

THE SEA CANOEIST NEWSLETTER

Issue 47

October/November 1993

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The Sea Canoeist Newsletter is published 6 times a year and is the official newsletter of the Kiwi Association of Sea Kayakers (N.Z.) Incorporated. Subscriptions are \$10.00 per annum and should be made out to K.A.S.K. (NZ) Inc. and sent to Eric Van Toor, 133 Port Hills Rd., Christchurch.

Editorial

Apologies for the lateness of this newsletter. I will blame work commitments in November and a 17 day stay in hospital over the Xmas-New Year period for the delay. Before being admitted, I was told Santa Claus definitely did not visit the surgical ward. At 2am on December 25 a very shickered Mrs Santa Claus with a tree fairy and a sort of wicked or naughty fairy breezed into the ward, ringing a large hand bell and singing 'We wish you a merry Xmas' etc, chased by the night sister who was trying to hush them up. It made my night!! I now have a 6 week period of convalescence to get over the 'open stomach' surgery, and a chance to get back on schedule with the Newsletter.

Address List

A current address list of KASK NZ Inc. is included with this newsletter.

NZ Canoe Federation

Eric van Toor has faxed me an information brief on formation of the New Zealand Canoe Federation which was agreed to at the NZ Canoeing Association AGM back in June '93. Separate national associations are now able to be formed when their constitutions are incorporated and approved by the executive, and the following are noted: NZCA, Racing, Sea Kayaking, Canoe Polo, other. Cost is noted at \$300 per association plus \$1.50 per member, that is a total of \$525 for the noted 150 sea kayakers. I will take a lot of convincing that KASK should join this new federation. KASK was formed as an independent incorporated society to enable active promotion, education and publicity of sea kayaking and to allow independent application of funding for instructional purposes without being tied to a bureaucratic organization with no interest in sea kayaking.

Sea Kayaking Safety Video

Eric has budgeted the costs of a Sea Kayaking safety video, which will be used by clubs, schools, instructors etc to improve the safety skills of people involved in sea kayaking. It will cover:

- basic sea kayaking skills
- selection and use of safety equipment
- rescues and assisting disabled paddlers
- dangers of weather and tide conditions

Funding would be partly from the Water Safety Council and the bulk from KASK and commercial sea kayaking companies.

CALENDAR

Otago Sea Kayak Forum
Date: weekend of 5/6 February 1994
Venue: Aromoana, near Dunedin
Cost: around \$50, including lunch & dinners
Accommodation: tents
Alan Woods notes that 25 paddlers have already signed up for the weekend, which has sessions for beginners, intermediate and advanced paddlers.
For information, contact: Alan Woods
4A Alva St., Dunedin
Phone: (03) 479 2618

KASK FORUM

Date: early April
Venue: Picton area

The Auckland Scene

by Vincent Maire

Firstly an apology to Paul and the thousands of other Sea Canoeist readers for missing the last two deadlines. The sea kayak scene has been reasonably busy over the winter and there is no doubt the sport is growing.

As a market researcher by profession, I make a habit of spotting trends. A month or so ago I received a call from a director of a well known, medium sized printing company and his question was, "I'm sick of doing the usual drinks and finger food at Christ-

mas. How do I take all my staff sea kayaking?" On finding that he had 24 people to cater for, I immediately told him his main problem was finding a fleet. I subsequently heard that Ian Ferguson has accepted the challenge and will be taking the Christmas trip to Rangitoto for a BBQ and games evening.

The other trend that goes on and on is the ever increasing number of sea kayak operators that are starting up. In recent weeks I have fielded letters from Warkworth, Waipu, Akaroa, Rotorua, to name a few. There is an operator on the Puhio River and two retailers selling sea kayaks on the Hibiscus Coast, all further evidence that the Auckland scene is growing.

The recently held course 'Risk Management for Sea Kayakers' was very successful. Forty sea kayakers from around the North Island gathered at M.E.R.C. Long Bay for an intensive session on risk management. The weekend was organized by ASKNET and led by Ray Button who took us through an in-depth two days of theory and practical insight into this very interesting topic. For me the best part was being in the company of so many professional or aspiring to be professional sea kayakers and outdoor pursuers. It really was exhilarating.

The best summary of the weekend course was written by Glyn Dickson in a recent issue of the Auckland Canoe Club Newsletter. Glyn writes: Possibly the most important point to consider is that risk management begins before you get on the water. How many of us stop to consider whether the route is suitable to all members of the group, what escape routes or route changes may be required if conditions dictate, defining a minimum and maximum group size (or ratio of experienced to inexperienced paddlers), potential hazards, and whether any individual has a

medical condition... What members of the group have a current first aid certificate and are carrying first aid kits? How strong and fit are the different members of the group and how much paddling have they done? Have you advised a responsible individual of your trip plans (2 minute form) and group details?

Last weekend I had my first experience of doing a risk analysis while planning a Skills Day for Sea Kayakers. As well as the usual factor of weather, wind and tide, we had to take into consideration sewerage. There has been a sewer overflow and Long Bay was closed; this is one element or risk I hope not to see again on the analysis form.

In today's post I find 'the first of, hopefully a monthly or bimonthly newsletter' from Sandy Ferguson of the Canterbury Sea Kayak network. It's great reading and good to see another publication devoted to the sport (is sea kayaking a sport of a pastime).

Also received is the December issue of Adventure magazine which includes an interview with New Zealand Canoeist of the Year, Hugh Canard. What Hugh has to say on the comparison between American sea kayak operators and those in New Zealand is very interesting. All sea kayak operators should read this article and perhaps re-think their marketing strategies and customer care activities.

And finally a useful tip on safety equipment for Nordkapp paddlers. On a recent paddle around Rangitoto and Motutapu islands, I suffered a damaged bow. While launching from a beach a wave washed over the kayak and took my drink bottle with it. I paddled round to retrieve it and as I did so, another wave caught the kayak and drove it nose first onto a rock. The top six inches of the nose was cut open leaving the front bulkhead open to the waves. My repair took the form of my sock, a bandage from my first aid kit and plenty of tape.

As I paddled home into waves driven by 10 to 20 knot winds, I realized that what I really needed was a condom. Vincent Maire.

Letters to the Editor

Re: Assessors of Professional Sea Kayak Guides

With reference to your editorial on the above subject, I thought perhaps an explanation of what a 'grandparenting' course is about might help. Firstly remember we are talking about guides, not instructors. The range of skills is different, although both need to be competent sea kayakers.

When an organization needs to establish a training and certification scheme for its members, it makes sense to assemble those of its members who are actually engaged in the job, try and establish a benchmark level of performance, and determine what precisely should be included in the syllabus. This is what the NZ Outdoor Instructors Association (NZOIA) have done with rockclimbing, caving, kayaking, canoeing etc as these activities have established themselves. These initiating courses are called 'grandparenting'.

Grandparenting courses require skilled and experienced facilitators - not assessors. Hopefully the course throws up not only guides or instructors of the requisite level, but also assessors of the future.

To answer your points specifically: 1. SKOANZ did not ignore the depth and talent of sea kayakers. The participants are all currently earning a living as sea kayak guides. This is where one starts.

2. Mick Hopkinson and Brett Whiteley are experienced assessors in the similar discipline of whitewater canoeing, and Mick has acted as a facilitator on a variety of outdoor grandparenting courses in NZ and overseas.

3. I don't entirely agree with your contention that sea kayaking is so different to whitewater when it comes to assessment of guides and, possibly, sea kayaking instructors.

To guide a party on a whitewater river or on the sea - are not many of the skills similar? I suspect that we would all agree on most points raised once various terminologies were defined.

Brian Lodge was a participant and so was I. Ray Button, who was involved in the Auckland course, is both an experienced sea kayaker and an experienced assessor/instructor. Interestingly enough Brian and I had both

sailed offshore before becoming interested in kayaking whitewater and on the sea. Most of those on the course had logged over 200 days of guiding paying clients. I think this guiding experience is different from the club situation where one is amongst peers or from those who have done solo or expert only expedition kayaking.

We all learned a lot and rated the course a great success. Out of these two courses we hope to find our national assessors and have a syllabus and, therefore train and certify sea kayak guides that are accepted internationally.

The establishment of this course was made possible by the assistance of the NZ Canoeing Association in the person of Brett Whitely and it was funded by the Water Safety Council. Resources in the personages of New Zealand's expeditionary sea kayakers will not be ignored. I think that KASK should be working with the NZCA, NZOIZ, and SKOANZ to establish a Sea Kayaking Instruction Scheme in New Zealand. There is no need to re-invent the paddle. Draw upon the experience of all.

One final point. The clients ultimately make the assessment on the operators. That's why we are intent on establishing sea kayaking guiding as a profession, not just a summer job for the amateurs.

Keep up the good work. I look forward to my KASK newsletter to read about the exploits of those who sea kayak for fun, not for a living.

Regards

Hugh Canard, Ocean River Adventure

Committee member SKOANZ

Bruce Maunsell, Marlborough Sounds Adventure Co.

Chairperson, SKOANZ5

TRIP REPORTS

from Fred Underwood

Enclosed is an account of a trip made by my friend George Spearing and myself.

You asked in your letter that I suggest things that assisted our trips and bring to your attention negative factors that may have been best avoided. We were fortunate on both trips to have weather that allowed us to make fast times although on the Tauranga

trip I found the following seas and strong breezes too much for comfort during one stage. We calculated our tidal flows correctly on both trips and made big gains by having tidal assistance where we needed it most such as at harbour entrances. I think a careful study of the tide charts is a must when planning a coastal voyage, especially one involving entries through tide races and narrow places.

Because George and I are constrained by our work as most are, we have to select times not always in keeping with ideal weather patterns. We do try though to plan our jaunts for periods where the weather is most likely to be favourable.

On our trips where our intention is to cover distance as quickly as possible rather than enjoy the scenery, George and I tend to stay well offshore especially when paddling point to point. On the Tauranga trip between Boat Harbour and Waihi we stayed too far offshore so that with the sea state difficult and forcing us to look out to weather constantly we paddled past the objective which for the day was Whangamata. In hindsight we would have been safer to paddle closer inshore in those conditions. As you know there is often a fine line between safe paddling and fast passage making but I suppose we should put safety first.

Until the Tauranga trip I had always taken too much gear. This extra weight slowed me down and prevented me from keeping up with George. Since re-evaluating my stores list and buying and Arctic Raider with its small hatches, I have now modified my requirements and now consider myself a spartan traveller. I now adhere to the KISS principle and travel light.

BY KAYAK TO TAURANGA

This year a fireman friend (George Spearing) and I decided to paddle our kayaks from Auckland to Tauranga. I own a Puffin design and George a kevlar Sea Bear.

We left Glendowie Beach at 7.45am on March 9 with supplies for 10 days. We hoped to complete the trip in six days but were carrying the extra food in case we became weatherbound along the coast. We hoped to reach Goat Bay on the Coromandel Penin-

sula but were prepared to stay overnight at Hooks Bay on Waiheke Island if the weather deteriorated.

Punching into the last two hours of an incoming tide but assisted by a light tailwind, we headed towards Matiatia on Waiheke Island. We thought that once at that point we would be able to judge conditions for a crossing of the Firth of Thames. We were beyond Matiatia within 2.5 hours and could sense a big gain if we took the risk and crossed the Firth directly from this point. At that stage we could expect six hours of ebbing spring tide and a light tail wind to assist us towards Goat Bay. Accordingly we pointed our bows towards Cape Colville and set off for a longish paddle under a hot sun.

We paddled steadily towards Coromandel, seeing only sea birds and a few dolphins in the distance to relieve the monotony. I had warned George to expect sharks on the Coromandel side of the Firth as March is the breeding season for hammerheads. Sure enough as we drew close to land, we started to see small sharks. They circled us out of curiosity but as we were bigger than them, kept a reasonable distance from us. Suddenly a bigger beast surfaced to port of George's boat. He circled around the front of George then followed him dead astern and about 20' away from his rudder. I was paddling about 50' behind George as this occurred and from my position thought the shark was about to take a bite out of my partner's boat. Accordingly I upped my paddling rate and aimed my boat at the shark with the intention of ramming him. I was within 15' of the shark when he sensed my presence and turned towards me, I slammed my paddle hard against the Puffin's deck and this, accompanied by his surprise at seeing me appear unexpectedly, caused the shark to sound; thankfully we did not see him again. We both saw the shark on the surface and estimated his length to be six feet. From then on we stayed a little closer together, in the hope that the two kayaks might be more of a deterrent than one on its own. Although we saw many more small sharks, no more of the larger size investigated us.

With the road bridge at Goat Bay in

sight, we turned across the now flooding tide and headed for shore. We hit shore after 8 hours steady paddling/ After deflecting a DOC official who wished to move us on from the bay, we set up camp and enjoyed the rest of the day.

Leaving Goat Bay the next morning at 8am, George and I headed into the remains of an incoming flood tide towards Cape Colville. We hoped to round the cape at slack water. Soon abeam of Port Jackson and in the distance, it was noticed conditions were not going to be pleasant as a 10 knot head wind had sprung up and was pushing into a strongly flowing ebb tide. The bottom in this area is irregular and points of land project into the channel; when wind meets tide in this place, "something will happen!" Abreast of the cape, the first of the hollowed steeple waves were encountered, (characteristic of the area in adverse conditions) however the canoes plowed into them with water hitting us from all directions.

Progress was slow and wet for the next 3 miles. George and I felt we were in a precarious position in conditions that could only be described as 'Technical'. As we distanced ourselves from the cape, the seas abated although the breeze did not, and we continued to plug into them for another 3 hours, before finding a boulder beach to haul out on; paddling on, after this break, and stopping to camp the night in a small cove on the northern arm of Kennedy Bay.

After a couple of hours sleep, we were subjected to attack from the 'Far Side'. Gary Larsen could have described what happened next in one of his cartoons. A herd of Angus cattle which I'd noticed grazing earlier had left their bush grazing and had sent the calf in. I awoke to hear a banging noise from the direction of my boat and after investigation found the calf worrying my rudder. As I yelled, it hesitated then ran to the safety of the herd which was standing off in anticipation some 60' away. On the return of the calf the whole herd ran along the beach, no doubt laughing their horns off at the alarm they had caused us.

George and I were underway next morning by 8am and heading towards

Mercury Bay, aided by a light tail wind and favourable swells, passing through flocks of seabirds and arriving at the northern arm where at a small boulder bay we had lunch. After this we chose to make distance instead of sightseeing and headed directly for the headland, marking Boat Harbour, about 12 miles away. By this time the gentle breeze had freshened to a 10 knot northerly which with the attendant swells pushed us quickly towards Boat Harbour. We were very happy to reach this beautiful, well sheltered campsite, where water is plentiful and the seaward views spectacular. After a refreshing night at Boat Harbour we pressed on in the early hours towards Whangamata, 17 miles away. After the steady paddling of the last few days, George and I thought a short paddle and an early finish would allow us to complete the rest of the course more easily.

Upon leaving Boat Harbour, a yachtsman advised us that northerlies averaging 15 knots were to be expected for that day and thinking we would be in Whangamata before the breeze built to its estimated speed, we paddled on blithely unaware of what the day held in store for us.

As George and I paddled between Slipper Island and the Coromandel Coast I noticed the waves were taking on the hollowed appearance of water under pressure from tide against wind; once past Slipper Island, the breeze which was pushing into a weak current, built up. The seas, especially over the shoal patches, increased in steepness and height until we were

paddling before 14' high seas. Fast paddling you will say and it was, demanding total concentration, so much so, in fact, that with our gaze constantly directed seaward, we sailed completely past Whangamata and landed in a delightful little cove on Waihi Beach Heads. This navigation error which was caused by being too far out to sea to identify land formations and concentration on staying upright, was to aid us greatly the next day.

After a refreshing nights sleep some of the stress and tiredness of the previous days arduous paddle was shed, and we set off at 7.45am towards Bowentown Heads, hoping to enter Tauranga Harbour. Two and a half hours passed by, paddling into a light headwind and at the entrance to the harbour, the kayaks were poised to cross the bars that guard the entrance. George, who always likes to take the direct route, paddled directly over both the outer and inner bars before reaching the smoother water of the harbour, whilst I approached the entrance from closer in, avoiding the outer bar and contended with the broken standing waves of the inner bar. Once inside and with 3 hours of favourable tide, we pressed on towards Tauranga. With a strong tidal flow under us, but paddling into a freshening breeze, we made our way towards the city of Tauranga, stopping for lunch six miles up the harbour. Setting off again George and I rounded a point where the canoes faced the full force of a 20 knot headwind, beating into what had now become a strong flowing outgo-

ing tide. After crossing the deepest channel and reaching smoother waters, we slogged on against the breeze and with weak tidal assistance to the Tauranga Marine, resting a while before completing our journey at the Tauranga 600 tonne slipway.

Our craft were very different in type, with George's being a lightweight kevlar model, whilst mine is a very much heavier plastic model. We felt George's boat, was much faster than mine. On the debit side, the Sea Bear needed more careful handling during landings than mine, due to its less robust construction. After this, our most harrowing sea trip, both felt that our own boats were best for the task and agreed to differ on which was the superior design. This never ending debate over which is the best design for the job occupies many hours of sea kayaker's time, during long trips and afterwards, probably never reaching resolution.

The objective of this trip was to paddle to Tauranga from Auckland and to give ourselves the best chance for achieving our objective sightseeing had to suffer. Best use of the weather was made to cover distance, and examination of the shoreline took second place. What features we did see were from up to 5 miles offshore so that although we saw the overall picture, it was not in much detail. We have now rested and are looking forward to the more normal gunkholing around rocky shores that sea kayaks are so eminently suitable for.
Fred Underwood.



