continued to work my way through the rolling list, began (with a TON of help from friends) raising money to go to the Greenland National Kayaking Championship and studied all of the information I could find about the history, culture and language of Greenland. I was eager to compete in all of the competitions, which include several races, individual and team rolling, rope gymnastics and harpoon throwing for both distance and accuracy.

I took a road trip to Washington to get my qajaq. It was about half finished, so I spent several days working with Bob and learning the fine art of qajaq building. The qajaq fit me like a glove, which meant that every time I twitched, it would twitch.

Until that point, I had only been in the ocean in my large plastic kayak. I'd been hit by waves, rode over swell and played in rocks. The kayak had floated on the surface and served me well. But the day that I first sat in the qajaq that was built for me, out

of wood and nylon, with my every measurement and need in mind, I truly felt like I was a part of the ocean. Every movement that I made influenced the qajaq, and over time it taught me to be a better paddler. I was no longer floating on the surface, I was now interacting with the water.

CKM: How did you do in Greenland?

HW: In July 2008 I competed in the Greenland National Kayaking Championship. I had studied everything that I could about the competition but didn't really know what to expect. The championship was developed in 1984 as a way for newer generations to remember their country's history. It is more of a celebration than a serious competition. Each of the towns in west Greenland forms a team, and often one team judges another. Getting from one town to another can only be done by ferry or helicopter, which is very expensive. This makes the championship somewhat of a reunion, as many of the competitors have not seen each other since the previous year. The competition

Maligiaq Padilla, four time Greenland National Champion, during the competition in Greenland.

Photo by Helen Wilson





*Helen demonstrating a roll at
Bay Area Paddlefest
Photo by California Kayaker*

moves from one town to the next, each town taking its turn to host the event. The week-long championship is filled with laughter, games, parties, and of course kayaking.

While I was there I had the opportunity to learn a lot about the design of the qajaq that I had fallen for at SSTIKS. A traditional west Greenland qajaq is a wonderful hunting tool. It moves through the water quickly and quietly. Its low volume and small amount of freeboard makes it virtually unaffected by wind, and its wood and skin design makes it light but strong.

My view on kayaking since the day that I bought my oversized, plastic kayak has changed dramatically. I now think of kayaks as an extension of my body. I want my kayak to fit my every curve. I want my every movement to make the kayak move.

CKM: Can you describe the “Greenland rolling list”?

HW: The rolling list consists of 35 different rolls, each one is done on each side of the kayak. The beginning ones are all with a paddle, then you move on to the norsaq ones. A norsaq is a throwing stick, which is what attaches to a harpoon. If you threw a harpoon and fell over, could you roll up with the norsaq?

In competition, you have 30 minutes to go through the list. You must go through in order, but you can skip rolls. Each roll has a point value, and the values increase as you go through the list.

The hardest roll is the straightjacket roll, and is worth 10 or 11 points, and as far as I know, no one has ever gotten points for it in competition in Greenland. Your arms are crossed across your chest with your hands underneath your arm and you go around like that. If your elbows lift at any point or your hands come out at any point, you don't get points for that one. What it shows is that rolls have to do with body mechanics, not with the paddles the paddler is holding. If you can do it, your technique is very clean.

CKM: Can you do the straight-jacket roll?

HW: Yes, but not on both sides. My left side is not very consistent.

CKM: Why were the Greenland Rolls developed?

HW: In Greenland, people don't have flotation or rescue devices. If you capsize, you are expected to either wait for someone to come save you or to roll yourself up. These rolls were used so that whatever position

you ended up underwater, you can get yourself up.

Qajaqs and harpoons aren't needed for hunting now, as they have better equipment. The competition is done for tradition. I think the list used is expanded over what was actually used historically, because some of them have you starting from positions that I can't imagine someone would actually get in.

CKM: What are the Greenland ropes?

HW: Greenland Ropes are 2 ropes that hang horizontally at about waist height. It is kind of like the rolling list – there is a rope's list as well. In Greenland it is too cold to paddle in the winter, so they set up the ropes system as a way to practice their rolls in the winter.

I actually have a set up in my living room and I do them quite often, but I am not very good at them.

CKM: Besides practice, how can one get better at rolling?

HW: Stretching and Yoga - rolling has way more to do with flexibility than it does strength, and if you can get the flexibility then your roll can be easier. I normally do yoga 4 times a week. I notice the difference if I don't do yoga, as my rolls are stiffer.

CKM: What Greenland Kayaking events are there locally?

HW: In California, there is Traditional Arctic Kayak Symposium (TAKS). It rotates locations. Every other year it is in San Simeon, and alternating years it is at other locations. This year it is in Trinidad (Oct 15-17), and I am actually an organizer for the event.

Somewhat nearby is the South Sound Traditional Inuit Kayak Symposium (SSTIK) in Washington State in June.

CKM: Tell me about your video?

HW: I have a DVD on rolling called *Simplifying the Roll with Helen Wilson* that came out in mid-May. It has 3 chapters. The first chapter is on how to do the roll. It is general rolling for anyone—for white water kayakers, sea kayakers, anyone who wants to learn to roll.

Second chapter is troubleshooting a roll. Covers problems like diving paddles. There is a whole bunch of things that can go wrong with the roll.

Third chapter is on taking these new techniques into more advanced rolls. Once you have a clean roll, how to start playing with the rolls on the Greenland list.

Bonus section on how to transition to a forward finish roll. Layback rolls are all high brace rolls, where forward finish rolls are low brace rolls. So it is the complete opposite.

The thing about rolling, which I am trying to get across to people, is that it doesn't have to be a concern. If you play with it and practice rolls as a fun thing, and then if you do get knocked over on the water without expecting, you've been there before and can just roll back up. ❖

For more information

Helen Wilson's web site and information on the *Simplifying the Roll* DVD
www.greenlandorbust.org

Traditional Arctic Kayak Symposium (TAKS)
www.shamankayaks.com/shaman/taks
Oct 15-17, 2010, Trinidad, CA

South Sound Traditional Inuit Kayak Symposium (SSTIK)
www.qajaqpnw.org
June 18-20, 2010, WA

News

Continued from page 5

Santa Cruz Surf Kayak Festival Results

Top 3 for each category are listed here. Full results can be found at www.asudoit.com/kayak_fest/index.html

High Performance Men's

1. Galen Licht
2. Christopher Hobson
3. Stephen Farthing

High Performance Women's

1. Rachel Krugman
2. Devon Barker
3. Roberta Borsari

Masters Open

1. Ken King
2. Dave Johnston
3. Dan Crandall

International, Men's

1. Darren Bason
2. Dessie McGlinchey
3. Sean Morley

International, Women's

1. Devon Barker
2. Morlee Griswold
3. Jameson Riser

Wave Ski Open

1. Fletcher Burton
2. Mathieu Babarit
3. David Speller

Plastic Pro Challenge

1. Jason Craig
2. Luke Borserio
3. Ruth Gordon

Elite Stand up Paddle Surfing

1. Chuck Patterson
2. Zane Schweitzer
3. Michael Roberts

High Performance Intermediate Open

1. Kye Borserio
2. Doug Hudson
3. Mike Bancroft

Sit-on-Top Intermediate Open

1. Tim Smith
2. Chris Bensch
3. Rob Casey

Stand up Paddle Surfing

1. Robin Donaldson
2. Lars Hansen
3. Tim Larkin

Reno River Festival Results

Top 3 results for each category are listed here. Full results at www.renoriverfestival.com

Female Kayak Downriver

1. Amy Delosa 22:34.00

Male Kayak Downriver

1. Sean Morley 18:03.00
2. Rich Roehner 18:38.00
3. Edward Gordon 19:42.00

Female Stand Up Paddle Downriver

1. Ruth Gordon 26:10.00
2. Donyelle Dewey 27:25.00
3. Allison Bruner 31:19.00

Male Stand Up Paddle Downriver

1. Dan Gavere 20:24.00
2. Mike Bennet 21:19.00
3. Jay Kincaid 21:23.00

Pro Invitational and Open Free-style results were not posted when *California Kayaker Magazine* went to press.

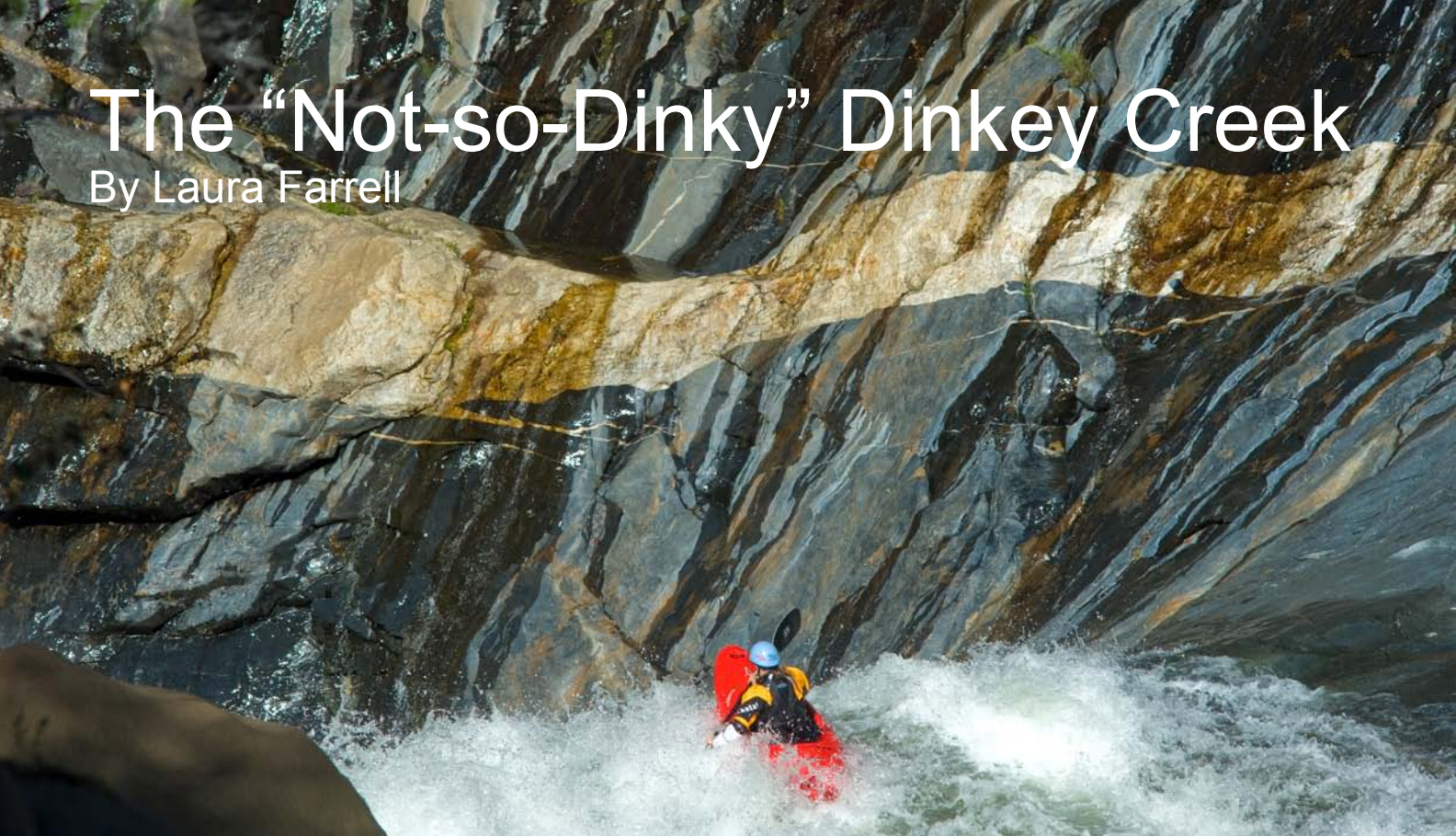


Follow *California Kayaker Magazine* on Facebook for progress updates, announcements of when each issue will be published, up-to-date listings on events, etc.

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

The “Not-so-Dinky” Dinkey Creek

By Laura Farrell



Imagine driving across the country from North Carolina and hours into the Californian wilderness to put in one of the state’s best steep creeks only to find that the storm the week before dumped too much snow on the road to make it drivable. This is exactly the predicament that myself and a few friends experienced a few weeks ago when trying to do a spring run on Dinkey Creek, a California high Sierra classic located just North of Sequoia National Park. Did we know this was a possibility? Sure. There is a reason that this run has only been attempted in the spring a handful of times. However, the enchantment and allure surrounding the creek’s clean waterfalls and unmatched scenery clouded our judgment and drove us to that point.

Not ready to give up easily, we literally pushed our shuttle vehicle up a few hills and out of a few ditches hoping that the end of the snow was just around the corner. Eventually we all had to come to the realization that the van was simply not going to make it to the put-in. After having already put so much time and effort into the mission, it was hard for us to turn back now. So what did we do? We started hiking. We started hiking knowing that we were somewhere between five and fifteen miles away from the put-in and that we were determined to get there.

The author about to drop over a final 40’ slide on “Willie Kerns”, named after a person who broke their ankle on it years ago.

Photo by Darin McQuoid

After saying goodbye to our shuttle vehicle (whose driver had to return to Reno due to a time commitment), we were truly committed to making it to the river considering we were in the middle of nowhere, hours away from our other vehicle, which was happily waiting for us at the take-out. Walking through the winter wonderland of the California wilderness was magical. Dragging a 45-pound kayak loaded down with another 30 pounds of overnight



Trudging through the snow to the put-in
Photo by Laura Farrell

gear through the snow... not so magical. But the enchanting world of steep rapids flowing over smooth granite rock was too enticing so we pushed on.

Some twelve miles and seven hours later, we finally made it to the put-in of the river. Exhausted and without much daylight left, we decided to set up camp by the river and rest up for the big day we had ahead of us. This stretch of Dinkey Creek is generally paddled as an overnight trip, but because of our late start, we would have to paddle the entire river in one day. While only six miles long, it drops over 1,700 vertical feet, involves at least two mandatory (and not especially easy) portages and more Class V rapids than you could count.

We woke up early the next morning anxious to finally paddle the rapids we had worked so hard to get to. The put-in slide is not your standard warm up rapid and requires your immediate focus and attention from the get go. The saying goes that if you want to portage this rapid, you might as well start hiking your boat back to the put-in. For us, having no car at the put-in, this was not an option.

Throughout the first few miles of the river we encountered some of the biggest drops, including the Willie Kern rapid, a must run 40-foot high angle slide. After a quick scout of the entrance (which involves a 15-footer into a low angle slide before dropping off the main drop) everyone fired into it with great lines. Following a few more 20-foot waterfalls, we arrived at a both difficult and dangerous portage which either involves a 40-foot jump into the water or the use of ropes to descend closer before launching in. While getting past this point did mean we had some of the biggest stuff behind us, we were still miles from the take-out and knew we had to keep moving downstream at a good pace so as to not risk spending another night out there.

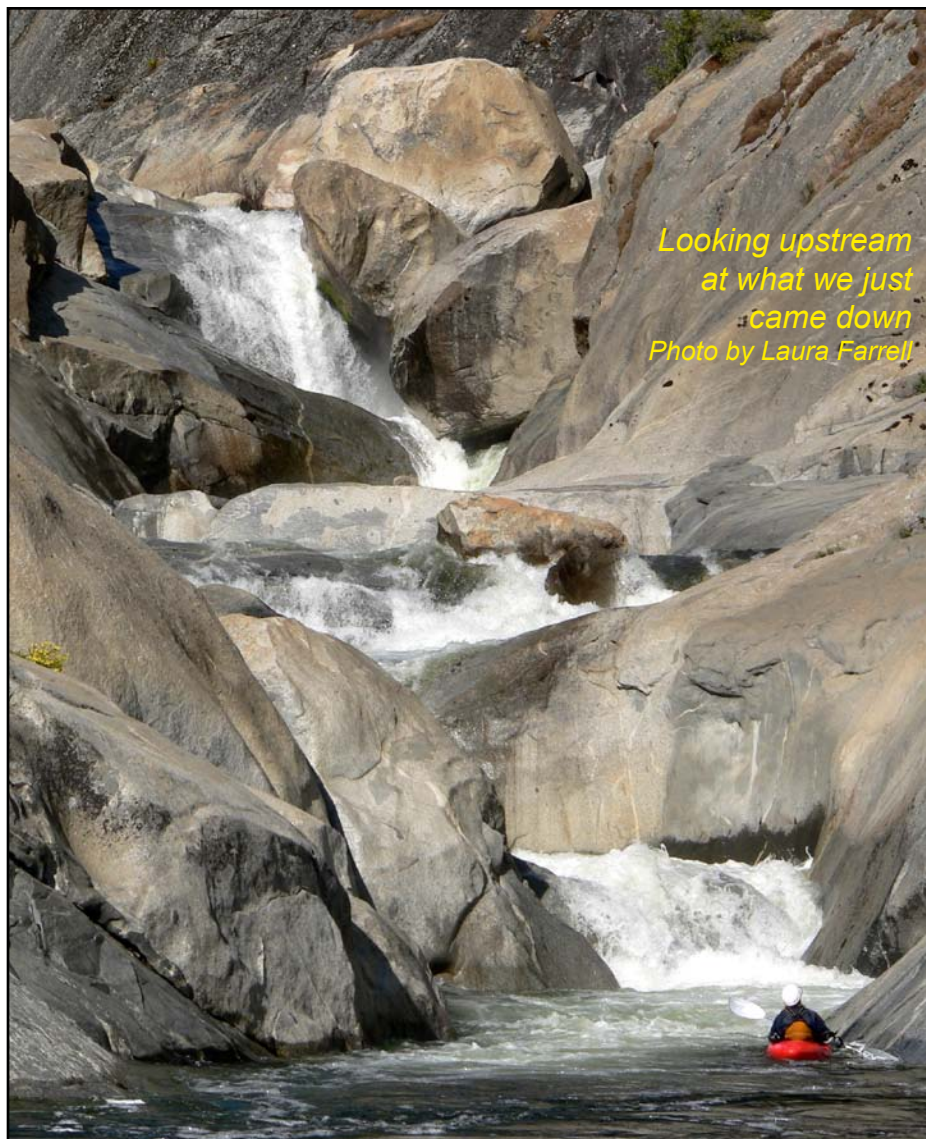
From there the river continues to meander through a granite wonderland of rapids such as Spike, the Good Morning Slide (named because it is just below the standard camping spot) and the Nikki Kelly Slide. The group dynamics were strong and each member of the team played a pivotal role in making the day safe and smooth. We encouraged each other to both test our limits while also remembering the importance of good judgment in the face of large Class V rapids in the middle of the wilderness.

The pace doesn't let up until just a mile or so before the take-out when the river mellows out to Class III-IV boogie and you finally realize you just did it, you just ran the Dinkey Creek.

During the summer, this might not have been such an epic adventure, but in the spring, when the roads are locked in by snow and the rivers are on the rise, running Dinkey Creek can turn into quite the mission. ❖

Laura Farrell is an experienced Class V paddler, whitewater kayak instructor and adventure travel guide from North Carolina. Currently living in California, she is spending the summer as an instructor for California Canoe and Kayak. Her sponsorships include Dagger Kayaks, Kokatat Watersports Wear, and Seals Sprayskirts. To see and read more about her paddling adventures, check out www.theliquidlifestyle.blogspot.com

More information on Dinkey Creek can be found at www.americanwhitewater.org/content/River_detail_id_179



*Looking upstream
at what we just
came down
Photo by Laura Farrell*



American River Bridge Tour

By Glenn Brank

The American River runs through the heart of California's capital, but most drivers catch only a glint of water as they speed across one of the American's bridges. Kayakers enjoy a much better view, and paddlers never find themselves caught in a traffic jam.

A short, easy kayak trip on the American near downtown Sacramento is perfect for that sunny spring day when you have a few hours to spare. Our weekend paddle began near Howe Avenue and ended 3 hour and 8.5 miles downstream at Discovery Park, where the American converges with the Sacramento River. As a bonus, we enjoyed an "underview" of 11 bridges while paddling one of the finest urban parkways in California and the West.

The current on this wider stretch of river tends to be more leisurely than upstream, closer to suburban Sunrise Boulevard and Nimbus Dam. That section of the river becomes a social circus on spring and summer weekends, when hundreds of people rent rafts for some high-decibel floating parties. In contrast, our trip featured quiet contemplation, nature-watching, and an occasional fly fisherman. Aside from the muted rush of traffic on the bridges above, the loudest noises we heard came from honking Canada geese.

Idyllic as it seems, this paddle demands reasonable caution. Snags, shallows and a few good-sized riffles can

Paddling under the Guy West Bridge, a one-tenth scale model of the Golden Gate Bridge
Photo by Glenn Brank

take an unwary kayaker by surprise. Water temperatures are cold almost year-round. So wear a personal flotation device, as always, and go with a group—preferably including someone who has paddled this stretch before. Companions are needed anyway for the vehicle shuttle.

After passing under the Howe Avenue bridge and past a futuristic-looking water treatment plant, we floated under the Guy West Bridge at California State University, Sacramento. This pedestrian bridge and engineering gem—a one-tenth scale model of the famed Golden Gate—was built in 1966 and named for Dr. Guy West, the first campus president. It's the smallest span on this trip but the most elegant by far.

Looking up from the water at Guy West and the nine remaining spans, it's amazing to realize that many were built when Gold Rush memories were still fresh. Before these bridges, the American River was more of an obstacle than an urban playground. People paddled this river out of necessity, not for recreation.

For example, take the H Street Bridge (also called the J Street Bridge and the American River Bridge at H Street). It wasn't built until 1932, though other bridges preceded it. According to an article in *The Sacramento Bee*, this

was roughly the spot where Gold Rush-era folks forded a shallow spot in the river.

Today it's a four-lane span to upscale suburbs. Old concrete abutments under the bridge look ominous—like the lairs of river trolls. But any mythical monsters must have been snoozing on the Saturday morning when we quietly glided by.

Further downstream, past the Capital City (I-80 Business) freeway bridge, are three railway crossings—the old Southern Pacific and Western Pacific lines, plus a pedestrian and bike bridge that once carried the Sacramento Northern. It was an electric railroad that once ran all the way to Chico, say transit historians, who note these rail lines created the first permanent crossings of the American in the early 20th century. That's a fact probably lost on graffiti artists who have decorated the bridge foundations more recently.

Nearby, tucked into the shadows of the busy 16th and 12th street bridges, is a little riverfront neighborhood complete with docks, decks, solar panels and a houseboat or two. Most of the residences are mobile homes, though by the look of things, they're not about to move anywhere. Only two minutes from downtown Sac-

Directions:

Since this is a one-way, downstream paddle, arrange a vehicle shuttle from the Howe Avenue Boat Ramp to Discovery Park, both located on the American River Parkway. To Howe: take U.S. Highway 50 to Howe Avenue, turn north and then right onto La Riviera Drive. Follow La Riviera for less than a mile. Turn left at the clearly marked park entrance. At the east (upstream) end of the Howe parking lot is a concrete ramp and small beach that are ideal for launching kayaks.

The drive from Howe to Discovery takes about 20 minutes. Go west on Highway 50 to Interstate 5 North, past downtown Sacramento, and exit on Richards Boulevard. Turn left toward the river and then right on Jibboom Street to the park entrance. Immediately past the park entry kiosk, turn down the hill to the south shore of the American. Skip the launch ramp, and drive a bit further to the parking spaces that face the riverfront. This area offers shade, a good view, and a sandy beach that's an ideal kayaker take-out point.

Sacramento County Parks charges a day use fee per vehicle of \$5 per vehicle (\$8 on holiday weekends) and an additional \$3.00 per boat. Pay at either park, then keep the receipt on your dash; it is good for both parks. More info can be found at www.msa2.sacounty.net/parks/Pages/ParksA-ZListing.aspx.

Cautions:

While this portion of the lower American is free from significant rapids, higher river flows may be expected this spring and summer due to runoff from the Sierra's deep snow pack. Kayakers may find the latest California river reports on flow and water temperature at www.dreamflows.com/graphs/day.076.php. Flows in the range of 3,500 cfs indicates higher, faster conditions that merit additional caution.

ramento, it's the perfect waterfront hideaway. Someone should open a dockside coffee bar here.

At this point, the river begins to widen and slow like a mini western replica of the Mississippi. Ducks and

geese patrol the riverbanks and fly overhead in formation. A few turtles sun themselves on snags near the bank. Even though our day began with a chill, most of our paddlers had already shed their jackets and week-day cares.

All that was left before us was the massive Interstate 5 overpass – its huge concrete trusses reinforced by the mud nests of swallows – and the 1930s Jibboom Street Bridge that crosses the river at Discovery Park. It marked the perfect ending to this bridge paddle tour as we surveyed the old and the new, side-by-side. ❖

Glenn Brank of Sacramento is a veteran journalist whose blog, www.norcalyak.com, features Northern California kayaking trips and related topics.

View of four bridges on the American River, starting with the Union Pacific rail bridge.

Photo by Lisa Ouellette



The Hunt for Lingzilla

by John “Hawk” Martin

The clock reads 4:20 am as I lay wide awake, fully dressed in giddy anticipation of the day’s hunt on California’s fabled “Lost Coast”. It’s still o’ dark thirty as I creep into the driveway of local kayak fishing legend and Guru Eric “Abking” Stockwell. We hydrate profusely with cupfuls of freshly roasted Humboldt Java as we lash extra tie downs to the kayaks to weather the drive across the insanely winding country road nicknamed the “Wildcat”.

We cruise through the Victorian era Town of Ferndale and turn off at the forested road to Petrolia, named for its once thriving but now defunct oil industry. At first the drive appears pastoral and benign, but soon gives way to stark terror as the road winds wildly up and down the mogul-like terrain. Logging trucks pass within inches and cut across lanes to save time and turning. Sheep and fowl wander right into the road oblivious to traffic. Eric, who has made this drive literally hundreds of times, barrels at breakneck speed while blasting AC/DC from the stereo.

As the road exits the forest, the ocean comes into full view. We stop at a pull out above a hill known to cyclists as “the wall”. It’s a near straight drop. Looking down you can’t help but wonder what these road engineers were thinking.

The view is as informative as it is breathtaking. You can see the entirety of the fishing grounds and gauge the wind effect on the sea. We know exactly where the fish are and where we want to be but getting out through surf and rocks at low tide in loaded fishing kayaks is going to be a challenge. The shoreline is composed of millions of grapefruit-sized rocks pounded on constantly by dumping surf. We seek out a launch behind a bulbous pair of sea



stacks we call “mother’s milk”, named for their resemblance to the upper anatomical features of the fairer sex. They offer a protected window to launch from for those with good timing and solid bracing skills. It’s about a mile and a half out to a special reef that shall remain undisclosed. It’s not a straight shot however because the way is guarded by menacing rocks that cause us to zigzag around them to avoid getting maytagged by waves breaking everywhere. As the sun rises the morning mist is turning into a thin fog. It hangs on the coastal redwoods like sticky tallow and creeps down like a serpent through the distant Mattole River valley. I look back to shoot a compass bearing on my parked car which is now barely visible. Through the haze I keep my eye on Eric’s bright red jacket rising and falling with each passing swell.

Even paddling our plastic battleships at 4 knots, it takes almost an hour to get to our spot with a quick stop to drop some baited crab traps. The appearance of vast kelp fields clues us in that we’re right on top of the offshore reef. Usually we find our secret spot by lining up a range with particular sea stacks and certain coastal features, but today we rely on technology and follow the GPS gizmo.

The Lost Coast is the healthiest and most abundant fishery in the state. Anywhere we drop our hooks is probably going to be productive. But we are going through all this trouble to catch Lingcod. And not your garden variety Lingcod, but a species so huge it can only be called “Lingzilla”. I won’t kid you, this is a beastly looking fish with big ol’ teeth and shoulders like a Green Bay Packer. They don’t like being messed with and have a particularly bad attitude when it comes to the indignity of being caught by a kayaker.

At our spot we immediately tie up to some kelp to keep from drifting. Eric’s rod is pre-tied with a fluorescent yel-



low double fluked swim bait, tipped with squid bits. Mine has a beefy root beer scampi bait attached to a 6oz jig head. I tie an additional shrimp fly to my line with a dropper loop. Our method is to jig the rod, bouncing the bait off the bottom and doing our best not to get hung on rocks.

Right off the bat Eric starts nailing 'em. He's pulling up bright orange vermilions, black rockfish, and the prehistoric looking Cabezones. I put my camera down just in time for the start of an insane feeding frenzy. Schools of blacks and blue rockfish have amassed beneath our kayaks. These fish are going nuts to become tacos and ceviche. They slam the bottoms of our kayaks and leap clear out of the water to snatch our hooks. I've never seen anything like it in 30 some odd years of fishing all over the world. Eric lands the first ling, though not a monster, it came up as a hitchhiker that chomped onto a rockfish Eric had on the line.

It's half past noon and we've been fishing for hours. Between us we probably caught over a hundred fish and carefully released 95% of them.

We usually keep a few fish for dinner and for cooking up on the beach with some brews before heading home. It has been an epic fishing day and our arms are feeling all that reeling. The wind is starting to pick up and we still have a long paddle back.

Despite the phenomenal fishing and a nice keeper ling for the both of us, we still haven't seen anything worthy of the title "Lingzilla". Eric takes off the tattered shrimp fly to avoid a pre-emptive rockfish strike, and tries one last time. Within one or two jigs his rod goes bendo and he looks at me with these wide eyes. He pulls up on the rod but it doesn't budge an inch. At first I'm thinking he's got to be hung up on a rock, but then that thing nearly pulls him off his boat.

He hasn't used his net all day so now when I see him look over to it, I know this is the fish we've been waiting for. In a single moment the silence is interrupted by an explosion of water at the side of Eric's kayak. Rather than horsing it in or frantically going for the net, Eric holds that rod and takes the thrashing of a lifetime. This is brute versus brute but in the end the

land-walker wins. There she was in the net; this Lingzilla Eric had always talked about on previous trips.

Some may disagree, but for us this is not the type of fish you take home. This is a fish that will benefit the generations down the line if left to breed. So Eric grabs this ling matriarch by her enormous gill plates and slides her on board the deck of his kayak for a measurement. I'm snapping away like the fish porn paparazzi and this thing's jaws are inches from Eric's nads. He takes a moment of communion with the fish, which lay amazingly calm on his deck. One or two more shots and the back into the drink she goes, wasting no time in retreating back to her den.

It's a good bet that ling and many more Lingzilla like her are still down in those waters, breeding the future stock. It's amazing to know such a place exists and is kayak accessible.

Note - It takes more than just great fishing knowledge to be a competent kayak fisherman in these northern waters. The ocean can be brutal and unforgiving. We always venture out in teams and loaded to the hilt with experience and redundant safety measures. ❖

John "Hawk" Martin is ACA and BCU certified and is owner of Humbolt Kayak Adventures (www.humboats.com), a company based in Eureka that specializes in kayaking lessons and tours (including kayak fishing tours). Hawk, a nickname he picked up when serving as an Army Ranger, has over 15 years of experience in paddle sports and has accomplished numerous adventure kayaking and solo expeditions worldwide.

Photo by John "Hawk" Martin showing Eric Stockwell fighting and landing Lingzilla.



Pedal Power

Review of the Hobie Mirage and Native Watercraft Propel Pedal Drives

One of my friends used to call me “massive thigh guy”. Not sure if this was good or bad, but there may be some truth to it. For all of my adult life, I have been riding bikes. Even raced for a while. Doing so has built up my thighs to be rather large—enough so that my legs won’t fit in low volume sea kayaks (of course, the size of my stomach may have something to do with this also).

Having strong legs, I have wondered for a while about these pedal operated kayaks. Would they be good for someone like me? So I figured I’d check them out.

When I think of pedal powered kayaks, I mostly think of fishing. These propulsion methods allow one to move the kayak while still keeping their hands free to land that fish. And reading the manufacturers’ literature, the fishing crowd is definitely one of their target markets. But they also appeal to people who have weak upper bodies or

people who are doing other activities that require hands (like bird watching). They could also be a way for fitness fans to work out a different part of their bodies while enjoying being on the water.

How Tested:

I wanted to get a boat from each manufacturer very similar in length, hull shape, etc., so I could do a head-to-head comparison, but their product lines aren’t close enough. There were too many differences between the boats to make that fair, so I changed the focus to looking at the Hobie and Native Watercraft drives and comparing them to each other, and also looking at them in relation to using a paddle.

I set the borrowed boats up at a dock. I started the sea trials, switching back and forth between the two, using

Native Watercraft Propel Drive	Available in the Ultimate Multi Sports and Mariner Multi Sports line of boats.
Manufacturer’s Marketing Speak	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoy total boat control with forward and reverse capabilities. • The 1:10 drive ratio converts each pedal crank into ten revolutions of the prop. • You will go far with less fatigue as the sleek hydrodynamic design allows efficient propulsion with minimal drag. • Your body position mimics a recumbent bike • The internal drive unit is completely sealed against sand, grit, and mud so it is virtually maintenance free. • Drive unit’s housing is marine grade anodized aluminum so it is light, tough and rust proof. • The system uses a simple pivot system to be lowered or lifted out of the water easily. • Unit weight 11 pounds (down 4 pounds from 2009 model)
More Info	www.nativewatercraft.com



Propel Drive Underside View



Propel Drive Paddler’s POV

a GPS to track speeds. Played around in a variety of conditions – mostly flat water, but some boat wakes and a decent spring breeze going. Tried each boat with the pedal system, and then removed the pedal system from each boat and paddled each boat with a paddle only. Did a second set of test runs at Bay Area Paddlefest when I had friends take each boat out and provide their feedback. This also gave us an opportunity to feel what it was like to launch and land off of a beach.

How They Work:

With the Native Watercraft Propel, you pedal in a circular motion, just like a bicycle. Through gears, the pedal motion is converted into revolutions of a propeller (at a ratio of 1 revolution of the pedals becoming 10 revolutions of the propeller). You can pedal both forward and backward, causing the boat to go both forward and backward.

When using the Hobie Mirage, you use your legs to push and pull on the pedals in a Stair Master motion. This causes the fins to move from one side to the other. As the fins move, the trailing end of the fins flexes into a shape that pushes water toward the back of the boat in a sculling motion. Propulsion is in forward direction only.

Similarities:

Interesting to find that there are more similarities between the two pedal systems than I expected. Both have hand rudder controls in similar places near the paddler’s hip, both have pedal drive units that are easy to remove, and both pedal-systems out-performed a paddle in regards to acceleration and cruising speed.

On boat speed, I have read online message boards where some people would claim one drive system was faster than the other, so I specifically tried to test for this. I did not find this to be true. Both systems let you get up to speed quickly, and cruise at this speed with less perceived effort than with a paddle, but neither would let you exceed the hull speed for the boat (which would take a huge amount of energy to do).

But I also found that neither system functions well enough that you would want to go out without a paddle. Both required that you be moving at a decent clip to get the rudder to turn the boat. So turning in a small area would be challenging without a paddle. And even when not in confined space, using sweep strokes with a paddle to turn would be faster.

Hobie Mirage Drive	Available in the Mirage line of boats, which consists of 8 models of hard shelled kayaks and 3 models of inflatable kayaks.
Manufacturer’s Marketing Speak	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Revolutionary new propulsion system• Pedal driven• Hands-free kayaking• Adjustable mechanism accommodates a wide size range of pedalers• Durable construction of injection-molded plastics, anodized aluminum, stainless steel fittings• Self-cleaning mechanism (resists wear from sand and other particles)• Easily removable for transport and storage• Unit weight 6.6 pounds
More Info	www.hobiecat.com



Mirage Drive Underside View



Mirage Drive Paddler’s POV



Differences:

Beyond the similarities, there clearly were differences between these units.

Neither unit works well in very shallow water, but the Mirage drive did better. The Propel drive needed to be pulled out when the water was less than about 14" deep. The fins of the Mirage can be placed flat against boat hull to land on a beach, or drive unit could be pulled out. The fins can also be "fluttered" close to the hull to

Rudders are controlled by a lever located near the paddler's hip. Hobie's rudder control shown here.



allow you to get propulsion in shallower water.

Neither unit is inexpensive. Native Watercraft does sell the same model boat with and without a Propel drive, and those with the drive are about \$650-700 more expensive. Hobie does not offer the same boat with and without a Mirage Drive, so there is not a direct comparison to determine the cost of the Mirage Drive. Looking at similar boats, I estimate that a boat with the Mirage drive is about \$750-800 more than one without.

I found my legs got tired faster with the Mirage unit than with the Propel, but this was probably to be expected (given my years of biking, but having never spent any time on a Stair Master). In the Propel, I found I was not "pedaling circles" (applying power through the entire revolution), but instead was pumping the pedal. There are optional toe straps available (or standard bike pedals can be installed) that may resolve this, but unfortunately I was not able to test with these.

Drive units removed from the boats.

Who Should Consider Them:



Both of these propulsion systems would be good for kayakers who want to keep their hands free, or just prefer to use their legs. Propel had a slight advantage if you needed to move forward and backward a lot, where Mirage may be slightly better for someone who is often launching and landing on a beach or paddling in shallower water.

Neither system also would be good for "technical" paddling, like white-water, rock gardening, or surfing. This is not something that may come up, as these propulsion systems are not normally installed on the highly responsive boats that are preferred for these types of kayaking. ❖



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