

# California Kayaker



#9

Magazine

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Summer 2012

INSIDE:

Sea Kayaking the Redwood Coast

Kayaking & Small Living Places

With the Sea Beside Me

SUP for Kayakers

Forward Stroke

Santa Monica

Eel River







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clubs, marinas, and events, available free to  
be downloaded from the web, or individual  
copies can be mailed for a nominal charge to  
cover postage and handling.

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



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*Cover Photo: Rob Avery playing in  
the Yellow Bluff tide rip at the 2012  
Golden Gate Sea Kayak Symposium  
Photo by Dominick Lemarie  
Camera: Canon EOS 10D*





# Editor's Note

A break. That is what I am getting. For the last two and a half years, I have been going from one issue of *California Kayaker Magazine* to the next without a lot of time to sit back and think about where this magazine should be going.

But now that we are only publishing two issues in a year, and this being the second issue for 2012, I am looking at a six months break before the next issue is due.

This break will be nice. Of course, I plan to paddle. A lot! But I also plan to spend some time thinking about this magazine and how to make it better. Feel free to drop a line if you have ideas.

If you miss reading the magazine during our break, I will be putting updates from time to time on our Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/CalKayakerMag](http://www.facebook.com/CalKayakerMag). Feel free to "like" the page to keep up to date.

And don't forget, this magazine is advertiser supported. It wouldn't exist if it wasn't for all the advertisers buying ads. If you tell them you saw their ad in the magazine, they will know that their ads are working and that they should keep advertising (and I can keep publishing).

Happy Paddling!

Peter Donohue

Editor

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## ▷ Events

### **Bay2Bay Paddling Regatta**

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July 7, 2012

[www.peninsula.ymca.org/special-events/bay-2-bay-regatta.html](http://www.peninsula.ymca.org/special-events/bay-2-bay-regatta.html)

### **Big Bear Paddlefest**

Big Bear Lake, CA

July 7-8, 2012

[www.bigbearpaddlefest.com](http://www.bigbearpaddlefest.com)

### **Scheels Paddle Sport Demo**

Sparks, NV

July 14, 2012

[www.scheels.com/events](http://www.scheels.com/events)

### **Eppies Great Race 39**

Sacramento, CA

July 21, 2012

[www.eppiesgreatrace.org](http://www.eppiesgreatrace.org)

### **Shared Adventures Day On The Beach**

Santa Cruz, CA

July 21, 2012

[www.dayonthebeach.org](http://www.dayonthebeach.org)

### **US Surf Ski Championships**

Sausalito, CA

August 4-5, 2012

[www.ussurfski.com](http://www.ussurfski.com)

### **American River Festival**

Coloma, CA

Sept 7-9, 2012

[www.americanriverfestival.org](http://www.americanriverfestival.org)

### **Kern River Eddy Hop**

Bakersfield, CA

Sept 8-9, 2012

[www.kernriver.org/eddyhop](http://www.kernriver.org/eddyhop)

### **California Coastal Cleanup**

Various locations

Sep 15, 2012

[www.coastal.ca.gov/publiced/ccd/ccd.html](http://www.coastal.ca.gov/publiced/ccd/ccd.html)

### **Moke Races**

Jackson, CA

Sept 15-16, 2012

[www.mokeraces.com](http://www.mokeraces.com)

### **Feather River Festival**

Chico, CA

September 21-23, 2012

[www.chicopaddleheads.org](http://www.chicopaddleheads.org)

### **Support Strokes Paddle**

Oakland, CA

September 29, 2012

[www.calkayak.com/supportstrokes](http://www.calkayak.com/supportstrokes)

### **Pacific City Surf Off**

Pacific City, OR

September 29-30, 2012

[aldercreek.rezgo.com/details/23398/pacific-city-surf-off](http://aldercreek.rezgo.com/details/23398/pacific-city-surf-off)

### **US Wave Ski Championships**

Ventura, CA

October 12-13, 2012

[www.uswaveski.com](http://www.uswaveski.com)

### **Lumpy Waters Symposium**

Pacific City, OR

October 19-21, 2012

[www.lumpywaters.com](http://www.lumpywaters.com)

### **Sea Trek Regatta & ETC Paddleathon**

Sausalito, CA

October 20, 2012

[www.etctrips.org/special-events/regatta](http://www.etctrips.org/special-events/regatta)

### **Davenport Paddle Surfing Classic**

Davenport, CA

November 10-11, 2012

[www.davenportpaddlesurf.com](http://www.davenportpaddlesurf.com)

### **Golden Gate Sea Kayak Symposium**

Sausalito, CA

January 25-27, 2013

[www.ggskys.com](http://www.ggskys.com)

### **Wavechaser Paddle Series**

Various NorCal locations

Various dates

[www.wavechaser.com](http://www.wavechaser.com)

To submit news or an event for consideration to *California Kayaker Magazine*, please send basic information to [editor@calkayakermag.com](mailto:editor@calkayakermag.com).

## ▷ News

### **Bair Island Development dead—for now**

Back in the Spring 2010 issue of *California Kayaker Magazine*, we alerted you to possible development of salt evaporating flats in Redwood City. Cargill (the land owner) and a land developer had plans to turn the flats into a small city with 12,000+ homes. Environmentalists would prefer that the area be turned back into tidal wetlands, which would help protect the region from sea level rise and provide additional wildlife habitat (and paddling opportunities for kayakers).

A partial victory has been announced in May when the developers announced they had withdrawn their plan for the development. So that particular project is not going forward.

It is only a partial victory, as the lands are for now staying as salt evaporating flats. Environmentalists still hope that they can buy the land and permanently protect it from development. But until that happens, there is always the possibility a developer will again bring about a proposal to turn it into a city. And as this issue went to press, there were signs that Cargill was continuing towards developing the lands.

### **Out of Sight Out of Mind Trashpedition**

In May, a group called Out of Sight Out of Mind (OSOM) paddled sea kayaks from Portland to the ocean with canoes in tow to serve as “garbage barges” to collect all the trash found. Their goal was to document the path of plastic pollution from purchase and consumption at a downtown convenience store to the storm drain, into the river, all the way to the ocean and its eventual convergence with the Great Pacific Garbage Patch. By documenting their efforts to stop plastic litter from making its way to the sea, they hope to inspire others to do the same.

Continued on Page 22



# Kayaking & Small Living Spaces



**K**ayaking is a great sport, but the gear required can take up a bit of space. PFDs, wet suits, paddles, and such can be bulky, but are generally manageable. The boat is your largest piece of gear and unless you paddle a short white water boat or surf kayak, often requires a dedicated place to store it.

But how does one deal with this space requirement if they live in an apartment and/or in a big city without any large storage space? There are a few options that will let you keep kayaking:

## In the Closet

One option is to go in the closet (or whatever storage space you have). Because there is a lot of hollow space in the standard kayak, some styles of boats can be broken or shrunk down to manageable sizes. The three main options for staying in the closet are inflatable kayaks, folding kayaks, and sectional kayaks.

Inflatable kayaks are ones where the shell of the boat is made up of chambers which you fill with air to create the shape of the boat. They generally pack down to the size of a duffel bag.

In general, these boats are not as fast as a standard (hard shell) kayak. Prices range from \$100 for glorified pool toys to a little over \$1000 for top of the line inflatable boats. If you do go for an inflatable, we recommend looking at one with some framing in it, as this helps improve the boat's speed. *California Kayaker Magazine* had a review of the Advanced Elements AirFusion inflatable kayak in the Spring 2011 issue.

If you add enough frame and take away the inflatable chambers, you have a skin on frame kayak. If you then take the frame and make it so it can be easily disassembled, you have a folding kayak. Folding kayaks, in general, are close to the speed of standard kayaks. A downside is that they are pricey with prices starting at well over \$1000 to \$3-4000 for the ones used for expeditions. Float bags or a sea sock are strongly recommended for safety, and there are some added steps you should learn to self-rescue in these boats.

*Trak makes folding kayaks that have the added ability to let you adjust the boat's rocker on the fly.*

*Photo courtesy of Peter Schodl & Nathalie Marik of sea2summit at Zanzibar Expedition 2010*

*Setting up three Advanced Elements inflatable kayaks on a dock*  
Photo by Jan Vestak

Both inflatable kayaks and folding kayaks actually have some set up and tear down time (more for folding than inflatable). And both really should be cleaned and dried before





*Valley Nordkapp sectional kayak  
being carried in a Smart car.  
Photo by Marcus Demuth*

packing away (and if storing a boat is an issue, then that same issue may prevent you from having a place to lay out the inflatable/folder to dry), which isn't really required of standard kayaks.

So what if you cut a shard shell kayak into manageable pieces? Make a standard kayak with double wall bulkheads, cut the hull between the bulkheads, add an attachment method, and you have a boat that splits into pieces. These are called sectional kayaks. Since they started life as a hard shell kayak, they perform just as well. Most of these sectional kayaks are made of composites, and need to be custom ordered from the factory. The exception being Point65, a company out of Sweden, which has developed a set of sit-on-top and recreational boats that can be split into 2 or 3 pieces (rumor has it that they may have a touring model soon). These boats assemble and disassemble in minutes, and take up more storage space than an inflatable or folder, but are much easier to store than a standard kayak. The Point65 boats are around \$1000, and custom composite sea kayaks would start at \$3000 or so and go up.

Added benefit to inflatable, folding, or sectional kayaks is that they are easier to transport, not requiring special kayak racks or trailers.

### Storage Outside Your Home

With a little thinking outside a box, it may be possible to store regular boats in areas you already have. For example, the ceiling space above your car in a car port or garage may not be fully used, so it might be possible to hang a boat from there.

Another outside the box form of storage is on the roof of your car. Turns out that kayaks are not as easy to steal as bicycles, so are not targeted as often (the average thief looking to steal something to quickly turn over for their next drug fix is likely to have



already sold their car, so won't have a way to carry your boat once he steals it). If you do go for the car-top storage method, it is still recommended that you lock your boat, and companies like Lasso and KanuLock make locks specifically for this.

Shorter boats, like whitewater kayaks or surf kayaks, can actually be stored inside some cars.

You can also make the boat less palatable by removing accessories (hatch covers, etc.), so a thief would have to spend some cash to make the boat usable again. This method, of course, exposes your boat to the sun more, which will reduce its life some. And you are putting the boat at some theft risk, so it is less advisable for an expensive boat.

### Paying for Storage

Renting a storage area from a public storage place is also an option. And you can also store all the junk (I mean treasures) that you have taking up the space in your garage and preventing you from parking your car inside. Costs vary greatly by location and size of storage area. *California Kayaker Magazine* got lucky and found a spot that is 5' wide by 18' long, allowing us to store all except the longest of kayaks.

In many areas, you can rent at-water storage slots for your boat from local marinas, kayak retailers, etc. Basically, you keep your boat on a rack at a launch location. When you want to go paddle, you go to the spot and toss your boat in the water and go.

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*The packed California Kayaker Magazine storage area, before it was cleaned up and organized.*

*Photo by California Kayaker*

No need to transport your boat or store it. Many of these locations have added facilities that you can access, such as showers. Costs generally range from \$25 to \$100 per month. To find a location near you, I recommend contacting local clubs or retailers/rental locations.

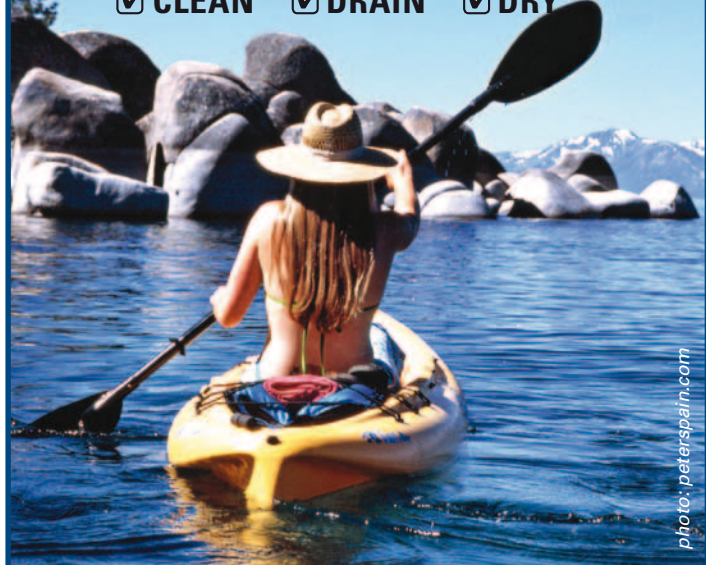
The last option is to not actually pay to store a boat (or even to own a boat), but instead do extended rental deals. Your local kayak outfitter may have 10-hour rental cards, 3 month "all you can paddle" options, or similar. You pay less than the standard hourly rate to paddle a boat whenever you want. And you are not usually tied to any one model boat, but can try a variety of boats. Sometimes these deals allow you to take boats away to paddle different locations, but not always. Check with the local outfitter for specifics.

Storing boats at on-water locations or doing extended rental deals from outfitters have an added benefit of not requiring you to have a way to transport boats (kayak racks, trailers, etc.), which saves a lot of costs and hassles. ❖

*Words by California Kayaker Magazine*

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# Efficient Forward Paddling

by Mark Tozer

*Forward paddling efficiency is as important for recreational paddlers as it is for surf ski racers.  
Photo by California Kayaker*

**W**hen out kayaking on a river, lake, or the ocean, an efficient forward paddling stroke should be a whole-body exercise that involves the paddler's torso, legs, shoulders and arms with the torso and the legs at the core of the stroke. They are the key to good posture control, power transfer and paddling stamina. Your arms and shoulders are primarily for guiding the paddle, and only after that to help change gears.

By far the most important feature of efficient forward paddling is to have a range of gears that enable you to cope with the dynamic nature of your chosen kayaking environment. Technique, stroke rate, and length will all vary depending on the circumstances. There are those sunny days when you can relax and cruise along, but you may need to go up level when punching through a surf break, crossing an eddy line, or paddling against the wind. Being able to accelerate out of a challenging situation is also vital for personal welfare and group safety.

Watch experienced paddlers and notice how they vary the use of the gears available to them. Most seasoned kayakers will paddle slow and steady, making as much use of their body as possible on daylong trip. A good forward stroke should appear smooth and balanced over any given distance. Establishing a good rhythm will also help maintain that efficiency for long periods. Here is a tip: if your arms hurt at the end of the day, you were probably using them too much, instead of your upper and lower body for that essential power transfer.

Another dimension that will influence forward stroke efficiency is your paddle choice. As kayakers, our paddle is the tool that allows us to create proper resistance in the water, and in the case of forward paddling, drive the kayak past the point of grip for maximum propulsion.

## Paddle Choice

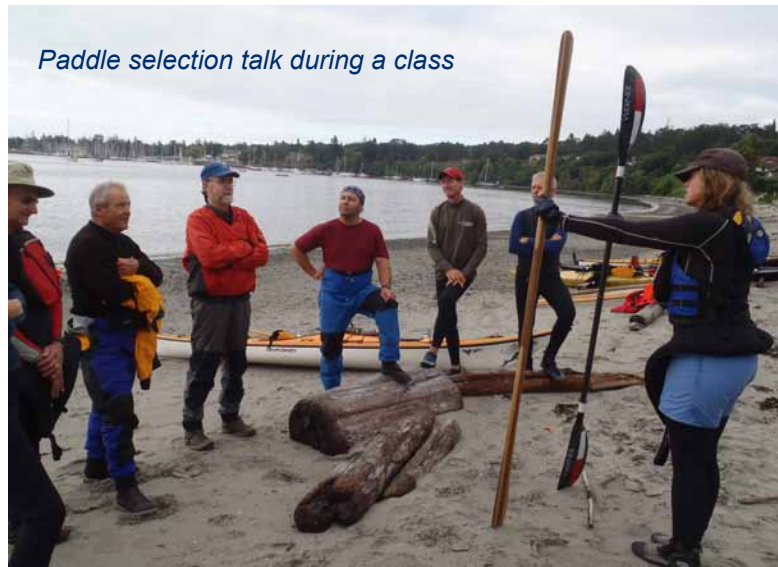
To really appreciate the principles of efficient forward paddling you will need to experiment with a lot of different variables. Good posture, effective power transfer and

paddling stamina are important elements but so is paddle choice. Different paddle lengths, construction types, degrees of blade stiffness, blade width and angle will all impact your personal paddling style. The more you understand this aspect of kayaking, the easier it will be for you to choose a paddle and paddling style that suits what you want to do, and the better your forward paddling will become.

Try a different type of paddle from the one you usually use. Borrow a wing for a while, or a Greenland paddle, or a general touring paddle, whichever is the least familiar to you. If you tend towards a "high angle" paddle style, experiment with a paddle designed for a "low angle" of presentation. Compare the effectiveness of your usual stroke with the effectiveness of a varied angle stroke.

An important consideration is choice of paddle length, which is affected by many things including your torso height, arm length, kayak width and foredeck volume, height of your seat, and other factors including your posture control and technique. Without a favourable paddle length you are likely to compensate by using a modified technique and your posture may be negatively affected. A

*Paddle selection talk during a class*





*The Catch—stab the paddle in cleanly as far forward as you can*

good coach will be able to determine if your paddle length looks good as well as if your posture and technique are sound.

You can also learn more about the effect of “swing weight” by attaching a load to each of your paddle blades. Here is a tip: use strong elastic bands to hold a small zip-lock bag of water to each blade. You should notice a big difference when the weights are moved toward the mid-point of the shaft. The idea is that you can figure out your own personal preference for how the weight of a paddle should be distributed. Another experiment is to try a length of bamboo and use that as a paddle. How does this affect your acceleration and your top speed? When do you experience the greatest amount of flutter, when you’re accelerating or when you’re cruising? The outcome of this exercise should highlight the key phases of performing a forward paddle stroke and effective power transfer.

### Power Transfer

Power transfer for efficient forward paddling comes from upper body rotation so you should aim to keep the paddle at arms’ length at all times. By extending your arms you free the upper body and achieve greater power transfer from all strokes. Remember that your bottom hand controls the working paddle blade so keep the top hand relaxed to minimise interference with the accuracy of the paddle strokes. And finally, always immerse the paddle blade fully, especially on windy days. A blade partially immersed only results in wasted energy.

It is generally agreed that there are three phases to forward paddling—the catch, the pull, and the exit—and an appreciation of each one can help maximise the process of power transfer and forward momentum.

**The Catch** - It is important to plant the paddle as far forward as possible



*The Exit—slice the paddle out before you start lifting water*

with a clean stabbing entry. Sometimes referred to as the “spearing the salmon” technique. This sets up the paddle for the most important phase of the stroke. When you plant the paddle, do so fully. Here is a tip: wrap a piece of bright tape around the shaft where it meets the blade. You should bury the paddle to this tape mark, and no more, no less. Strive to keep the blade at this depth throughout your stroke.

You can help keep the paddle at a constant depth by allowing the paddle to flare naturally away from the hull during the stroke, while maintaining good posture. This is only possible with sound body mechanics and correct paddle length. Too long a paddle makes it easier to get the blade in the water for the catch, but the paddle may go too deep at the exit. A paddle that is too short is just the opposite. As for good posture, sit upright and avoid excessive forward lean.

**The Pull** - With a kayak of 14 feet or more its ability to go in a straight line (often referred to as its directional stability) is going to be relatively high. You therefore need to convert all your effort into driving the boat forward. To achieve this, imagine you are pulling yourself up to and past the paddle as the blade is placed in the water. Use your feet to transfer the energy created by your trunk muscles into the kayak.

**The Exit** - As the kayak moves past the paddle the angle of the paddle changes until it is lifting water and tends to push the boat downwards. At this point it is giving very little assistance to moving the kayak forward and using lots of energy. Slice the paddle out of the water before this happens or allow the movement of the boat to pull it out of the water (this is less efficient). Do not waste energy pulling on it. Before the next catch check that your body is wound up and that the paddle will catch the water as far forward as possible. Feel your trunk muscles ready to pull the boat past the paddle.



## Coaching Tips

Here are some coaching points to think about when practicing your forward paddling:

- In general, a paddle should be held in such a way that there is equal distance between the outside of your hands and the blades. By marking this distance with tape, you can check to see how much your grip moves.
- Look where you want to go and not at the paddle. Keep your head still.
- Trunk rotation, or to be more precise un-rotation, is essential to efficient forward paddling. Try to rotate, or wind up, your upper body by reaching forward with the paddle blade out of the water. Then plant the blade and un-wind to pull the paddle through the water using a more powerful muscle group.
- Most power should be generated in the first foot or so of the stroke.
- Imagine that your arm is a piece of string connecting your shoulder to your hand while in the pull phase of the stroke. This will help you avoid using the smaller arm muscle and concentrate effort in the trunk muscles.
- Relax, and even extend, the fingers of your top hand. This will promote reach and help reduce forearm injuries and cramp.
- Keep your top hand by your shoulder and pull the kayak past the paddle for an efficient high gear cruising stroke. Drive forwards with your top hand when you need a lower gear such as when accelerating or paddling in to a head wind.
- Avoid air paddling. This is the wasteful act of winding up your body and then unwinding before putting the paddle in the water. Do not engage your torso until you have caught the water.
- Think about what is going on below deck. Paddlers should push with their feet on the same side as they are pulling the paddle with their lower hand. Try putting your knees together to encourage a cycling action with your legs as well as loosening up your hips to spread the load across your entire body.
- And finally... find a compatible paddling partner and you'll make great progress with these skills—watch each other, give each other feedback and the learning curve will be much steeper. If you hit a plateau, that's the time to go get some more coaching! ❖

*Mark Tozer, PhD, is a BCU Level 5 Coach and BCU Coach Educator / Assessor. Mark and his wife, Helen Wilson, provide presentations, instruction, rolling demonstrations and BCU certification programs worldwide through their business, Greenland or Bust. Mark is currently an ambassador for Kokatat Watersports Wear, Joe O' Paddles and Tahe Marine. To learn more about Helen and Mark, visit [www.greenlandorbust.org](http://www.greenlandorbust.org).*

*Photos by Mark Tozer*



*Relaxing the fingers on the top hand*

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# SUP for Kayakers

## Why You Should Try Stand Up Paddling Today

By Matt Palmariello



*The author paddling down to the take-out. 4-day SUP camping trip on the Colorado River, Nevada.  
Photo by Haley Caruso*

**T**hink back to the very first time you tried kayaking and see if you can remember the details of your experience. Was it positive? Did you have fun? Did you capsize? Did you make it to where you were going? Did you make it back? For me, that very first experience was on a sit-on-top kayak during a tropical vacation. It changed my entire life. From that humble beginning, kayaking became my biggest pursuit, took over much of my life, changed my career outlook, and dominated my leisure time.

These days, however, standup paddling is doing the same exact things for me. It has given me a new perspective, a new challenge, and exciting new experiences on the water that I won't soon forget.

The first time you try standup paddling you'll notice right away how similar it can be to kayaking. All of the paddle stroke skills you use in your kayak will work on a standup board. Forward and reverse strokes, turning strokes, steering strokes, draw strokes and braces are all extremely effective. Some will work even better on a board than in a kayak. Coming to standup paddling with existing paddle stroke skills, you don't need to relearn these, so can focus on balance.

But don't let the balancing part scare you because, just like kayaks, boards come in all shapes and sizes for a range of uses and ability levels. With the right equipment you probably won't fall in at all, and your balance will improve very quickly. If you do fall in, no worries, it takes just seconds to remount the board. On most flat-water



*Lake Tahoe lunch break.  
Photo by Matt Palmariello*





standup paddles I do these days I'm completely dry afterwards (well, from the ankles up).

As an added bonus to all the fun you'll have on a standup board, you'll hone balance skills and increase core strength. You're not going to have six-pack abs in a week, but if you use proper technique while standup paddling regularly, it will make your core stronger. Your better balance will be useful in other sports and in everyday life. Anytime you paddle with proper technique, whether in a kayak, on a standup board, or in a canoe, your overall paddling skills will improve. Standup paddling is a great way to cross train for other paddle sports and it will make you a better kayaker.

Standup paddling is a hybrid sport, the "standup" part being similar to other board sports and the "paddling" part resembling any other paddle sport, most closely canoeing since you use a single bladed paddle. Typically you will stand on the board in either a parallel stance or a surf stance. A parallel stance is when your feet are both facing forward like in skiing and a surf stance is when you stand with one foot further back than the other, like surfing. When you're in a surf stance you have a toe-side edge and a heel-side edge. You can stand regular foot (left foot forward) or goofy foot (right foot forward). A surf stance lets you easily adjust your trim without moving your feet and also allows you more rotation to your toe-side. Just like in kayaking, body rotation is important for efficient and safe paddling.

On a standup board you aren't stuck in a cockpit and can move around the board freely. Move forwards, backwards, turn around, lie down, kneel, sit, do yoga, or anything else for that matter. By moving forwards or backwards you're distributing your weight to different areas of the board (changing its trim) thus changing the way the board paddles. Trimming a board will affect its speed,

*Paddling out in Ensenada, Mexico. Not being locked into a cockpit and seat, like you would be in a kayak, you can paddle kneeling or even prone, when the conditions call for it.*

*Photo by Haley Caruso*

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*Small waves are better than no waves. Ensenada, Mexico.  
Photo by Haley Caruso*

stability, maneuverability and tracking and will open a whole new aspect of paddling that you don't experience in a kayak. Step back, raise the nose and you'll be able to pivot turn, just like a stern squirt in a whitewater boat. That freedom to move around the board and adjust trim is one of the biggest benefits of performance standup paddling.

Because you use a single bladed paddle, you'll use cross strokes much more than in kayaking, and you'll learn to more effectively steer from the bow, or nose as it's referred to on a board. The board has one or more fins in the back to help it go straight, so steering from the stern, or tail, is less effective. You'll learn that cadence and momentum are important and that edge control is useful. As a

kayaker, you'll quickly relate to the "paddling" portion of standup paddling and it will feel natural.

Most people that have tried standup paddling will tell you that one of the biggest differences between kayaking and standup paddling is the ability to look down into the water and see the world beneath you. Depending on where you paddle, you'll see rocks, kelp, fish, sea creatures, shipwrecks, and anything else you may miss when kayaking. But looking down isn't the only advantage of standing up. You'll be more visible to other boaters and you'll be able to see further ahead. On the river (yes, standup paddling can be done on rivers) your height will help you read the water better. In the surf, you'll spot the oncoming sets before the

other surfers. With my surfing friends in San Diego I've become the official wave spotter of the group.

Like kayaking, standup paddling can be done anywhere. Fresh water or salt water, flat water or moving water, whitewater, coastal conditions, surf—it handles it all with ease. It can be anything you want it to be from a relaxing escape to an adrenaline rush to a full-body workout. But, before you head to your favorite class III whitewater run or paddle out into the lineup at Santa Cruz, make sure you get some experience on flat water first. Dial in the fundamentals before venturing to more challenging waters.

Globally, standup paddling competitions are taking place on flat water, rough water, whitewater, in the surf and downwind. People are doing expeditions on boards and traveling to remote destinations. On the business front, an entire new market has been created opening up the doors for many new manufacturers, outfitters, events, and media. Existing businesses from the paddling and surfing markets have capitalized on the sports success and adopted standup into their programs and product offerings.

Standup paddling is great with kids, it's affordable, the equipment is simple and easy to transport, and it's fun.

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*SUP camping with sea kayakers. Colorado River, AZ.  
Photo by Matt Palmariello*

I still kayak quite regularly, but now with more comfort, control, and confidence due to the increased strength and balance I've gotten from standup paddling. Every kayaker should give it a try at least once, if for no other reason than to get a fresh perspective of your surroundings. If you haven't tried it yet and you have the slightest interest in experiencing it, don't wait. Grab a friend, go to your local paddle shop and rent a board or take a class. The sport is young and quickly growing with unlimited possibilities. There's really no telling where it will take you. ❖

*Matt Palmariello works full-time at California Canoe & Kayak in Oakland and is the event manager for the Golden Gate Sea Kayak Symposium. He's an avid sea kayaker, canoeist and standup paddler and has been guiding and coaching paddle sports for over 10 years. He maintains ACA & BCU coaching certifications as well as consistent personal training on the sea and in the surf.*

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# Center



*Kayakers paddle past a dock full of California Sea Lions at Monterey's Moss Landing  
Camera: Pentax Optio WG-1  
Photo by California Kayaker*

Have a photo that shows the beauty of kayaking or otherwise makes people think?  
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Include the background story and what camera was used.

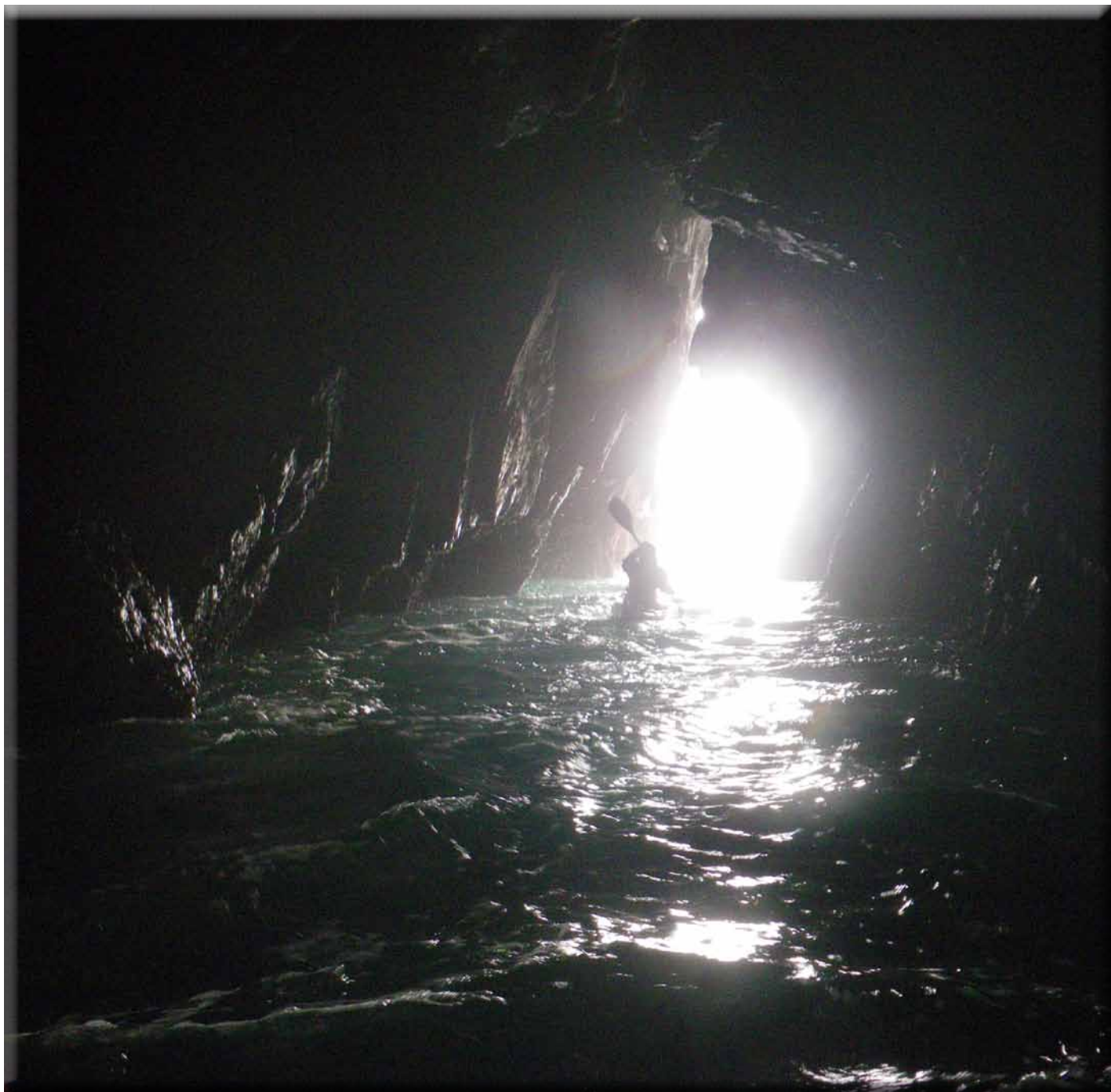


# Hatch

*Lucy O'Brien paddling toward the light at the  
end of the tunnel on the Big Sur Coastline*

*Camera: Pentax Optio W80*

*Photo by California Kayaker*



# Eel River - Source to Sea

by Cate Hawthorne



*The author paddling through Ramsey's Rapid  
Photo by Jeff Laxier*

Somewhere the idea was born—let's paddle the Eel River to the sea. It was a notion based on our love of the Eel River, our curiosity to explore it more, and our desire to do an overnight wilderness trip by kayak. In the Fall of 2010, Jeff and I tossed the idea about and talked it over at the Bay Area Sea Kayakers' Mendo weekend with Jerry Albright who knows the Eel River well. It turned out that he and a friend had done the trip that we were contemplating. The idea was to paddle 169 miles of the Eel River from below Lake Pillsbury in Lake County to where it empties into the ocean in Humboldt County.

In the fall when we set our calendar for the year, we set aside 2 weeks in late April for our trip. We figured it would be good to go in the spring when the days were lengthening and evening temperatures were not below freezing. There was the best chance that we would have the right flow of water in the river (where in the winter we could have too much or too little).

The beginning of April came. We had the dates on the calendar and a notion that we wanted to do the trip but a million excuses not to. We hadn't announced that we were doing the trip because we were going to be selective about who we wanted to spend 7-14 days in the wilderness with and were uncertain as to how all the logistics were going to work out. We knew that any companions on this trip would have to be able to literally go with the flow. Flow was probably the biggest concern—it could be too much or not enough. As our departure date approached, the water level was low. It looked like we would be bumping and scraping along in the upper sections.

Despite the low water flow, we made up our minds to go and set about preparations. Jeff's tasks were assembling safety equipment, programming the GPS, compiling the camping gear, setting up the SPOT tracker, and shuttle logistics. My primary task was food preparation. No big deal! The trip is just down river and 10 days worth of food and supplies isn't that much to plan and pack, right?

The challenge is packing all the necessities for 2 people to live in the wilderness for 10 days into 2 whitewater kayaks that are only 69 and 77 gallons in volume and don't have dry storage compartments. I got out the dehydrator and vacuum sealer and went to work planning one pot meals that would be condensed, nutritious, hopefully delicious, and require minimal fuel to prepare.

Jeff's planning involved mapping potential campsites, rapids that we might have to scout, potential side hikes, and points of interest (we would be paddling through some beautiful country including Avenue of the Giants.) Jeff assembled our tent, water filter, stove, cooking utensils and arranged our logistics team. A couple of good friends that could not join us on the trip helped us with logistical support including our shuttle to the put-in and take-out.

Finally, it was "go" day. Cell phones were turned off and stowed. We were now on river time. Probably the best part about any trip in the wilderness is the simplicity of life—eat, sleep, paddle, and enjoy the water, the wilderness, and wildlife.

Our first day had some of the toughest whitewater of our trip and was one of the longest paddling days. Jerry joined us for day one as we paddled 25 miles from



Pillsbury to Hearst. A little bit of rain triggered snow melt. The flow of the river increased from a slow and shallow 350 cfs (cubic feet per second) to a fast and technical 1500 cfs. At this flow some of the rapids were in the Class IV range. As a progressing whitewater kayaker, this run was the most technical that I had yet to paddle and a good test of my developing skills.

The rapids were fast and furious with powerful hydraulics to avoid while maneuvering through tight boulder strewn channels. A rapid called Double Drop was one of the most significant rapids of the day. It was a bend in the river with an elevation drop where the water was funneled between gigantic boulders. At lower flows the rapid presents 2 distinct consecutive drops. As we scouted it, the 2 drops were not distinct but appeared to have merged into a huge frothing channel of chaotic whitewater with diagonal, lateral and reversal currents.

The line through appeared to be straight forward; however, there was a lot of water bouncing off rocks that could capsize or knock a paddler off line. As we scouted from shore, I saw the line and calculated the worst case scenario. The right side appeared to have rocks lurking beneath the surface and the left side had hydraulics that were powerful but flushing. Worst case scenario would be to end up off line and upside down bouncing over rocks on the right or upside down on the left in a hydraulic waiting for it to flush me out. These thoughts were not appealing so I banished them from my mind and envisioned a clean line as I climbed back to my boat at the top of the rapid.

Back in my boat at the top of the rapid, I felt surprisingly calm. However, as I committed to dropping into the frothing madness of the rapid, my heart was in my throat. Time was suspended for a moment and the mantra "Lean forward and paddle" came to mind. I dug my paddle blade

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*Riverside camping  
Photo by Jeff Laxier*





*The dilapidated Eel River Railroad could often be seen from the river.  
Photo by Cate Hawthorne*

into the water and launched into the mayhem of whitewater. Plunging into the rapid, my boat buried but resurfaced. I powered forward timing my paddle strokes with the waves to stay upright. I dropped cleanly down the line and eddied-out in the calm water below the rapid. Feelings of elation and relief were overwhelming as I looked up at the walls of foaming whitewater that I had just descended.

We enjoyed fun whitewater on the river for 5 of the 8 days. The rapids ranged from class II through IV. The majority of the rapids were in

the class II and III range with lots of big waves, squirrely eddy lines and boils. Sections of significant elevation loss and constriction were very fast with gigantic wave train rollercoaster like rides. Paddling a whitewater kayak loaded with provisions for 10 days was a new experience for me.

As we launched on our second day, I realized that I had not packed my boat evenly and my boat was stern heavy. It felt like I was riding a wheelie down the river. Waves and boils seemed to be constantly grabbing my unbalanced boat and challeng-

ing my balance and bracing skills. At the top of the most difficult rapid of the day, a wave capsized me. As my kayak flipped upside down and my head dunked in the cold frothing water, I was nervous for a moment about rolling the loaded boat upright. Swimming down the rapid with a loaded kayak was the last thing that I wanted to have to do so it was a must-make roll. With hundreds of rolls under my skirt, I went on autopilot and rolled my kayak upright. A solid combat roll is definitely a necessity when paddling wilderness whitewater with your food and shelter loaded in your boat.

It rained for most of our trip giving us a speedy downriver flow. When we hit the confluence of the main and middle fork on day 3, the river was moving fast—around 10,000 cfs. Rainy days gave us motivation to keep moving. When we woke up to rain, we put on our dry suits as we emerged from our tent. We weren't inclined to lounge about camp in the rain when the river was awaiting us. Rainy days became long paddling days and sunny days were hiking and enjoying camp days. We completed the trip of 169 miles in 8 days. It rained 6 of the 8 days.

Our trip down the Eel River was gorgeous. Snow was on the ridges, wildflowers were blooming, and birds were singing. Scattered among the mountains and hillsides of conifers and oaks, redbuds exploded with bursts of pink foliage. Purple/blue lupines, red Indian paintbrushes, yellow wallflowers, and green mosses brightened the river canyon walls. As we traveled down the river, we continually gaped as we drank in nature's beauty. We wondered at the absurdity of man's impact and intervention. On the upper part of the Eel, there are two dams. On the lower sections, evidence of the dilapidated Eel River Railroad is ever present.

The railroad through the Eel River Canyon was opened in 1914 to transport logging and mining materials and passengers between the Bay Area and Eureka. Since opening, the



*Sow with piglets  
Photo by Cate Hawthorne*



unstable soils and floods of the Eel River have wreaked havoc on the railroad infrastructure. A continuous battle ensued between man and nature to keep the 95 miles of tracks and 30 tunnels clear until 1997 when the railroad was abandoned. As we paddled the river, we were fascinated by sights of rails suspended in the air, tunnels blocked by landslides, and abandoned railcars in the river. Part of the wonder is the way that nature is working to reclaim the terrain.

Most of our trip was in the wilderness. The old railroad tracks paralleled the river, but there are very few roads into or out of many stretches of the Eel River. Occasionally we would see homes in the mountains, but many appeared to be unoccupied. We pretty much had the river and wilderness to ourselves—well not exactly.

One day when we were scouting a riverside campsite for the evening, we landed our boats on a sandy beach and walked 100 yards down river to check out a creek for water and camping. When we returned to our boats, there were bear tracks in the sand right by our boats. It gave us pause for a moment. Fortunately these wild California black bears don't associate humans with food. Regardless, we didn't store food in our camp.

Throughout our trip, we enjoyed watching wildlife from the water. Most did not appear to be alarmed by our passing through. An exception was two sows who were mothering a brood of a dozen piglets—guess they were concerned that we might add bacon to the menu. Wildlife highlights of our trip included sightings of Tule elk, bobcats, bears, deer, river otters, turtles, green herons, bald eagles, wood ducks, western meadowlarks, and pileated woodpeckers. We were also treated to choruses of tree frogs, songs of western meadowlarks, trickling creeks, cascades of waterfalls, and the roar of the river.

On day seven, we were paddling along the 101 corridor and knew that we had left the wilderness. We stopped for a quick resupply of beverages at a market in Scotia. On the last night of the trip, we enjoyed beverages by the campfire and were wistful that our trip had gone so quickly and that we would arrive at the ocean the next day.

The last stretch of the river was flat but moving along quickly. When harbor seals started popping up in the water and barnacles started appearing on the driftwood, we knew that we were almost there. Our melancholy over the trip coming to an end was exchanged for elation as we realized that we had reached our goal of paddling to the sea. ❖

*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](http://www.liquidfusionkayak.com)).*



*Jeff Laxier running Double Falls  
Photo by Cate Hawthorne*

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They paddled 100 miles from Portland to the ocean in 5 days. The trash canoes were filled 4 times with an estimated 1500-2000 lbs of trash, mostly foam from docks and single use plastic bottles. They found a lot of crazy stuff too, like a Rocky DVD, a USA Aid grain bag with Arabic writing, plastic chairs, and balls for every sport known to man.

OSOM has an ongoing contest to help get all of us paddlers to remove trash we see when we paddle (garbage barges not required). Remove trash from any waterway using any human powered craft and post pictures of the removal & disposal to the OSOM Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/gulfkayak/info](http://www.facebook.com/gulfkayak/info)), and you can enter to win cool gear provided by sponsors.

### **NorCal Kayak Anglers Growing Heroes on Water program**

Heroes on the Water (HOW) serves wounded warriors by taking them kayak fishing in the outdoors as a way for them to relax, rehabilitate, and reintegrate into society. This mission is carried out by volunteers who operate local HOW chapters across the United States. NorCal Kayak Anglers (NCKA) is a local chapter of HOW, and sponsored an event on June 2 at Kelsey Bass Ranch. Kelsey Bass Ranch is a 125 acre lake in the Sierra Foothills near Merced. They had thirty vets

and about fifty volunteers (including both NCKA members and some non-members who just wanted to support the cause).

Don Anglin, NCKA HOW coordinator reported "One lady vet stuck out for me. I set her up on a tandem with a volunteer paddling her around. She told me she would only be 'out for 5 minutes.' She hooked up right in front of the launch area and the screams of joy were heard everywhere. Did not see her again till lunch. The vets all came in, had a wonderful smoked pulled pork sandwich lunch and then the VA therapists wanted to pack it up and head back home. The vets all wanted to get back on the water, so we re-launched."

NCKA has been a HOW chapter since 2009 and has run 10 events so far. The group does not have a dedicated fleet of boats for use, so draws on its members' boats and boats borrowed from local retailers (The Headwaters of Lodi provided some for the Kelsey Ranch event).

NCKA HOW is looking for wounded warriors, family members, and friends of wounded vets to contact them. Along with the large events they do directly with the VA, they want to have smaller, more intimate events reaching people who aren't as actively connected with the VA. They are also always looking for support, both in additional volun-

teers to run the events and in donations of money, gear, or food. More information on the HOW program can be found at [www.heroesonthewater.org](http://www.heroesonthewater.org) and at [www.norcalkayakanglers.com](http://www.norcalkayakanglers.com).

There are also HOW chapters based in San Diego and in Oregon. For contact information on all the local chapters, go to [www.heroesonthewater.org/chapters/find-a-chapter](http://www.heroesonthewater.org/chapters/find-a-chapter).

### **California Approves Marine Protected Area for North Coast**

The California Fish and Game Commission has adopted regulations for the north coast Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), completing the network of MPAs in California's open coastal waters. The north coast region covers approximately 1,027 square miles of state waters from the California/Oregon state line south to Alder Creek near Point Arena in Mendocino County. The plan includes 19 MPAs, a recreational management area, and seven special closures. All together, these cover approximately 137 square miles, or about 13 percent of the region. These regulations will go into effect some time in 2013.

The majority of the impacts from these MPAs is on limiting commercial fishing, but some of the areas also limit sport fishing. And the special closures are areas that are closed to all boating, including kayaks. The MPAs are the first state-wide network of underwater parks in the United States. Their goal is to provide an area where the wildlife is free from human pressures, so can thrive and help restock the non-protected areas.

The four regions cover the entire California coast and comprise of 124 protected areas that cover 848 square miles, or about 16 percent of the approximately 5,285 square miles of open coast state waters. More information can be found at [www.dfg.ca.gov/mlpa](http://www.dfg.ca.gov/mlpa).



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# Speaking with Sea Lions in Santa Monica

By Alan Feldstein



*Happy paddlers off of Santa Monica*

While I study Swahili for my African Safari Company, I practice speaking sea lion most Sundays when I meet them in the Santa Monica Bay. Sunday morning is the day for most people to sleep in and read the Sunday paper over a late breakfast. But for several of us who are instructors at the UCLA Aquatic Center, Sunday is the day to get up early and get in our kayaks at about 8 a.m. to go for our weekly paddle.

We are a fun group of paddlers who enjoy each other's company. Many in our group do it to get away from the stress in their lives. We have lawyers, doctors, a nurse, a paralegal, and a retired engineer, a good mix of both men and women. Many of us have traveled together to paddle in Mexico, North Vietnam, and Africa, as well as more local spots such as Anacapa Island and Elkhorn Slough.

I love teaching new students and exposing them to the wonders of kayaking. It certainly isn't for the few dollars an hour but rather the love of introducing people to a whole new world. The best part of the class is at the end. After they learn the basic strokes and rescues, I give them their first exposure of paddling outside of the sheltered waters of the marina. I take my students out past the break wall to a sailing marker a couple of hundred yards away. When we get to the marker I have them raft up. Exhilarated with the thought of paddling themselves out on the ocean, everyone has infectious smiles (or for a few, tight lips of fear). I ask them to consider that here we are less than a mile from a major urban center, but in beautiful waters with dolphins, sea lions, pelicans, cormorants and assorted other wildlife. I encourage them to continue to come out paddling and enjoy what South-

ern California has to offer. I hope it is the inspiration they need to keep coming back.

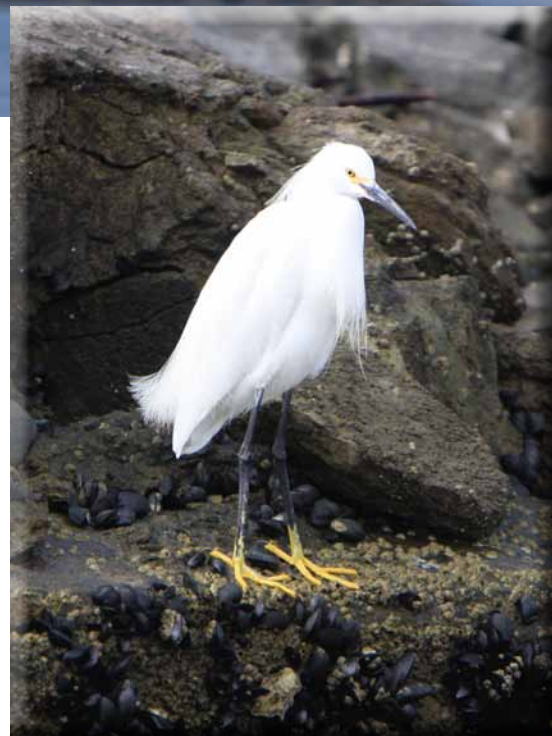
I follow my own advice almost every week. Paddling in Southern California is wonderful. We have great weather (most of the time), calm waters and abundant sea life to join us on our journeys. We paddle with dolphins feasting on the local fish, curious sea lions who wonder who we are and assorted bird life. My favorites are the pelicans who glide gracefully just inches above the water and then climb to soaring heights to dive bomb into the water and come up with a delicious fish snack.

Each time of the year is different. Although it may be hard to believe, the best time of the year to paddle can be the winter. Winter in Southern California means clear crisp weather, clear skies and beautiful views. It is quite amazing to paddle up the coast and look out on snow-covered mountains! In the summer the weather is beautiful (except for the proverbial "June gloom" when it is overcast). It is also a great time for practicing our rolls and rescues as the water is not as cold and can be very refreshing. Despite what people say the water is quite clean out in the bay. The only time it is not is after some heavy rainstorms. I wish everyone could see where things end up that they drop in storm drains. Hopefully it would make them think twice about littering.

Even though the water is beautiful, one still has to remember we are out in the ocean. One day while we were following dolphins and hundreds of birds in a fish feeding frenzy the fog rolled in. It was so thick we could not see more than a few feet. Using my compass we headed back to the shore but the fog did not clear until we were almost right on top of surfers in the surf.



*Some of the wildlife seen on these paddles*



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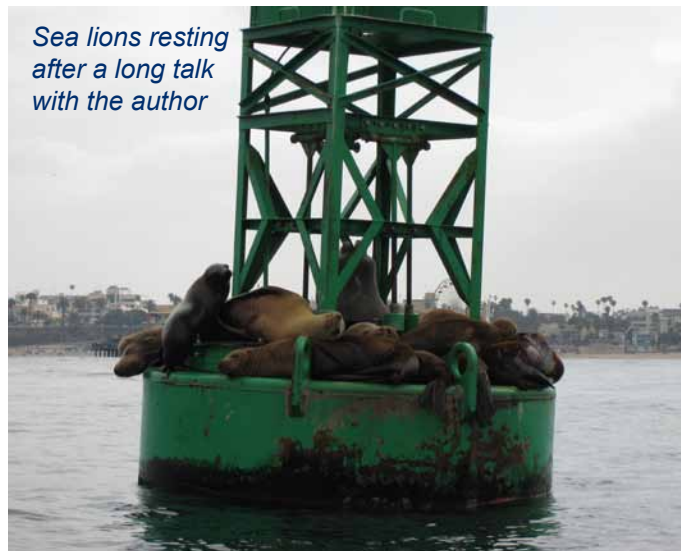
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*Sea lions resting after a long talk with the author*







Our typical paddle starts out paddling up the main channel of the Marina. At low tides we can sometimes see small rays and starfish in the water on the rocks along the way.

A mile up we are at the break wall. Hopefully the wind is behind us because all that bird life can make for a strong odor in the morning! Watching out for boat traffic, we head out of the north entrance of the channel.

Then we continue up towards the bell buoy off Santa Monica pier that is usually packed high with sea lions sunning themselves. I give them my traditional sea lion bark which by now they give me that “you again” look. (Yes, as I tell my students, I speak fluent sea lion).

We have a great time out there and the camaraderie is great. We have even celebrated birthdays out there with hats and party favors. A full size birthday cake fits in a hatch. It takes a little talent to devour it with a knife and fork while you are drifting in the ocean. We are all good friends with no shame any more as we help each other get back in our boats when nature calls.

After about 15 minutes of water, food, and really bad jokes we begin the paddle back. This time we paddle around the break wall and come in the south entrance on the side of the UCLA Aquatic center. After washing our boats and ourselves we are off to do all the things that one normally has to do on a Sunday, but with the pleasure of knowing we have seen a side of Los Angeles that few experience, let alone by kayak. Oh yeah—and discussed the state of the union with a sea lion. ❖

*Alan Feldstein is the owner of Infinite Safari Adventures (www.infinitesafariadventures.com), Infinite Safari Adventures is an African wildlife safari and adventure company that offers a variety of adventures including being the only company to pair wildlife safaris with ocean kayaking off the Tanzania coast. Alan is also a UCLA kayak instructor, SoCal Chapter Chair of the Explorers Club and a member of the Adventurers Club of Los Angeles. An accomplished wildlife photographer, his work has appeared in the LA Times, Wavelength Magazine, and the Paddling.net calendar.*

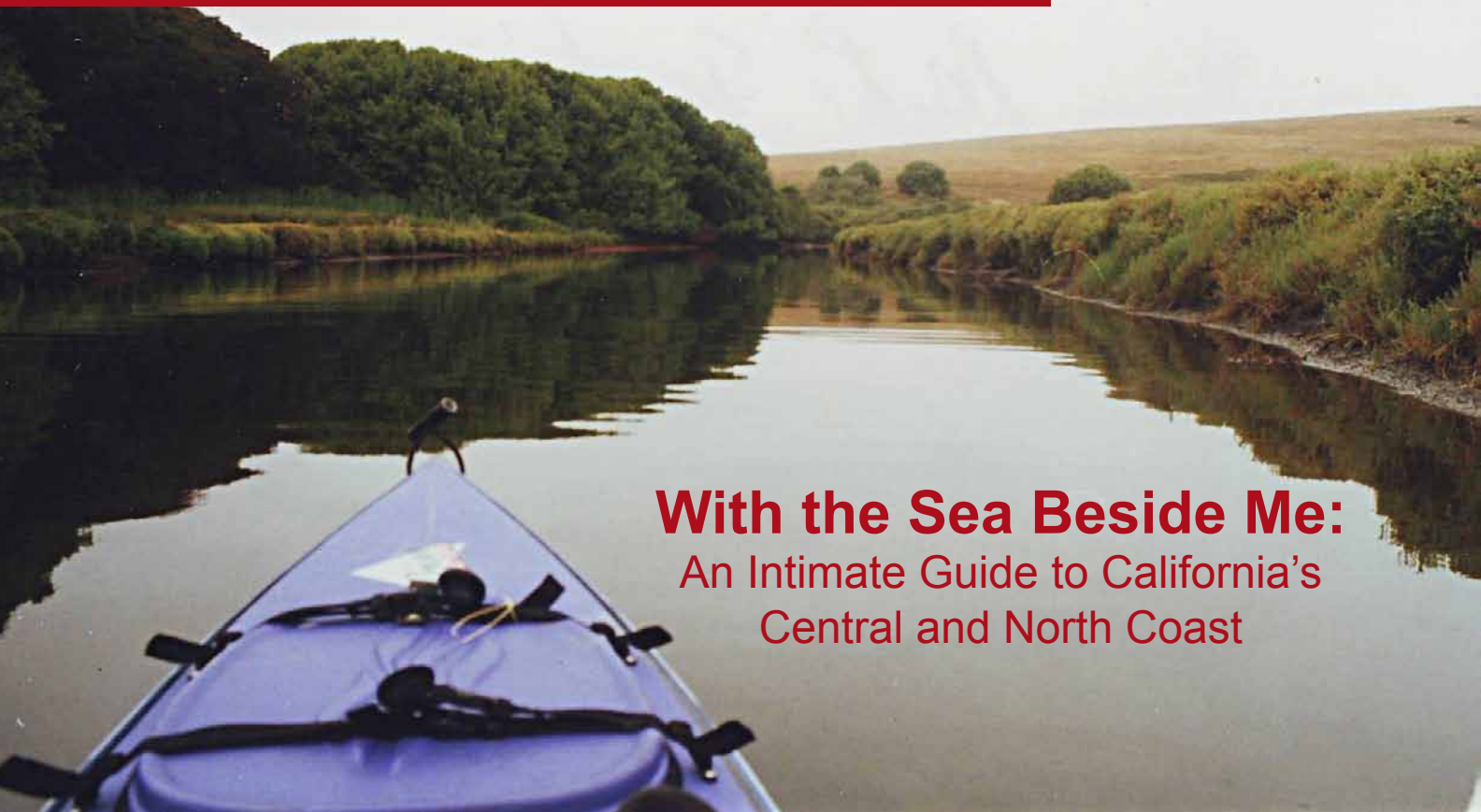
*Photos by Alan Feldstein.*

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## With the Sea Beside Me: An Intimate Guide to California's Central and North Coast

**M**eade Fischer, a regular contributor to *California Kayaker Magazine*, has just published a book called “With the Sea Beside Me: An Intimate Guide to California’s Central and North Coast”. This book reads like a guided tour of the coast from Santa Barbara to the Oregon border, and the intent is to make the reader feel he or she is riding with the author on an extended road trip. This mile-by-mile guide and travel literature is meant to be read for enjoyment before departing and then to be referred to along the way.

The following is an excerpt from the chapter on Marin:

*When you take the road out of Dillon Beach, there’s a junction. The right takes you back to Tomales, and the left to Valley Ford, which is on Highway One, just over the line in Sonoma County. However, just a mile before reaching Valley Ford, there’s a little known, but outstanding paddling experience, Estero Americano. The Valley Ford Franklin School Road crosses the Estero at Marsh Road, and just off the road there is a small parking area, just feet from the water. When you launch, go left.*

*One thing that makes the Estero special is that on hot summer days everyone flocks to the coast to escape the city and the heat. Unfortunately, you’ll find most of the city is there, crowding the beaches and the*

*parking. Imagine relaxing on a totally deserted beach at the mouth of Estero Americano, halfway between Dillon Beach and Bodega Bay.*

*There’s a catch, however. You can’t drive to it, and you probably can’t even walk to it, unless perhaps at a very low tide. The only way in is to paddle for an hour and a half to two hours. Yet getting there is often at least as wondrous as being there.*

*That’s the case with Estero Americano. The six mile paddle down the Estero transports you to a California gone for 200 years, a sparsely populated rolling land of green and gold, cattle grazing on the hills.*

*Just after passing under the bridge there is a stretch of water populated with thousands of pale blue dragonflies. They dance in the air like fairies or like heat shimmers on a desert highway. With a little imagination they become a welcoming committee to a land of solitude.*

*Soon the Estero widens, birds pick for food along the marsh grasses, cows graze lazily on the hills and the occasional ranch house can be seen atop a distant hill.*

*After about an hour there is a channel going off to the left at a 90 degree angle. It flows to a bluff, turns and appears to intersect the main channel a quarter mile down stream. This is the one deceiving place on the trip. The left fork is the main channel, as I discovered*



# With the Sea Beside Me: An intimate guide to California's central and north coast



Meade Fischer

when I had to walk my kayak through the mud and climb over a barbed wire fence.

This left channel takes the paddler by Whale-Tail Rock, a very distinctive formation. From this rock to the next formation, the water is very shallow, so one must take care not to go aground.

The Estero enters a steep-sided valley populated with egrets,

herons, pelicans and gulls. As the canyon walls drop away, the beach appears a short way ahead.

In summer the Estero doesn't flow to the sea. In winter, when it does, it would be wise to take a tide table along, as low tide can be a muddy problem.

A ranch house way up on the hill reminds the paddler that he isn't

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*totally alone, as the beach gives the impression of being visited for the very first time. Approaching the beautiful rock formations on the south end of the beach causes the nesting birds to take up an angry cry against the invading aliens.*

*These rock formations, surrounding crystal clear tide pools, give way to another, smaller beach, more sea rocks, and on and on, perhaps all the way to Dillon Beach. I walked through a sea arch and into the water to see yet another beach and point. It looked possible to walk to Dillon Beach on a minus tide, but I've yet to try it.*

*I wandered those beaches alone for an hour or more. This was on a hot, sunny Saturday in mid June. I didn't see other people until halfway back to the car.*

*Approaching the shallows at Whale-Tail Rock, I watched two kayaks growing closer. In a brief conversa-*

*tion with the couple, I discovered that they were among a small group of regular paddlers on this slough. A half hour later I passed a couple in a canoe, desperately maneuvering to keep from going aground.*

*Returning through a blue haze of dragonflies to my car, it seemed odd to find the tiny parking area filled with three vehicles. I had been out of touch for five glorious hours, and it took a few minutes to readjust to civilization.*

The book includes off the beaten track beaches, great hikes, campgrounds, some motels and restaurants, brew pubs, surf spots, kayaking spots, interesting people to meet along the way and selected stories from the road accumulated in a quarter century of exploration and includes over 200 photos and maps.

If you enjoy the coast and get the occasional travel bug, you can buy this book on Amazon.com. ❖

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# Sea Kayaking the Redwood Coast

The north coast of California offers excellent paddling opportunities for kayakers of all abilities—from advanced rock gardening to mellow paddles on protected lagoons. But if you wanted to visit there, how would you find out about where to paddle? Local knowledge is the key. *Sea Kayaking the Redwood Coast* is a collection of local knowledge provided by members of the local kayaking club, Explore North Coast, that you can pick up and read in advance of your trip.

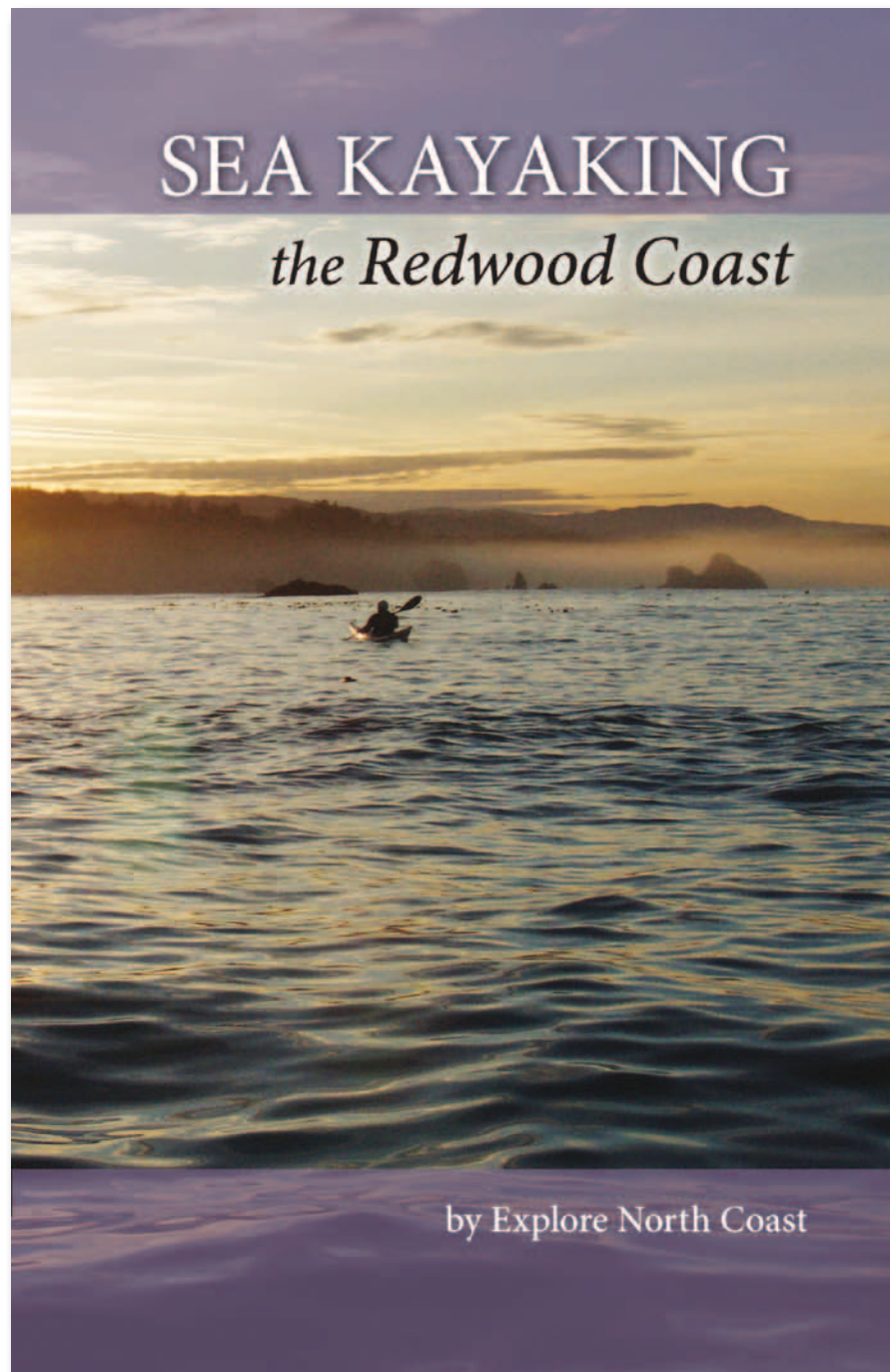
This guide book covers the area from just south of Eureka and all the way north to the California-Oregon border. It is separated into chapters that each covers a geographic section. Basic information about the area, cautions, directions, facilities available, and suggested paddle routes are all included. Each section also contains a map and a myriad of supporting color photos. Running a print publication, *California Kayaker Magazine* is well aware of the costs of printing in full color, so it is impressive to see this book having so many color photographs and maps.

Interspersed with the information on the various launch points and routes are interesting side notes for that area, such as historical points or natural/ecological information. These are nice additions, adding background information that will improve on your paddling and whole trip experience.

This book would be good for sea kayakers and recreational flat-water kayakers who want to paddle in the region. The information covered tells you what you need to know to paddle in this area and what skill level the paddle would be suggested for. The descriptions of anticipated conditions are also very helpful for keeping you safe.

The book only briefly touches on areas that may be good for fishing, but doesn't provide the details that kayak fishermen would need. It does not cover information needed by whitewater kayakers. Neither of these should be a surprise, for a book whose title starts with "Sea Kayaking".

*Sea Kayaking the Redwood Coast* can be purchased online from the club's web site at [www.explorenorthcoast.net/book.html](http://www.explorenorthcoast.net/book.html) or at most sports and kayak retailers on the North Coast. \$19.95, 104 pages ❖







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