

# California Kayaker



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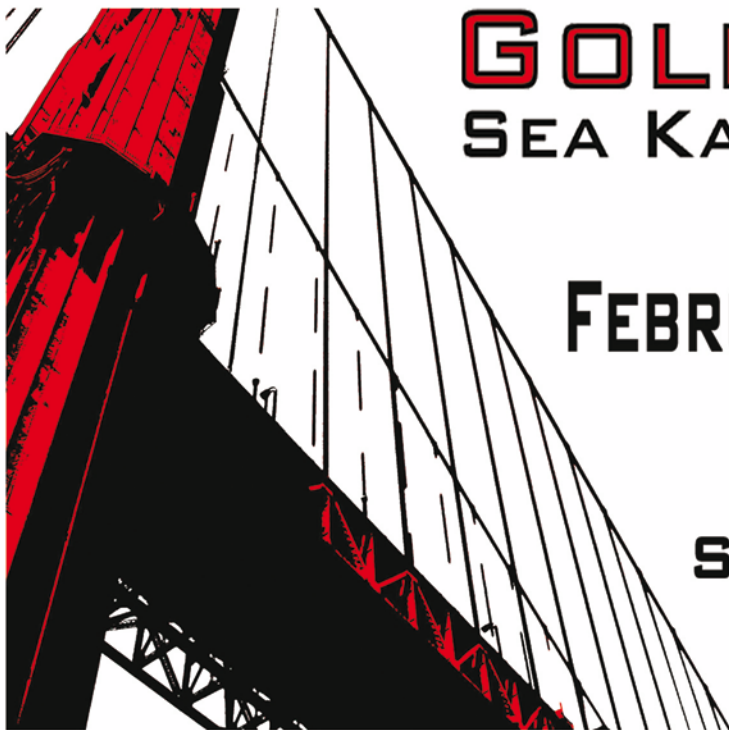
Winter 2010



**INSIDE:**

**Moss Landing**  
**Boat Outfitting**  
**Rancheria Creek**  
**Making Swimbaits**





# GOLDEN GATE SEA KAYAK SYMPOSIUM

## FEBRUARY 18-20, 2011

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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, available free on 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.

# Winter 2010

Volume 1, Issue 4

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**Cover Photo** - Current ICF World Freestyle Kayak champion Nick Troutman (red boat) hits the water alongside Junior World Champion Jason Craig during the *Reno River Festival*. They took first and second place, respectively, in what is considered one of the deepest fields of competitive whitewater athletes in the world.

Photo by David Calvert,  
[CalvertPhotography.com](http://CalvertPhotography.com)

Camera: Nikon D300



# Editor's Note



## Welcome Letter

Welcome to the Winter issue of *California Kayaker Magazine*. Hard to believe that this is the 4th issue (and being quarterly, that means we have finished our first full year). The magazine is still coming along nicely.

I received an email from a reader regarding last issue's Leopard shark *Critters from Kayaks* article. When we talked about where to go see Leopard sharks from a kayak, we missed one of the better places – La Jolla. During the summer, it is common to see a school of large Leopard sharks just off the beach – common enough that there are 4 or 5 kayak rental shops there getting people out to see the spectacle. Sorry about not listing La Jolla.

*California Kayaker Magazine* has been available online since the first issue. But now rather than just having a PDF available for download, there is also a version of the magazine that can be read using a Flash-based player hosted by a company called Yudu.com. In both PDF and Yudu, all links are active. So if you want to check out an advertiser or get more information from one of the links with more information in the sidebar of the articles, opening either of the online versions will let you click to go to the link rather than having to retype the URL.

I am putting this together around Thanksgiving, which makes me think about what I am thankful for. Good health, living in an area where I can kayak year round, etc. are all on the list. But for the magazine, I am thankful for the many new advertisers in this issue, which are helping the magazine get closer to breakeven. And I am VERY thankful for the advertisers who have been with us for a few issues now, some even showing their support for *California Kayaker Magazine* right from the first issue. If you like this magazine, let the advertisers know that you saw their ad. This way they will know they are spending their advertising dollars wisely.

Happy Paddling!

**Peter Donohue**

Editor

[editor@calkayakermag.com](mailto:editor@calkayakermag.com)



## ▷NEWS

### New Fishing License Process

State fishing licenses can now only be bought online or from a special terminal that will be installed at many of the larger licensing agents. Those agents that did not sell at least \$6k worth of licenses a year (or about 150 per year) are not able to get the machine.

**Impact** – You can get a license online (more convenient), but many of the shops you may have bought licenses from in the past may not offer them anymore. Annual licenses will be mailed to you. However, at the end of the transaction you will be able to print a temporary document for immediate use until you receive your license in the mail.

On a positive note, earlier this year the requirement that you wear your license in a visible location was removed, but of course you still need to have the license with you when fishing.

For more detailed information visit [www.dfg.ca.gov/licensing/fishing/sport-fishing.html](http://www.dfg.ca.gov/licensing/fishing/sport-fishing.html).

## ▷EVENTS

*Golden Gate Sea Kayak Symposium*  
Sausalito, CA  
Feb 18-20, 2011  
[www.ggskss.com](http://www.ggskss.com)  
see ad on page 2

*25th Santa Cruz Surf Kayak Festival*  
Santa Cruz, CA  
March 17-20, 2011  
[www.asudoit.com/kayak\\_fest](http://www.asudoit.com/kayak_fest)

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

### Johnson Outdoors to Support Fight Against Breast Cancer

As part of their commitment to eradicate breast cancer, Necky Kayaks and Ocean Kayak (both part of the Johnson Outdoors product family) donate one percent of the gross sales from their women-specific kayaks to the Breast Cancer Fund, the leading national organization working to identify and eliminate the environmental causes of the disease.

Since the program's inception in 2002, Necky Kayaks and Ocean Kayak have donated nearly \$85,000 in cash and products to the Breast Cancer Fund. Johnson Outdoors donates proceeds from its "designed for women by women" Necky Eliza and Ocean Kayak Venus kayak sales. Both of these brands look forward to continuing the support in 2011.

### California Coastal Cleanup Day

California Coastal Cleanup Day is the premier volunteer event focused on the marine environment in the country. In 2010, more than 80,300 volunteers worked together on Saturday, September 25 to collect more than 1,100,000 pounds of trash and recyclables from our beaches, lakes, and waterways. Since California Coastal Cleanup Day started in 1985, over 800,000 Californians have removed more than 15 million pounds of debris from our state's shorelines and coast. More information and reports can be found at [www.coastal.ca.gov/publiced/ccd/ccd.html](http://www.coastal.ca.gov/publiced/ccd/ccd.html) and [www.thewatershed-project.org/enewscdaywrap.html](http://www.thewatershed-project.org/enewscdaywrap.html).

[News Continued on Page 15](#)



*Kayakers cleaning up Marina del Rey  
photo by Mark Lessley*

## ▷RESULTS

### U.S. Waveski Nationals

The 2010 U.S. Waveski Open was held in Ventura on October 15-17, 2010. A waveski is basically a surfboard designed to ride waves while seated and be propelled with a kayak paddle. More information can be found at [www.uswaveski.com/blog/?p=193](http://www.uswaveski.com/blog/?p=193)

Open (overall winner):

1. Blaire Moore
2. Steve Farthing
3. Tyler Lausten

Top U.S. WaveSki Surfers:

1. Tyler Lausten
2. Geoff Jennings
3. Roger Adams

Women:

1. Wina Duminy
2. Lucy O'Brien

Vets (age 60+):

1. Dennis St. Clair
2. Mike Wright
3. Dick Gallovay

Grand Master (age 50-59):

1. Roger Adams
2. Mike Harrington
3. Eric Luhrs

Master (age 40-49):

1. Blaire Moore
2. Stephen Farthing
3. Jeff Munson

Seniors (age 30-39):

1. Morne Eramus
2. Geoff Jennings
3. Francois Duminy

New Age (age 21-29):

1. Tyler Lausten
2. Kevin Mackinlay
3. Jim Gaffney

MERV (finless boats):

1. Jim Grossman
2. Mike Harrington
3. Rick Haley

Kayak:

1. Jim Grossman
2. Vincent Shay
3. Geoff Jennings

# The Greenland Paddle Not Just for Rolling

By Duane Strosaker

*A selection of Greenland Paddles  
Photo by California Kayaker*

**T**here is no doubt about the effectiveness of the Greenland paddle (GP) for rolling. But in the world of sea kayaking, where the forward stroke is king, don't underestimate the long, narrow blades of the GP. They are as effective for paddling as they are for rolling. Just this last summer, Joe O'Brien used one to take back the speed record for circumnavigating Vancouver Island. With proper technique, the GP is silent, smooth and efficient for cranking out the miles. If you've been paddling with big blades and would like to try the skinny stick, here are some tips to make the transition easier.

## Holding Between the Ends

The GP is meant to be held up and down the full length of the paddle, so I'm hesitant to describe a normal place to hold it. But there is a place to hold the paddle in between the times your hands are sliding back and forth. This place is with the thumb and forefinger of each hand wrapped around where the shaft meets the blades. The other fingers wrap over the top edge of the blades. This way you'll know the blade orientation by feel and be centered to quickly extend the paddle either way.

## No More Kerplunk

If you've been using a feathered paddle, the first thing you might notice when using a GP is a kerplunk as the left blade enters the water at an awkward angle and splashes. Switching to unfeathered paddling takes some getting used to. The trick is to relax the grip on the right hand as soon as the right blade exits the water. The left hand now becomes the control hand while the paddle spins freely in the right hand, allowing the paddle to be held at any angle, low or high. Then as soon as the left blade exits from the water, relax the grip on the left hand and the right hand becomes the control hand. Switching control hands with each stroke is symmetry at its best, and you'll lose that big callus knob on your right thumb.

## Getting Off the Treadmill

There are few things more hilarious than watching a big blade paddler try a GP for the first time and look like he's on a treadmill. You can't start cranking back on the paddle as soon as the tip hits the water. Air gets pulled down behind the blade, creating a trail of air bubbles and a scratching sound, and most of the cranking power is lost before the paddle has maximum bite. The trick is to plant the blade quickly and smoothly into the water at



least twelve inches before cranking on it. When no air bubbles follow the blade, the stroke is silent, and there's lots of bite, the paddle is telling you the stroke was started right.

### Putting Spin on It

When a GP flutters, it is because it can't decide which edge of the blade to let the water flow over, so it switches the flow back and forth. To resolve this problem, think of how ping pong players put spin on the ball with a slicing motion from the paddle. As you paddle with a GP, put a slight angle on the blade to allow the water to flow over just one edge of the blade. This makes a slicing motion that creates lift and allows the paddle to find new water to push against, much like a wing paddle. But better than a wing paddle, a GP can slice both outwards, with water flowing under the bottom edge of the blade (wing paddle style), and inwards with water flowing over the top edge of the blade.

For the wing style stroke, with the blade slicing outwards and water flowing under the bottom edge of the blade, let the blade drift away from the kayak while rotating through the stroke. While the wing style stroke works with the GP, I find the paddle is more powerful with the blade slicing inwards and water flowing over the top edge of the blade. This style of stroke is done with the bottom hand pulling straight back and close to the kayak. Because the top hand crosses over the deck during rotation and the bottom hand stays close to the kayak, the blade in the water draws slightly closer to the kayak through the stroke. Holding the paddle with the top edge of the blade canted forward slightly helps direct the stroke. The slicing and cant are subtle and take practice, but finding the sweet spot results in smooth and powerful strokes.

### Using More Than Just Half of the Paddle

The funny thing about kayak paddles is that one blade is usually sticking



up useless in the air. The genius of the GP is that the blades are designed to be held with the hands sliding back and forth to vary the width of the grip and extend the paddle to take advantage of its full length.

The sliding stroke is useful for getting more power with a wider grip and getting the blades deeper into the water for more bite. It's sort of like switching into a higher gear. To do the sliding stroke, as the right blade exits the water, relax the grip on the right hand and slide it out onto the blade about six inches, which extends the paddle out to the left. Take a stroke on the left side, and as the left blade exits the water, slide the right hand back in where the shaft meets the blade. Now relax the grip on the left hand, slide it out onto

*Gripping with thumb and forefinger where the shaft meets the blades*

the blade about six inches, and take a stroke on the right side. Repeat to continue the sliding stroke. Remember that the sliding hand returns to where the shaft meets the blade before the other hand slides out on the blade. Although the sliding stroke is tedious at first, with practice you won't even realize you're doing it. A single sliding stroke also works nicely as a corrective stroke to keep the kayak going straight.

When wind or waves knock the kayak far off the heading, nothing gets it pointed back in the right direction faster than the far reaching sweep

*Demonstrating the sliding stroke*



stroke from an extended GP. Extend the paddle to the left by sliding the left hand to the right hand, and then sliding the right hand out towards the end of the blade. Return to the unextended position by sliding the right hand to the left hand, and then sliding the left hand to where the shaft meets the blade. Remember, while one hand is sliding, the other one is holding the paddle. Extending the GP also makes high and low braces very powerful.

As mentioned earlier, there really isn't a normal position to hold the GP. If your hands aren't sliding back and forth, unglue them.

### A Little about Sizing

Body measurements are commonly used for sizing a GP. I like a paddle blade a little shorter, with a shaft a little longer, than typically prescribed. So while body measurements are a good place to start, don't fuss over them too much. If the sizing is a bit off with the first paddle, your stroke will adapt, and you'll have an idea of which way to go for the next one.

Paddle length is typically as high as you can reach while standing with the fingers of one hand curled over the end of the paddle, but taller people will need to go shorter and

shorter people will need to go longer. Most GP lengths are 84 to 90 inches. The width of the shoulders is typically used for the shaft length, but I find this measurement too narrow and go a few inches wider. Shaft lengths are usually 19 to 24 inches. The blades shouldn't be wider than you can comfortably grip with your hands to extend the paddle. Most blades are around 3½ inches wide.

### Nothing like Using It

These tips should help you get started paddling with a GP, but nothing replaces the experience of cranking out the miles with one. Back when I was using both types of paddles, I noticed that my GP paddling improved my big blade paddling by making me more aware of what I was doing. But eventually the big feathered blades seemed like a hindrance, and the long, narrow blades made every stroke that much more enjoyable. The countless generations of Greenlanders who survived by hunting from their kayaks would agree. ❖

*Duane Strosaker resides in Irvine, CA. His favorite types of paddling are crossings and surfing, and he does both with a Greenland paddle. Visit his website at [www.rollordrown.com](http://www.rollordrown.com).*

*Photos of Scott Brown modeling the GP are by Duane Strosaker*



*Showing the typical paddle length*

For more info on GPs and how to make them:  
[www.qajaqusa.org/Equipment/paddles.html](http://www.qajaqusa.org/Equipment/paddles.html)

### Vancouver Island Circumnavigation Speed Record

Name: Joe O'Brien  
Launch Point: Brechin boat ramp, Nanaimo, B.C.  
Direction: CCW  
Start: August 19, 2010 8:08 AM PDT  
Finish: September 4, 2010 8:22 PM PDT

OFFICIAL TIME  
16 days 12 hours 14 minutes

*The paddle of choice of professional sea kayaker, Helen Wilson*



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# Encounters with Leviathan

By Mary Jane Schramm

*Gray whale in British Columbia  
Photo by Shutterstock/Tom Middleton*

**T**he female Gray whale slid through gunmetal gray water past the jutting Point Reyes Peninsula, tinsel streamers of rain pockmarking the turgid ocean swell. Gulls hovered overhead, kiting and wheeling before cutting away again. Gravid with calf, in her hurry to reach the safety and buoyancy of Baja's calving lagoons, the whale ignored the males' intent upon engaging her in mating. With measured urgency she maintained a speed of three to five knots, and a regular rhythm of four to six breaths, or blows, per minute, diving at three-to-five minute intervals. Having traveled much farther north to feed, she will not reach the calving lagoons before her calf arrives. If lucky, the cow-calf pair will be able to withstand winter storms and escape killer whales en route to the Baja lagoons and safety, and pass our shores once again this spring.

Each winter as the solstice approaches, many Californians anticipate the migration of the Gray whales past our shores, signaling the advent of a new year. The majority of the Eastern Pacific Gray whale population makes its stately progress twice each year past the California coast. In late fall and winter, having laid down a several inch thick layer of insulating and nourishing blubber, they head south from the Arctic's Bering and Chukchi seas to their sheltered winter breeding lagoons in Baja California. Then, in late winter and spring, mating and calving accomplished, they begin their trek north again to resume feeding throughout the summer and early fall in high-latitude waters.

The most coastal of the large whale species, their path takes them through the Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary just beyond the Golden Gate, using our waters as a marine superhighway. But this pattern is changing.

Warming ocean temperatures in the Arctic are hastening polar ice cap melt. Consequently, the nourishing amphipods—tiny mud-living marine invertebrates on which

Grays feed—are disappearing from the Grays' traditional feeding grounds. Amphipods feed on dead marine plants, or algae, that rain down from the underside of the ice sheet. When the ice sheet shrinks, the amphipods disappear, and Gray whales must seek sustenance elsewhere.

Some Grays have begun to stall out along the migration path, utilizing coastal waters in a different way. Instead of marine superhighways, these waters are now becoming "seafood buffet" tables. In addition to—or as an alternative to—amphipod-laden mud, changing conditions have caused Grays to switch to other prey such as swarms of mysid shrimp, or even herring roe slurped from kelp fronds.

Beginning in the early 1960s, small 'summer resident' populations of Gray whales began to linger in various spots along their travel route: In 1962 Grays established a feeding site off western Vancouver Island. Later, Grays began to over-summer at the South Farallon Islands, and in sheltered bays and inlets along the coast, including Tomales Bay and San Francisco Bay. These opportunistic meals can be high-risk propositions. Gray whales, already vulnerable to shipstrike because of their near shore migration, are now targeted by curious boaters and paddlers eager for a closer look. Careless whale watchers could disturb the whales even as they attempt to eke out a hard-scrabble existence. And the danger to small craft operators posed by a 40-ton whale should not be ignored.

Another concern: what foods are they finding in these newfound feeding spots? Is there enough to sustain them, or are these "junk food" pit stops? And are the whales ingesting toxins or bacteria? Scientists are currently looking at this.



*Gray whale in San Francisco Bay*  
Photo by California Kayaker

Some researchers note that a melting Arctic ice cap may open up more northerly feeding grounds, allowing Gray whales to forage in the path of the receding ice. The most dramatic example is the solitary Gray whale sighted in May 2010 off Israel. It's likely that it overshot the Arctic via the newly ice-free Northwest Passage, and found itself in the Atlantic, where it veered south and into the Straits of Gibraltar and Mediterranean beyond.

While we are still studying the responses and adaptations of the Gray whale to a changing ocean climate, we are advised to be cautious any time we may come into contact with whales, and give them distance and respect as they struggle to survive.

### Gray Whale Facts

The Gray whale, *Eschrichtius robustus*, is alone in the Family *Eschrichtiidae*, and may be one of the oldest surviving cetacean families. Two stocks, or populations, remain: the Northeast Pacific stock off North America, and the Western Pacific stock, off Russia and Asia. The North Atlantic stock disappeared in the 17th or 18th century, perhaps helped into extinction by European and Yankee whalers.

*E. robustus* is a mid-sized whale, reaching around 50 feet and nearly 40 tons, with a streamlined body, nar-

row tapered head, and arched upper jaw. Its dark skin has gray patches with white mottling, often scratched, with patches of barnacles and orange whale lice. Newborn calves are a glossy dark gray to black. Grays lack a dorsal fin, but instead sport a ridge of knuckles extending from mid-back to the flukes (tail).

The Gray whale is a *mysticete*, or "mustached" whale like many large whale species, lacking teeth, but using bristle-like plates hanging from inside its upper lip as a sieve. It engulfs great mouthfuls of food and silt, often gouged from the seafloor, but sometimes gulped from the water column. The food is then trapped behind the baleen plates, while silt and seawater are spit out.

### Conservation Status

Its specialized behaviors—its fidelity to breeding sites and its near shore habits—have rendered the Gray whale unusually vulnerable to exploitation. Whaling brought the Gray whale to the brink of extinction several times until it was protected by international treaty. Although their numbers once recovered to nearly 27,000, about one third of the Gray whales died between 1999 and 2000, many malnourished. The reasons are still not fully understood. They now number around 19,000.

By using binoculars to assure a good view, and leaving the whales undisturbed, you can enjoy seeing these

magnificent creatures while helping to assure their survival in the face of a changing ocean climate.

### How to spot Gray whales

Gray whales can sometimes be seen from a kayak. Often the thing you will see is its bushy blow, which looks like a puff of white smoke about 10 to 15 feet high, since very little of the whale itself is visible at the surface (particularly when you are sitting low in a kayak). A whale may surface and blow several times before a prolonged dive, typically lasting from three to six minutes. On its last surfacing, sometimes you will see the fluke as it starts its deep dive.

Grays generally migrate south past our coasts in December and January. During this time, they are often a half-mile to a few miles off shore. Males and non-breeding females migrate back north in March, at about the same distance from shore. Mothers follow after their calves have grown strong enough to do the migration, around April-May. Cow-calf pairs stay very close to shore, and may even pause in quiet coves for the calf to nurse or rest. They may even roll among the breakers in the surf zone -- which could provide refuge or a sound-screen to protect against killer whales that patrol the coast.

If you want to watch from a kayak, be aware that Gray whales are federally protected, with serious consequences for those who violate the rules. The Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) of 1972 prohibits the "taking" of marine mammals, including whales. "Take" has been defined as "the act of hunting, killing, capture, and/or harassment of any marine mammal; or, the attempt at such." MMPA has given National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) the enforcement powers to make sure whales are protected.

Kayakers in the 21st Century aren't usually out hunting for whales, but can possibly be in violation of the MMPA by harassing them. Because



our boats are very quiet, we can sometimes get very close to whales before they notice us. But this stealth approach is also the tactic that Killer whales use, so Gray whales may be surprised by your approach (and could possibly react violently in defense).

The NOAA Office of Protected Resources has issued guidelines for boaters:

- Remain at least 100 yards from whales.
- Never separate a whale cow from her calf.
- Limit your time observing an animal to 1/2 hour.
- Marine mammals should not be encircled or trapped between boats or shore.

In addition to these guidelines you can also make sure you are not harassing the animal by ensuring that nothing you do causes the whale to change its behavior, even if this means staying further away than the guidelines listed above.

If you are not sure about finding whales and behaving correctly when around them, it may be easier to take a guided kayak whale watch tour (see box for information on tour companies).

Below is a list of some of the kayak companies that have whale watch kayaking tours:

Arcata Area:

- Humboats
- **KayakZak (pg 14)**

Mendocino Area:

- **Liquid Fusion Kayaking (pg 29)**

Bay Area:

- **Clavey Paddlesports (pg 13)**

Monterey Bay area:

- Kayak Connection
- Venture Quest

San Diego area:

- Hike Bike Kayak
- Aqua Adventures

Companies in bold are advertisers.



*Baleen visible on a spy-hopping Gray whale in Baja  
Photo by Shutterstock/ jocrebbin*

Or you can increase your chances of seeing whales even more if you go on one of the whale watch cruises (often on fishing boats), which launch from most every major port in California.

And there is always the option of viewing these whales from shore, which you can't do with most other whales. At the right time of the year, Grays can be seen from just about any shoreline, though you can increase your chances if you gain a little elevation (view from a bluff, rather than a beach) and go to a point of land that sticks out (possibly bringing you closer to the whales). ❖

*Mary Jane Schramm is a whale watch naturalist and media specialist for NOAA's Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary. She has led whale and wildlife expeditions off California and Mexico.*

Learn more at: [farallones.noaa.gov](http://farallones.noaa.gov), and at [www.acsonline.org/issues/grayWhales/index.html](http://www.acsonline.org/issues/grayWhales/index.html)

A video of the Gray whale in San Francisco Bay can be seen at [calkayakermag.blogspot.com/2010/11/graywhale.html](http://calkayakermag.blogspot.com/2010/11/graywhale.html)



*Gray whale in San Francisco Bay  
Photo by California Kayaker*



# Outfitting Your Boat for Comfort & Control – A Medical Perspective

## Part 1 – Sit Bones and Hip Flexors

By Gregg Berman



Thigh support placed providing support to hips, butt, and thighs

I had just launched on an eight-day kayak trip paddling through beautiful areas of the Everglades and parts of the Florida Keys. The wind was light, the azure skies were sunny and clear and the water was wonderfully warm in this near tropical climate. It seemed an idyllic start to my journey.

Regrettably, I was in a new boat and had not spent any time outfitting it. Within my first few hours on the water I had progressively lost sensation in both my legs. The symptoms extended from the tips of my toes to above my waist on both sides of my body, accompanied by a burning pain that extended throughout my legs and butt. I had never experienced symptoms so severe, and I certainly didn't want to struggle with it for eight days. I seriously considered ending my trip right then. Thankfully another paddler gave me some wonderful advice that largely eliminated my complaints and allowed me to complete the trip. So what was this great advice? Before I answer, let's discuss what caused these symptoms in the first place.

Most of us have experienced some sort of discomfort while paddling, even if not typically as severe as the description above. We may have gotten out of our boats a little stiff or with a sore spot here or there. Any little irritation may diminish the enjoyment we feel while kayaking. In this two-part series we'll discuss some of the most common maladies, their causes and how we can outfit our kayaks to best prevent them.

### A Medical perspective on Leg Numbness

The factors creating leg numbness go by a variety of names including *piriformis syndrome*, *sciatica*, *peripheral* and/or *entrapment neuropathies*, *nerve compression syndrome*, *limb paresthesia*, and more. No matter what you call it though, the underlying ideology stems from the same set of factors, namely compression of the nerves and blood supply running down the leg. The sciatic nerve essentially runs from the spine down the buttock and continues down the back of the leg. Along its path it comes in close proximity to the *ischial tuberosity* or "sit bones" and travels under or over a wide variety of muscles in the buttocks and thigh including the piriformis muscle. Inflammation of any of these areas in addition to the direct compressive forces of sitting can impede blood flow and nerve conduction causing pain, numbness and the pins and needles sensation.

One way to limit these effects is with proper and consistent stretching of the hamstring muscles. Doing so can prevent the tightness that not only creates its own pressure but also leads to minor or sometimes major muscle spasms that can further irritate the sciatic nerve. Of course that knowledge doesn't help while you're sitting in your boat feeling uncomfortable. Fortunately, there is an easy solution you can do even while on the water. Simply inflate your paddle float under your knees and slide it back towards the front edge of your seat until you find the desired degree of support. This is what saved me on my eight-day



trip. It sounds ridiculously simple but it's amazingly effective. There are also commercial devices such as Seal Line's thigh cushion support or Eric Jackson's Happy Seat.

The float allows for a natural bend in the knee. This all by itself relieves back pressure (more on this later) and also allows the hamstring muscles to relax. Try sitting on the floor with your legs straight in front of you, no bend in the knee. Now try the same thing but bend the knees. For most of us the latter position will be far more comfortable. Of course you can hold your legs in that position without use of the paddle float but this would further tax the hip flexors which are already overworked from maintaining the seated position. Over time these hip flexors become short and tight which results in a condition of unwanted reciprocal weakening of non-engaged gluteal muscles. At the same time, compensatory muscles such as the piriformis and related muscles enlarge. This isolated enlargement of certain muscles can increase impingement of the sciatic nerve. The paddle float prevents that by allowing your hip flexors to relax.

When not on the water, we can do even better with our outfitting. Many kayak seats are essentially nothing more than a hard, basically flat pan with an often overly large and overly tall backrest. These features also increase the strain on the hip flexors as well as greatly increasing the direct pressure to your sit bones. This direct pressure can create an inflammation of the bursa, the protective pads that provide lubrication between the ischial tuberosity (the bones felt near the juncture of your hamstring and buttocks while in the seated position) and the tendons that move over it. This is yet another potential source of irritation of the sciatica.

Imagine driving your car for long periods if your seat was not much more contoured than a board with a mild depression carved into it like those old wooden school chairs. Likely you wouldn't be able to sit in it comfort-



*Commercial options for thigh support include (clockwise from top) the Jackson Kayak Happy Seat with built in tube to inflate after placing under legs, Seattle Sports paddle float (with a custom inflation tube attached), and the Seal Line self inflating Kayak Thigh Support Cushion.*

ably for very long. Instead your car seat is designed to rise in the front, up under your knees as well as be scooped near the buttocks while also providing lumbar support. We can do this in our kayaks as well. Though sea kayaks and surf kayaks are progressing, most whitewater boats are far more advanced in terms of ergonomic design. Whitewater boats typically have a seat pan heavily scooped out in the rear, with a gradual rise towards the front where it rests under the hamstrings.

If you're lucky enough to have this scooped out type of seat the addi-

tion of the paddle float may be all the modification you need. The stock seats in both my sea and surf kayaks were very flat, creating lots of pressure on my sit bones. My legs would fall asleep to some degree on anything more than a very short paddle. The use of the paddle float greatly alleviates this but we can go a step or two further. If you are handy with foam shaping or fiberglassing, you can find some very good web sites that explain in detail how to make a seat with a perfect fit using those methods.

If like me, you are endowed with nei-

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*Examples of a flat pan seat (left) that will offer little support thus creating pressure points versus a more ergonomic seat that will reduce pressure points by supporting your frame more evenly.*

ther of those talents, finding a stock seat to use that is comfortable can be an easier option. I had a selection of my own boats to compare between, but even if you don't have boats of your own to choose from, your local shop can provide seats to try. I took the seats out of boats and placed them on flat ground to isolate only what I was feeling in the seat without other aspects of the boat fit interfering with my selection process.

Often whitewater seats have a more ergonomic design, so they are worth considering. And don't be afraid to call the manufacturer. They can definitely provide seats from newer model kayaks and they often have seats for discontinued models cluttering their warehouses. They'll typically sell discontinued seats at amazingly cheap prices (at least until word gets out about how valuable they are —so keep this quiet). If they don't have the model seat you're looking for they'll tell you the closest current production seat to the one you like.

I ordered seats to outfit both my sea kayak and my surf kayak. Simple modifications needed to be done to both seats so they would fit inside the boats. In my case, I reduced the width with a hack saw and then sanded smooth the sharp edges. If you are planning to surf or rock garden, you may want to beef up the underside with expandable foam (available from TAP Plastics, among other places) and cover the seat with a three-quarters of an inch layer of closed cell foam. This extra strength will help prevent the seat from cracking and provide extra shock absorption to protect your spine from hard jarring forces common if bouncing down waves or in rock gardens.

In the end the best seat is simply the one that comfortably cradles you without creating undue pressure on your sit bones. The scooped out nature of the seat along with the upward slope towards the front, when combined with the paddle float, provides for even weight distribution



*Jackson Kayak Sweet Cheeks, Thermoarest Camp Seat, and REI Lite-Core Sit Pad are some of the options to reduce pressure points created by a flat pan seat without creating a whole new seat. Place these over the existing seat to conform to your shape. Also great to create a more snug fit for better boat handling.*

and better paddling posture. Not only can this translate into a much more comfortable ride, but you'll likely find you have better control of your kayak as well, no matter what type of paddling you do.

In Part 2 of the article we'll further your boat comfort and control with ideas for outfitting your backrests and foot rests. ❖

*Gregg is an Emergency Room Registered Nurse, ACA Level 5 Coastal Kayak Instructor and can be found paddling throughout the Bay Area playing with his friends in BASK, guiding with Environmental Traveling Companions, and working for Sunrise Mountain Sports in Livermore.*

*Photos by Gregg Berman and Amy Byers*



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#### Resources:

Making a seat out of fiberglass:  
[www.kayakforum.com/cgi-sys/cgi-wrap/guille/wiki.pl?Making\\_A\\_Seat](http://www.kayakforum.com/cgi-sys/cgi-wrap/guille/wiki.pl?Making_A_Seat)

Making a custom seat out of foam:  
[www.isomedia.com/homes/gadfly/kayak2.htm](http://www.isomedia.com/homes/gadfly/kayak2.htm)



## News - Continued from page 5

The next California Coastal Cleanup Day is scheduled for Saturday, September 17, 2011

### Support Strokes Raises Over \$25k to Fight Breast Cancer

*Support Strokes* began as a result of a desperate need to save one couple's home and pay bills following a fatal misdiagnosis of a young woman in her late 20s. The paddling community acted swiftly and generously to stave off imminent financial collapse and provide a support structure allowing her final days to be filled with quality care and the richness of family and friends. That paddler lost her battle with breast cancer in May of 2001, but the fight against breast cancer is not over. There is still a lot of paddling to do before breast cancer becomes a thing of the past.

In 2010, over 120 paddlers went around Alameda Island or paddled on the short courses within the Oakland-Alameda Estuary. Pledges received to date exceeded \$26,000, bringing the grand total to over \$500,000 since the event was first held in 2000. More information can be found at [www.calkayak.com/supportstrokes/?go=info](http://www.calkayak.com/supportstrokes/?go=info).

### Sea Trek Regatta and Paddle-a-Thon

196 paddlers came out for the *29th Annual Sea Trek Regatta and Paddle-a-Thon* to raise money for Environmental Traveling Companions' (ETC) accessible outdoor adventure programs.


Races that challenged paddlers and a raffle of a Feathercraft kayak, week long trip in Baja, and more helped raise over \$27,000 this year, bringing the total to over \$400,000 since the event started 29 years ago.

All proceeds enable ETC to provide scholarships to people with disabilities and disadvantaged youth in their outdoor adventure and education programs. Every year, more than 2,100 people with special needs discover the challenge and beauty of the great outdoors on ETC sea kayaking, river rafting, cross-country skiing, or youth LEAD adventures! More information on ETC and the Regatta can be found at [www.etctrips.org/regatta/](http://www.etctrips.org/regatta/)


### California Kayaker Magazine Adds Resource Page to its Website

There are some websites that kayakers go to frequently to get information they need before they go paddle. *California Kayaker Magazine* has compiled a list of these and posted them at [www.calkayakermag.com/resources.html](http://www.calkayakermag.com/resources.html). Bookmark this page, and whenever you need to find out whether a river is running, check water temperatures, or see if the waves and tides are such that you can have a good paddle, you can find all the information you need from this one site. ❖


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# Center



When professional kayak guide (and author of the boat fitting article on page 12) Gregg Berman assured his friend, a class IV river boater, that landing through the big winter shorebreak at Moss Beach along the rugged northern California coast would be a piece of cake, no one expected the look of sheer terror that appeared on her face when their inflatable double kayak suddenly did a nose stand in the rambunctious shore break. A moment later they landed safely (and right side up) on the beach.

Photo by Michael Powers

Camera: Cannon EOS 20D

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](mailto:editor@calkayakermag.com).  
Include the background story and what camera was used.



# Hatch

Duct tape kayak at the *Kern River Festival*. This unknown paddler made the boat by duct taping a bunch of empty water bottles together, and got about a 2-minute ride before being flipped over.

Photo by Dominck Lemarie

Camera: Canon EOS 1DS Mark III



# Mossy Surf

by Meade Fischer



**O**n a recent, sunny, early spring day, I walked up the dune from the parking lot at Moss Landing to find Buck Johnson, winner of the *Masters Long Boat World Championship* in Spain in 2007, in the water with his surf buddy Rick Starr. They were ripping the small, two to four foot waves in their traditional closed surf

kayaks. So after taking a couple of photos, I quickly suited up and joined them. It was good to see kayaks in the water on a Friday morning.

Until about a year ago, there was a tight group of Moss Landing regulars, kayak surf buddies who met at least once a week to ride these somewhat special waves. Saturday mornings at 9:00, there would be from seven or eight, up to fifteen or more men and women gathering at the Sandholdt parking lot to ride a break that was fair to good as often as not. With decent waves, there would also be 15 to 25 boards in the water. Sometimes a group would show up on Friday, often Sunday also.

I got introduced to kayak surfing a half dozen years ago, when my ocean kayaking friend, Bix, told me to drop by and check it out. At the time I was a long board rider, but sitting in the line up, watching kayaks rip waves that I'd paddled for and missed, made me give it a second thought.

At that time Bix and a few others were using sit-on-top surf boats and it looked like fun, so I picked one up from the local outfitter. Other folks were in the short, closed surf boats, but since I never learned the roll, I didn't seriously consider one of those. In that mix were some river boats and a couple of wave skis, which look more like surfboards on steroids.

Although we all surfed other places from time to time, we loved Moss because of the nice peaks with fast lefts and rights. A big plus was that just a few yards north of the break, the surf almost totally died, except for a small shore break, making paddling out a cinch, even on fairly large days.





For four years, a congenial mix of people, some retired, a few still quite young and a great young couple, recent transplants from South Africa, met each weekend, surfed when there were waves and gathered after at the local Surf City Coffee shop for a snack and surfing trash talk.

Over time, more and more of these folks moved from other types of boats to wave skis, but I never tired of my sit-on-top, truly a boat for all seasons. The guy from South Africa used to show up alone with the same type of boat as I, but soon his lovely wife joined him, and they purchased two new wave skis. She was just starting out, but soon, with her aggressive approach to riding, Vena, was out surfing her husband and had become one of the best in the line up. After two years, she won a local contest.

A year or so ago, I'd show up and find some of the regulars missing, and soon it wasn't a must gathering on Saturday. Often, being in a position to surf during the week, I started to skip Saturday altogether.

On a good weekday or weekend, a few kayak surfers would show up, but it was hit or miss, and I often find myself in the water with only board surfers, but at Moss, board and kayak surfers get along.

The south side of the Moss Landing Harbor is a mellow place, where boards and boats share the water. The place has both kinds of regulars, and boarders like Donny and Mandy are part of the Moss crew and are our friends. The other side of the harbor mouth, the Dunes side, is almost all board surfers, and there are folks over there who regard kayakers as interlopers.

The place is fun from two feet to overhead, when the waves are hollow "pipes", which is the name some locals use for the break. Conditions are dependent on the sand bars that build up right in front of the parking lot. If the currents and storms have been kind, they produce perfect waves where the left and right shoulders mirror each other, and you can high five a buddy before taking off in opposite directions.

**Directions:** From the Highway One bridge in Moss Landing, go south. Turn on Moss Landing Road (at the Whole Enchilada Restaurant). Go a block, and turn right on Sandholdt Road. Cross the bridge and immediately turn left into the parking lot for Sandholdt Parking Lot for Salinas River State Beach.

If you are new to surf kayaking, it is advisable to understand the surf etiquette before going out. Below are a Bay Area and San Diego area source for information on kayak surfing:

- [www.bask.org/surfing](http://www.bask.org/surfing)
- [www.sdkc.org/surfing/surfing.php](http://www.sdkc.org/surfing/surfing.php)

This sand bar break is just off the parking lot. In the winter it's often shoulder high when a hundred yards south, there are ten foot boomers impossible to paddle through. However, in the summer, when the main break is often too small, surfable waves are just a short paddle south, where a nice left peels off.

While you never know who you'll see, if anyone, on a given day, in



the weeks before the annual *Santa Cruz Surf Kayak Festival* at Steamers Lane, competitors from all over gather at Moss to practice for the big event.

The lefts there are particularly nice, as they shoulder off into the area beyond the sand bars where waves don't break, making for a quick and easy paddle back to the line up.

As in the old TV show, Cheers, it's nice to go where everybody knows your name, so if you come down to check it out, just say that Meade sent you. ❖


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

*Photos of various kayak surfers and the parking lot by Meade Fischer.*




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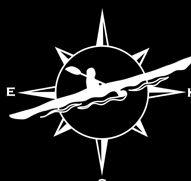
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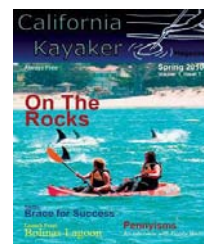
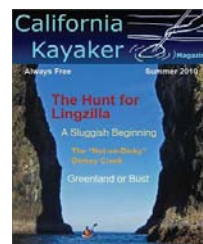
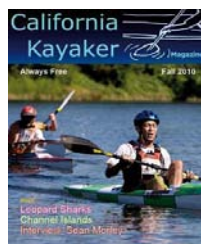
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# Following the Ducks Adventures on Rancheria Creek

By Cate Hawthorne



*The author paddling on Rancheria Creek*

**L**ike skiers and bicyclists, many kayakers enjoy going downhill. Downhill in kayaking involves whitewater and is often referred to as going down river or river running. River running entails carving in and out of eddies, ferrying across the current, riding wave trains, surfing waves, and boofing off rocks. California has considerable diversity of whitewater runs ranging from the polished granite of the Sierras to the woodland runs of the coastal range.

The coastal rivers and creeks of Northern California are predominately rain-fed and come and go with winter and spring rains. Like snow sport enthusiasts, coastal whitewater boaters eagerly anticipate storm fronts and precipitation predictions. (On occasion, we have even been known to do a few rain dances.) As a storm passes, we monitor the rainfall totals and river flows.

Situated in the Anderson Valley of Mendocino County, Rancheria Creek is one of our favorite rain-fed runs. Known for its scenery, Rancheria Creek meanders for 26 miles through riparian woodlands and mossy gorges towered over by redwoods and firs that occasionally part, providing glimpses of the surrounding Anderson Valley. Many tributaries tumble down the hillsides enhancing the scenery and feeding Rancheria Creek until it eventually becomes the Navarro River. Wildlife varies from river otters and wood ducks to bald eagles and red-shouldered hawks.

Rancheria Creek can usually be boated 10-15 days during the rainy season, typically on days immediately following significant rainfall. Sometimes we luck-out with a cold front that provides snow on the coastal range and gives us a couple of extra days. Despite its infrequent

flow, you can count on seeing boaters there when it is flowing. The lower stretch of Rancheria Creek is most commonly run and is 13 miles of class II+.

Rancheria Creek's wilderness setting with willow-strewn rapids and potential strainer hazards necessitates intermediate whitewater boating skills. In several areas, the rapids on Rancheria Creek run through gorges and offer fun stretches of continuous class II. One of the most notable rapids on the run is "The Ledge" (aka "The Class III Rapid"). Approximately 8 miles into the run, an outcropping of bedrock creates a sharp right turn in the creek. The willows that grow in the creek block visibility of the ledge, and the line on river right is narrow and difficult to see. Once scouted, boaters may decide to run the line on river right or run the 4-foot ledge drop on river left.

## Wilderness Anxiety

My first run on Rancheria Creek was riddled with anxiety. As a novice whitewater boater, a bit of apprehension was common for me on any run. The wilderness nature of this run elevated my usual whitewater nervousness. The only access points to Rancheria Creek are at the put-in and take-out so we couldn't scout the run from the road before going. Once we put-in, there was no alternate take-out. We were committing to 13 miles of wilderness boating.

Contributing to my anxiety was the presence of two brand new kayakers who had only a couple of swimming pool rolling sessions under their spray skirts. The two advanced whitewater boaters in our group would be 1:1 escorting the new paddlers down the river. I was told to paddle ahead, boat scout the rapids, and lead the way. I was "gripped," but my paddling partners assured me that it was straightforward and within my skills.





Half mile into the run, I started to feel the character of the run. Stretches of class II rapids intermingled with the occasional surf wave. The mossy green rocks and towering trees with roots growing down the canyon walls had me envisioning elves and hobbits on the forested river banks. The willows growing along the banks and in the river (even in the middle of some of the rapids) danced and rattled in the current like skeletons and definitely kept me on my toes, making sure that I executed my lines with precision.

Being an avid birder, I was delighted with sightings of bald eagles, several species of woodpeckers, wood ducks, and common mergansers. The common mergansers in particular helped me get through the run. They are good swimmers and know the lines to take in rapids – so I started following them down stream and watching for the lines that they would take as they swam through the wave trains and skirted the hydraulics.

My first run on Rancheria Creek became a fun game of follow the ducks on a journey through Tolkien's Middle Earth. Knowing what to expect, I wanted to paddle it again with less anxiety and take more time to enjoy the scenery and wildlife.

### Don't Follow Don

The flow was a little higher on my second run of Rancheria which increased my anxiety again. It meant that the current was a bit pushier. I knew that there were only a couple of significant hydraulics on the river that could potentially give me trouble, but the menacing skeletons (willows) that loomed along and in the rapids were my constant fear. My second run was with our paddling friend Don who is a very competent whitewater kayaker. Don takes clean lines through rapids and surfs every surf wave possible. Instead of following the ducks, I was

lulled into following Don down river and enjoyed bouncing along behind him through many of the class II wave trains.

Not long after "The Ledge" is a series of class II rapids. Assuming the rapids to be mostly wave trains, I followed Don and was enjoying the scenery and day dreaming of the journeys of elves and hobbits. Soon a landslide appeared, bringing about the beginning of a narrow gorge with an elevation drop. Lost in my daydreams, I didn't notice Don go over a drop and then a larger drop from which he did not emerge. Too late, I saw the first drop but managed to punch through it. I failed to anticipate the larger drop below that had eaten up Don. Fortunately for Don, I dropped into the hole and nudged him out of it.

The collision with Don stopped my forward momentum and flipped me. I rolled up only to be sucked backward into a nasty hydraulic which spun and flipped me again. Upside down and disoriented with water rushing over my head and wrestling for control of my paddle, I wet-exited and swam my boat into the nearest eddy. The guys were cheering for me for helping Don out and executing a "combat roll" and a skilled swim. However, I was cursing at myself for losing composure and bailing out of my boat. I was frustrated with losing my nerve that I seemed to finally have gotten.







## Resources:

[www.dreamflows.com/flows-canv.php#California\\_North\\_Coast](http://www.dreamflows.com/flows-canv.php#California_North_Coast) for flow information, links to more information on the runs, and checking for recent trip and hazard reports.

[www.cacreeks.com](http://www.cacreeks.com) has the put-in and take-out information for most California. Some of their write-ups are helpful and others are not so accurate. Many are from a rafter or inflatable kayak paddler's perspective which is often very different from those of a "hardshell" paddler. Their Lower Rancheria Creek write up is pretty good.

[www.calkayakermag.com/resources.html](http://www.calkayakermag.com/resources.html) has a compilation listing of various resources for kayakers, for both white water and flat water.

## Springtime on the Ranch

A late March storm left snow up on the ridges, so on April Fools' Day we found ourselves heading out for another run. As we drove through the Anderson Valley, snow glistened on the ridges, and we were filled with the optimism of spring boating.

We relished launching in the late morning and knowing that we had plenty of hours of daylight to meander and enjoy the run. The sunshine penetrated into the canyon and warmed our bodies and spirits. After several weeks of running harder waters on the Eel River, my skills and confidence had increased. The flow of 450cfs felt like a friendly float down the river. Today, I felt at peace with the water and was ready to enjoy the scenery and wildlife – which is what Rancheria Creek is known for.

GREEN!!! The backdrop for the river had changed. The willow skeletons of the banks and rapids were sporting green leaves and enchantingly dancing with the current. Our last run in February seemed damp and dark compared to this bright green, sunny day. Wildlife was plentiful and appeared to be enjoying the sunny day as well. A river otter escorted us along the first half mile and a pileated woodpecker crossed in front of us. The common mergansers that guided me through my first run casually floated along. During our lunch break at "The Ledge," a bald eagle soared overhead.

After lunch, we took the time to admire Ham Creek which is a tributary of Rancheria that appears to flow uphill. I skirted the hydraulic that troubled Don and I on our previous run and vowed to master my boof stroke and boof it the next time. With no hairy moments or carnage, this run seemed anticlimactic but really was just perfect for enjoying a warm, sunny day of excellent scenery and wildlife while floating down river. ❖

*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)).*

*Photos by Cate Hawthorne and Jeff Laxier.*



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# Make Your Own Swimbait

by John Kenny



*Soft plastic swimbait attached to a jig head*

**I**t's that time of year when winter has you wishing you were on the water. But the conditions are too rough on the ocean. The howling wind is making it difficult to hold a spot on your favorite lake, not optimal conditions for fishing from a kayak. A great way to get your fishing fix throughout the winter months is to make your own lures. Making swimbaits, top water lures, and saltwater jigs are easier than you might think.

This article will be on making swimbaits, a popular lure choice for many ocean kayak fishermen. If you get a grasp on the process, you can use this same process for worms and other soft plastic lures for all types of fishing.

All of the information in this article can be directly attributed to Larry Dahlberg and his methods. I am simply sharing the knowledge I have learned with his blessing.

Materials used: one pound Alumilite High Strength III mold making rubber, Alumilite Alumisol soft plastic, Alumilite Heat Stabilizer, Alumilite dyes, Alumilite synthetic modeling clay, a piece of glass or an old mirror, super-glue, stirring sticks, a microwave safe glass container, measurement scale, gloves and a microwave oven.

First you will start with modeling clay and your favorite swimbaits. I am using one 7-inch, one 3-inch and a pair of 5-inch swimbaits as my masters. (Note: This used slightly more than 1 pound of mold making material. If us-

ing only one 5 inch, one pound should be just right.)

I start by gluing the flat side of the masters down to the glass. Next, I create a box around them by using some scrap materials, like scrap wood or plastic. You want to leave about  $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$  inch on all sides of the masters. A large enough hard plastic box can be used as well. I find it best to make the box specific to the size needed, as that will keep you from wasting old material.

Once the box is placed, lay down a thin bead of clay on the glass to keep the mold material from seeping out. As you go around the box, make sure all edges are sealed with the clay – as in a watertight seal. The silicone will leak through the smallest of cracks so make sure you seal it well. (Note: Hot melted glue also works well for sealing the mold box down to the piece of glass.)

You don't want to waste mold material so I recommend using the online volume calculator found at [www.alumilite.com/CalcVolume.cfm](http://www.alumilite.com/CalcVolume.cfm). The mold material is a RTV silicone that uses a catalyst to make it cure. (RTV is short for Room Temperature Vulcanization, meaning it will setup from a liquid to a solid at room temperature.) Once you have calculated the amount you will need, measure only what you need and start mixing the mold material and catalyst together in a plastic cup or container. Mix it slowly but very thoroughly, scraping the bottoms and sides of the container. After mixing, let it sit for about 10 minutes, as tiny air bubbles from mixing will rise to the surface.

After the bubbles have dissipated, pour the mixed rubber over the masters. Pour slowly from one corner of the mold box and allow the rubber to flow naturally up and around the masters so you don't re-introduce or trap bubbles in your mold while pouring. Some bubbles

## Sources for Materials:

- MakeLure – [www.makelure.com](http://www.makelure.com)
- Lure Craft – [www.lurecraft.com](http://www.lurecraft.com)
- Jann's Net Craft – [www.jannsnetcraft.com](http://www.jannsnetcraft.com)





*After the box is made and the edges sealed, you pour the mold making material around masters*

it becomes a thin clear liquid, it will then harden to a soft plastic when it cools. Remember to stir the material several times as it passes through these stages.

### **Making Colors**

Once you have the plastic heated to a thin consistency you can add your dyes. The butt end of a small paintbrush or scrap piece of wire barely dipped into the dye is plenty. You will need white dye to make colors opaque. If you want a translucent appearance use the colors without any white dye. There are many color choices for dyes so you can mix them to achieve the color you want.

may continue to rise as the material continues to cure, which should not be a problem. Make sure you cover the master with at least one-quarter to one-half inch of rubber – you don't want the mold to be too thin on the back side. If you use a long cure time mold making rubber, you can start with barely enough and then mix and add more if needed.

wave on 50% power and set it to 3-4 minutes. (Times will vary for each microwave. You can burn the soft plastic, so keep an eye on it.) As the plastic heats up, stop every minute or so and stir the plastic gently to prevent burning. The material will transition from its original milky-white liquid state, to a thick and cloudy gel, and finally to a thin, clear liquid. Once

You can also add glitter or some of Alumilite's metallic powders. When first using glitter make a small amount to see how it reacts with the plastic. You can also add salt to increase the weight and fall rate of your lures. Add Microballoons if you want a suspending or floating lure.

Once you have poured the mold, let it sit for 24 hours. Do not touch it or mess with it – give it the time it needs to cure. The next day you are ready to undo the box and start pouring soft plastic into your new mold. This mold will practically last forever when using soft plastics.

### **Pouring Soft Plastic**

Soft plastics are easy products to work with but keep in mind that it will be very hot coming out of the microwave, so handle carefully. It will not stick to the silicone mold when cured so no mold release material is necessary.

Pour 3 to 4 ounces of soft plastic into your glass container. Put the micro-

*The mold after it sets next to the masters. You are now ready to pour the soft plastics*



Experiment until you find the desired effect.

Pour the soft plastic into the mold and fill the cavity moving back and forth. If a little bit spills on the sides when pouring layers or over the top, you can trim it off using a pair of scissors after it solidifies. After pouring, allow the plastic to cool until the lures are solid, about 5-8 minutes. The bigger the pour, the longer it will take to cool.

You can layer the soft plastic with different colors and it will adhere to itself. It is best if poured within the first 5-10 minutes of pouring the first layer. As soon as the first layer skins over, go ahead and pour your next layer. You can also pour simultaneously to achieve swirl colors through your soft baits.

If a pour doesn't turn out right, don't worry. Most soft plastics can be reheated and reused after they have cured, so keep all of your waste (and your used lures that fish tore up). To re-melt, clean the plastic, cut into small pieces, and put it back into your glass container. Then add less than a teaspoon of heat stabilizer for every half pound of recycled baits. This will help it melt evenly. Make sure you stir it several times along the way using the same heating process as above but note that it will not go through the thick gel stage as raw material does. As soon as it melts into a thin liquid, it is ready to re-pour.

Now grab your new baits and get on the water. I think you will find a great satisfaction in catching fish on lures you made. ❖

*John Kenny (a.k.a JK) is an avid kayak fisherman living on the California central coast. He has over three decades of fishing experience and is the co-founder of CentralCoastKayakFishing.com. He can be reached at [john@centralcoastkayak-fishing.com](mailto:john@centralcoastkayak-fishing.com) or on various kayak fishing forums.*



*Pouring the soft plastic into the mold*



*Adding a second color to the swimbait by pouring it on top of the first color*



*The new swim baits placed next to the original masters*





# The Basics of Dry Storage

stew in the storm for a few days before it washes up on a beach (the Coast Guard rescues people, not gear). Then pop hatches open and check to see how all your dry bags and cases worked.

This unfortunate test actually happened last September on Lake Superior (details can be found at [www.naturalsuperior.com/blog/2010/09/which-stuff-stayed-dry/](http://www.naturalsuperior.com/blog/2010/09/which-stuff-stayed-dry/)). Thankfully the participants were none the worse for wear out of the episode. But the boat's hatches were filled with water and sand. And there were interesting results in regards to the dry storage containers inside the hatches.

## Dry Bags

Probably the most common type of dry storage container is the dry bag. Early versions were wax-impregnated canvas bags tied off with rope used over a hundred years ago. These had some limitations, such as not handling high or low temperatures well, and sometimes animals found the wax to be tasty.

Over the years, the materials and designs improved and developed into current dry bags. Now, the design involves a bag with a top that rolls down to form a seal. Vinyl (such as PVC) and urethane-coated cloth are two common materials used to make dry bags. Vinyl is cheaper, but the manufacturing process is generally bad for the environment. Dry bags made of urethane-coated materials have many advantages over vinyl, such as being lighter, easier to close, and the material is not as sticky as vinyl, so the bag can slide into tight spaces with more ease, but have a significant disadvantage in price.

Turns out, many people are not always closing their dry bags properly. Christian Folk of Outdoor Research says "The roll top is supposed to be rolled down at least three times before being closed. Excess air should be purged from the bag so that the roll is not pressured from within the bag."

Andy MacAuley of AquaPac adds "It's all just a matter of pressing two layers together to make a seal. What happens when you fold a bag over on itself is that you stretch the back layer over the front layer on a really small radius, so that the two inner faces of the bag are squeezed tightly together. Then, when you close the buckle/strap/cinch on the dry bag, what you're doing is holding the

**M**any boats now come with sealed hatches, so why would someone need to put gear in dry bags and cases? Well, it turns out that these "sealed" hatches aren't always waterproof and have a way of proving it to you at the worst possible moment. And gear kept on deck or in PFD pockets doesn't benefit from any protection a hatch may provide.

Not all gear needs to be kept in waterproof containers but much should be. For example, electronics (like cell phones and electronic car keys) should be kept in very reliable waterproof containers, as the damage that can be done if these containers fail would be great. Similar issue with clothes, food, and sleeping bags if you are doing a camping trip. But it is probably not as important to put a paddle jacket or splash jacket in a waterproof container, or things like canned foods or other items already in sealed, waterproof containers.

On the other hand, *California Kayaker Magazine* has found out the hard way that not all electronics marketed as waterproof are actually waterproof, so sometimes an added layer of protection can be beneficial.

## A Test Case

Take one 21-foot tandem sea kayak filled with gear for a four-week expedition. Add some inclement weather (six-foot waves, 20- to 25-knot winds), capsize with wet exit, and rescue by a Coast Guard helicopter. Leave boat to





*Outdoor Research has dry bags that roll down along the long edge, making it much easier to access the gear that you keep inside.*

whole rolled part of the bag under some sort of tension, so that it can't unroll itself. However, a roll-seal is only as good as the tightness of the rolling, so always make sure you have nice, crisp folds. The best dry bags often have some sort of stiff insert or webbing at the opening to make sure that your folds are tight."

But roll-down dry bags are not submersible, even when closed correctly, which was shown in the Lake Superior incident. All of the dry bags in the boat were flooded. So these bags are good at keeping splash and temporary exposure to water out, but are not truly waterproof.

These bags come in a variety of colors, sizes, and shapes. When selecting, keep in mind that it is easier to pack a bunch of small dry bags

*LOKSACK zip-style bag being used to protect some VERY important reading material. They also have bags which keep food smells locked in, reducing the chance of a critter raiding your food when camping.*

into a hold than it is to fit a smaller number of large dry bags. And having different colors and/or see-through windows allows you to better keep track of what content is in which bag.

Added benefit – dry bags can be used in a pinch to carry water or do laundry. And clear bags can be used to keep kids occupied by turning into temporary aquarium with locally caught critters.

Pros – light weight; simple construction; inexpensive; little upkeep needed; easy to use; soft construction allows for easier fitting in a hatch

Cons – no indicator to tell you that the bag is sealed correctly (easy to not roll enough or not roll tight enough); even when sealed correctly, it is not 100% waterproof

Recommended for - clothes, food, tent, and other gear that is large and would be an inconvenience if it got a bit wet

### Re-sealable Zip Style Bags

Ever since ZipLoc was first marketed in the late 1960s, people have used them to protect their valuables from getting wet. Once ZipLoc's patent expired, many competitors jumped in to the market, some even providing bags specially made for use in the outdoors (a bit more rigorous application than keeping a sandwich protected in your office fridge). But these bags follow the same basic design of reusable, re-sealable zipper storage as the original ZipLoc, but perhaps with the addition of more rugged sealing properties and thicker materials.

Ottavio Cinelli of LOKSAK suggests the following for care and testing of zip closure bags: "We suggest that





you test your bag's seal integrity every so often after extended use by simply blowing a small amount of air into the bag and giving it a good squeeze. The plastic may cloud over time but is very resistant to puncture regardless; it is the seals that can become damaged over time."

The report from our capsized tandem was mixed on zip-closure bags. Some standard grocery store zipper bags, inside of flooded dry bags, failed. But a more robust type of "medication bags" did survive. There did not appear to be any of the zip closure bags developed specifically for the outdoors market in the kayak.

**Pros – light weight; inexpensive; clear and pliable, so you can access buttons and read screens of electronic devices**

**Cons – will fail if dirt gets trapped in the seal; light weight materials may fail; can't always tell if the bag closure is completely sealed or not by looking at it**

**Recommended for - keeping charts or maps dry on deck, and for keeping items separated (and double protected) inside of a dry bag**

### **Bags with Clips or Clamps and a Gasket**

Another type of bag is one that uses a clamp to seal the opening of the bag. These usually have a lever with a cam on it that pulls two hard materials together, clamping the bag together with a gasket to form the seal. These bags benefit from the strong seal provided by a clamped gasket, and still provide the benefit of a pliable material with transparent windows. They come in a variety of shapes, sometimes special made for a specific application, and allow you to do things like take photos through special lenses or windows, operate a VHF radio, and even use touch screens on PDAs and such while the bag stays sealed.

Andy MacAuley of AquaPac provides the following maintenance advice: "The number one tip is to keep the seal clean and free of obstruction. They're a pretty precise science and need some respect. Generally, respect your drybag/box/case as much as what's in it."

*AquaPac makes a variety of clamp-seal bags for special applications, such as allowing you to use buttons and read the screen on a GPS or to communicate with a VHF radio.*

There was one of this type of products on the capsized tandem, and its contents remained dry during the entire unplanned test.

**Pros – hermetic seal so OK underwater; definite yes/no closure; clear and pliable, so you can access buttons and read screens**

**Cons – expensive; must be kept clean/free of obstructions to work; heavier than roll-seal**

**Recommended for - gear that you want to use while it is protected in a bag, such as VHF's, GPS's, cameras, etc.**

### **Dry Boxes**

Dry boxes are hard cases with an opening that seals with a gasket at edge of lid, which forms a waterproof seal. They provide more mechanical protection than soft bags.

Care for dry boxes is pretty simple –

**Gear Continued on Page 30**



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## Gear - Continued from page 29

make sure the gasket and the edges that seal against it are clear of dirt.

As a testament to how well dry boxes work, those in use during the cap-sized tandem incident all were dry.

**Pros** – Excellent waterproofing; a solid case/box; definite closure

**Cons** – can fail if dirt gets on gasket, expensive; heavier than alternatives; gasket must be taken care of; fixed size (as you empty a soft bag, it

takes up less space)

Recommended for - anything that absolutely needs to be kept dry or needs the mechanical protection of a hard box ❖

*Dry boxes seal so well that Pelican Products adds a Gore-Tex membrane automatic purge valve insert that allows the box to equalize as pressure changes (such as on an airplane), without letting any moisture in*



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