

THE SEA CANOEIST NEWSLETTER

Issue 53

October - November 1994

Editor: P Caffyn, RD 1, Runanga. West Coast .N.Z. Ph/Fax: (03) 7311806

The Sea Canoeist Newsletter is published 6 times a year as the official newsletter of the Kiwi Association of Sea Kayakers (N.Z.) Inc.

Subscriptions are \$10.00 per annum & should be made out to K.A.S.K.

(NZ) Inc. & sent to the Treasurer: Sandy Ferguson,12 Dunn Street, Christchurch 2. Ph: (03) 332 5155 home, Fax: (03) 364 2110

Correspondence to the Secretary: Peter Sullivan, 7 Monowai Cres, North New Brighton, Christchurch. Ph.(03) 388 3380.

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EDITORIAL

Congratulations to the five paddler team that completed the first kayak circumnavigation of Vanua Levu. Eddie van den Hurk, a spritely 64 year young paddler from Auckland's north shore has supplied a brief trip report with an insight to paddling in Fiji. Ray Forsyth's account of a June trip to South East Alaska with tales of encounters with whales, otters, bears, deer and three freshly caught fish meals a day shows why this area is the most magic sea kayaking destination in the world.

The story by Jackie Fenton re-enforces the message of paddling with sufficient survival clothing, equipment and rescue gear to survive on your own even when paddling with a group. It also emphasizes the importance of communication within a group, both before and during a trip.

Lastly a report from Tony Jennings on the race he organized around Mana Island. I must admit that I do not wish to encourage competitive sea kayak racing. There is sufficient to think about offshore sea kayaking by way of weather, sea conditions, tidal streams and currents, landings and

navigation without the additional pressure of racing against other paddlers. Sea kayaks are not designed for racing at sea. A well designed sea kayak with waterproof compartments is a survival machine not a racing machine. A 20 foot long surf ski or triathlete kayak will generally out perform a sea kayak, which is why they were built, for speed and not for comfort or extended camping trips. My approach to offshore sea kayaking is the same as with face climbing in mountaineering, that is to minimize the time spent in a high risk environment, where sea/wind/surf conditions are likely to change but this is neither racing nor attempting to set a minimum time that a section of coast can be paddled in. Minimum energy expenditure for maximum speed requires a steady pace, without busting a gut, but always with enough energy reserves to cope with a deterioration of conditions or the need to turn back.

Up till recently, the sports of caving, climbing and sea kayaking have been not competitive. Fair enough you may argue that there was 'competition' to be first down the bottom of a deep cave, up to the top of Everest or paddling around small continents but apart from the Russians who were the only ones to condone and promote competitive mountain climbing, it was not climber racing climber at the same time to be first up a mountain. During the last decade there has been a world wide rapid growth in competitive rock climbing, but it is largely confined to indoor artificial climbing walls and bouldering while speed climbing on the big mountains has remained in Russia.

Sea kayaking is an unusual sport in

that it has no official body enforcing rules and regulations, no organized competition, no score keeping, no umpires, no annual medals or trophies, and no restriction on the number that can play. A sea kayaker's reputation is dependent largely on what his or her peers think, how other sea kayakers rate their skill, technique, ability to plan and organize, knowledge of sea and weather conditions, and perhaps courage - not on how fast they can paddle a 10 mile stretch of coast.

A certain degree of competition is present in some paddlers to reach the beach first after a long day, a prominent North Island paddler springs to mind, while most paddlers are relieved simply to be ashore. To conclude, I am not opposed to social competitive sea kayaking, such as the weekly Nelson Harbour blast, but would prefer not to see future encouragement or promotion of offshore sea kayak racing.

This is not intended to be a criticism in any way of the Mana Island race, simply a personal view of sea kayak racing. And naturally this editorial has nothing to do whatsoever with the fact that any of those Mana Island race paddlers could paddle past me at the moment in a bathtub (cough, cough).

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

In mid to late March 1995, the annual KASK forum is scheduled at Plimmerton, which is just north of Wellington on the west coast. Any one willing to help with the organization, please drop me a line.

Deadline for Letter/Articles for the next newsletter is mid-January.

TRIP REPORTS

On 27 September 1994, five New Zealanders completed the first circumnavigation by sea kayak of Vanua Levu. The second largest island in the Fiji group, Vanua Levu lies north-east of the main island Viti Levu. Those who completed the trip were: Ann Blackshaw, Eddie van den Hurk, Sandy Ferguson, Mike Randall and Jeff Richards. Kayaks used: a Nordkapp, two Seaquests and a wooden double.

Fiji

Vanua Levu Circumnavigation

by Eddie van den Hurk

Landing in Savusavu on 24 August 1994, I had a feeling of anticipation. I had only met two people out of a party totalling seven people. This was because of my late entry. All the others had met before.

Seven of us took off on the 543km journey. Five completed the tour together. The organizer and a friend decided after 10 days of paddling to withdraw from the party. Those who completed the journey were: Sandy Ferguson from Christchurch, Ann Blackshaw from Auckland, Eddie van den Hurk from the North Shore, Jeff Richards Timaru and Mike Randall from Warkworth. An interesting blend of personalities and skills which knitted into a team. Sandy controlled the rudder of a double, his own plywood design while Ann worked the engine room in the front cockpit. Mike and myself had rented our boats, both Seaquests, and these boats stood up surprisingly well, considering the hammering they got on the coral reefs - and the watertight compartments were really watertight. Jeff darted around in his Nordkapp surfing on in spite of a heavy load of water and food etc.

We carried a substantial medical kit including various antibiotics, syringes and adrenalin and painkillers, antihistamines etc. The only stuff we used in quantity was mercurochrome. During the first three or four weeks, every scratch became infected unless promptly treated. On our return to New Zealand, the medical kit was left at the Savusavu hospital.

We also carried a couple of small broadcast radios and a VHF set which

were all pretty useless as we rarely picked up a weather forecast; and an EPIRB which was never used.

A lack of local knowledge cost us two days when we began paddling into the trade winds and into an area with wide shallow coral reefs. Fortunately we met a New Zealand yachtsman and a local fisherman who showed us the error of our ways and we turned back to start again, but this time in a clockwise direction with the trade winds somewhat from behind.

The tidal range is only two metres maximum. At times we could only leave the beach about one and a half hours before high water. That meant you had to be back on the beach one and a half hours after high tide. Ignoring this, could leave the boats stranded a kilometre or more from the beach or a campsite.

The tradewinds usually start to blow at 10 to 25 knots at around 10 or 11 am. Therefore when paddling into the wind (about 75% of the time) it became important to do most of the work before the wind would rise.

Especially north of the island, we encountered extensive shoal areas. At low tide it was at times difficult to find a way through. Our main map was at a scale of 1:250,000 (one inch = 4 miles). Our navigation was mainly conducted by wristwatch and a basic Silva compass. We covered about five to six kilometres per hour.

Paddling over the reef in shallow water is hard work. I preferred to go for the open ocean, at least with an onshore wind. This always had an element of risk, as one plans to re-enter at a passage through the reef some hours later. And the surf can be quite formidable. Another unknown was the belts of mangroves, particularly the extent to which they covered the coastline. That could be from one to five kilometres if not longer. This was important to know when looking for a campsite later in the afternoon. It is dark at 1830 hours. Hunting for a campsite among mangroves with an onshore wind is not recommended. So we (nearly) always made sure that we found a village or a campsite early in the day. We carried three to four day's supply of fresh water in the boats. Replenishment had to come from the villages, some of which ran

pretty low themselves. At times, we were hesitant in asking for water. Also the quality differed a great deal. Usually when there was an artesian well, we replaced all the dubious water.

Food supplies were also a problem. The intention of the organizer had been to supplement the supplies we carried through buying from the villages. The problem was that the people don't sell their food. The villagers were extremely generous and gave us food. There was nearly always a meal supplied, but the only stuff one could buy was from the village shop. That was rice, flour or a few tins of fish or corned meat. Except for the last few days we had enough rolled oats for porridge in the mornings. We always had rice and I had bought an extra 20kg of spaghetti, macaroni, plus dried peas and lentils, as I had an uneasy feeling at the start about the supplies. In spite of that, I lost 10kg in weight. The last week or so I also felt my strength ebbing away. The final day we paddled 35kms. We had done this a couple of times before without any great trouble. But when I pitched my tent that afternoon I felt happy, even elated, but physically and mentally totally exhausted.

In future I will always undertake my own provisioning and cooking. I will also do a bit of study regarding nutrition, rest and liquid uptake for people of my age (64) so if any one has suggestions or information I would be interested to avoid this the next time.

The evening of our arrival at Savusavu, we had a great meal at the yacht club. They make a very good pizza. There is also a bakery which makes the best cinnamon rolls ever. Is it any wonder that I felt sick?

Finally Risk Management. I am one of those guys who expect a 40 knot headwind on the way home everytime I leave the shore. This means that I have to figure out an escape route for a wind change before it happens. When paddling outside a reef or mangroves, the questions are am I far enough to windward from the obstacle? If someone falls out of the boat is there enough time for a re-entry? With an offshore wind while crossing a bay, I want to know if there is a place to land in case I get blown

offshore, otherwise I will hug the coast. In the long run it will keep me alive and the reputation of sea kayaking clean. This joker Murphy and his laws will always put it across you.

To engage in a group paddle such as the Vanua Levu trip, one should consider having at least one double kayak in case some one gets sick or there is an accident. In areas with no roads, the only transportation is by boat.

Summary:

Total distance paddled 543kms.
Daily average 19.4kms. Shortest day 3kms.
Longest days 35kms.
Days padded 28. Total 32 days.
Days lost due to strong wind 2.
Days lost paddling into trade winds 2.

I believe we got around Vanua Levu through the effort and individual contributions of each member of our team. The goal was there and the will to do it. It was a learning experience with many aspects. This story is mainly about the technology of the trip. But there were many facets. How does one describe that wonderful feeling of having that warm air around you; warm water underneath, the waves rolling in the trade winds? The turtles, flying fish, the excitement of encountering sea snakes? The wonderful beauty of coral gardens and its inhabitants? How does one attempt to describe the generosity of the Fijian people; the happiness, discipline and honesty of the children? And that all on an income of 30 or 40 dollars a month. Where else could you leave your Swiss army knife lying on top of your boat, have it opened and closed by 20 kids and find it still there an hour later?

Is it possible to be a traveller without becoming a philosopher? Comparing the values of the people one meets against the values of our own society?

Eddie van den Hurk.

SOUTH EAST ALASKA

June 1994

by Ray Forsyth

Dundas Bay, at the southern boundary of the Glacier Bay National Park in South-East Alaska was quiet and serene as a motor boat carrying four paddlers and their sea kayaks drifted to a stop. We'd left Juneau at 6am and now at noon we were keen to launch and spend a few days exploring this remote bay, ringed by snow topped mountains and fed by many torrents, some larger ones coming down from glaciers.

The area is known for its bear population so we were keen to find a campsite on an island where we'd be less likely to be bothered by them. After the usual hassle of loading floating kayaks from a launch with gear and food for 12 days, we paddled off under a blue sky.

After checking out a few rocky islets, we found one with a small beach and sufficient space for two tents above the high water mark. The island was free of bear sign but not of those winged predators, mosquitoes and black flies. A few small forest birds discretely moved in the trees while a raft of several hundred scooters drifted by, reluctant to fly.

The next day was clear and calm as we paddled up one of the large arms of the bay. As we left a shingle beach, where we'd stopped for a brew, we paddled by a black bear that was feeding on beach grasses. We drifted within 100m of him, admiring his jet black coat, before he showed some interest in our presence, so we quietly moved away to leave him still grazing. We checked out several flocks of Canada geese and other water birds as we paddled and came across river otters who took little notice of us, as did the occasional harbour seal.

We landed at the head of the islet to look for an old Tlingit Indian portage trail and found a lot of bear sign on the spring growth of the flats and the forest understorey. Searching through the bush for the trail, we made plenty of noise and were pleased not to see a bear. Back at the kayaks, as we prepared to launch, we heard a twig crack loudly in the trees and believe it was a bear that had stalked us out. We didn't spend too long getting in to the kayaks

and pushing off.

We made another stop on a small island which held some wolf sign, but it had excellent beaches and camp sites with few bugs so we took the opportunity to bath and sunbathe.

The following morning was calm, totally cloudless and hot and remained that way all day. We spent the day paddling into the second large arm and bush whacking through some scrub and open spruce forest, once again finding fresh bear sign, and patches of snow up to an alpine lake. Back out to the white sand beach, we couldn't resist a 'bath' in the icy stream and more sunbathing, followed by a slow return to camp, fishing without success.

Next day we began our move out of the bay, towards the strait between us and the Inian Islands. Along the coast we stopped at the derelict remains of a salmon cannery, rusting steam boilers, machinery and wharf piles, but with the manager's timber house still standing and good shelter. Here I found in the mud a green glass axe head, which has the State of Alaska archaeologist puzzled as to its source and purpose.

While two of the party fished, Tam and I went ahead to find a campsite which are few along this rocky coast. We landed by a creek which ran through a bouldery areas of rough grasses, scrub and driftwood logs. Obviously good bear habitat, so we made plenty of noise before leaving the kayaks as we walked slowly along. It was then a black bear grazed out into view about 200m ahead of us. Despite the noise and some arm waving, he only looked in our direction once and then continued grazing. That evening we discussed our plan for the next day. North Inian Pass is renowned for its strong currents and we had to paddle 6kms of open water to reach the Inian Islands. It was essential to cross at slack water, either high or low tide and preferably in windless conditions. Fortunately the tidal range for his period was only 2m.

Next day dawned calm and overcast with poor visibility but by 6am we were leaving Point Wimbledon for the Inian Islands. We made good time, using a compass at times, but as we reached the island we heard the

song of the current as it began moving behind us, first a low shushing, increasing in volume as the water speed increased, breaking the surface into little ripples, and by the time we reached the point of Earl Cove, it had become a quiet roar as the waters of Icy Strait and Glacier Bay moved into the Gulf of Alaska.

For several days we explored the coast as we paddled eastwards to Point Adolphus. The fishing was good so we ate fish three times a day. Occasionally deer coming out on to the beach from the forest would walk along and investigate us. At one camp a gravel-voiced crab fisherman called on us and was intrigued to know I knew Paul Caffyn as he'd given Paul some help at Elfin Cove during his Alaskan paddle.

It was in this area that sea otters were common and usually they don't let you get much closer than 50m before diving but I paddled and drifted quietly up to an old patriach who was asleep in their usual position - floating prone on his back, forelegs crossed on his chest and webbed hind toes conspicuous. I put the paddle out to touch him and the shadow of the blade came across his face. He woke with a start, an incredulous expression on his face, and crash dived.

At Point Adolphus, we camped for two nights as this is a busy whale feeding area. A female humpback and calf stayed close to the beach and reefs, in front of our tents while we watched the mature whales constantly showing themselves further out, and a large orca well out in the channel.

We reluctantly left the point for Hoonah, a logging and fishing village where we boarded the Alaska State ferry for our return to Juneau.

Ray Forsyth.

Ray has supplied two photocopy A4 maps of the area paddled. I would suggest that any one who wishes more information on the area, how to get there and where to hire kayaks from, should write to Ray at

132 Cavendish Road,
Redwood, Christchurch 5
or telephone (03) 352 7924.

Ray noted that they had 12 days out and hardly wore a rain jacket the whole time, in fact a couple of days were considered too hot for kayaking. A contrast to Ray's 1992 trip at the same time of the year, with wet and windy conditions and very low temperatures.

Both photos
of paddling
in Dundas Bay
SE Alaska

This story came via Sandy from the computer net.

GETTING SMART THE HARD WAY

by Jackie Fenton

It has taken some time for me to be able to shake loose (somewhat) the subjective thoughts and to be able to sit down and in the most objective manner possible, attempt to share with other paddlers the lesson I learned on one stormy Sunday paddling Espiritu Santo Bay. The memory still occasionally haunts me in my sleep, and sometimes I become angry when I think about it much. But I have only my own stupidity, ignorance, or whatever you want to call it, upon which to place blame as the reason for finding myself in a life threatening situation that day.

Some time ago, two other paddlers and I (I will refer to them as Paddlers One and Two for the sake of keeping with the intended message here and not to point any fingers) ventured out into the night across Shoal Water Bay heading towards Steamboat Island. The small bay was well protected from the winds by Long Island. I was paddling a Prism, an open top kayak, and the other two were paddling closed sea touring kayaks. I had paddled with Paddler One twice. I had never paddled with Paddler Two. This was only his second sea touring trip.

Our night paddle was relatively calm as it was a protected bay. Only when we exited that small bay and entered the channel between Long Island and Steamboat did we encounter any rough water. And that was for a rather short, uneventful distance.

We broke camp Saturday morning after spending the night on Steamboat. We paddled the leeward side of Steamboat, then made our way across Espiritu Santo Bay to a section of Matagorda's long string of islands. So far, the trip had been a good one. The wind velocity had remained moderate from the beginning, but not threatening. Just enough to keep us on our toes.

We decided to make our camp Saturday night on one of the high shell beaches. Sunday, we awakened to a calm morning and relatively smooth waters. We ate our breakfast and began to pack and load our gear. Sud-

denly, the sky turned dark in the north and the wind quickly began to blow so hard we had to yell to communicate. Big waves with white caps appeared breaking with such force on the beach, we had to launch backwards and push our sterns into the waves. Every time a wave hit, my open top kayak was swamped. It was much like paddling a bathtub.

Paddler Two suggested we all stay together for quick rescue in case anyone got into trouble. Of course we agreed. That made sense. Otherwise, it would be foolish to cross under the conditions which suddenly broke on our campground.

The other two had already paddled off some distance when I caught up with them. Paddler One was pumping out the water that was seeping into one of his hatches. Seeing that they did not need me, I paddled on knowing my boat was much slower than their boats. I turned around often to make sure they were OK. Within minutes, they passed me. The waves were increasing in size, dumping large volumes of water into my lap. I knew from past experience that water was most likely spilling into my boat through the loose hard shell hatches.

The distance between the other two and myself was growing. I expected at any minute they would slow down and wait for me to catch up. A motor boat suddenly appeared from the east speeding across the bay in an attempt to outrun a possible downpour. The boaters did not see me. They were watching the other two paddlers. It became clear to me that the other two paddlers were not going to wait for me. I remember hoping then that they would quickly get out of sight so that any other boaters might then be able to spot and avoid me.

The velocity of the wind increased half-way across the bay. The National Weather Service reported winds up to 30 mph and gusting to 40 mph in the bay that day. Almost two hours into our paddle across the bay, I completely lost sight of the other two paddlers. I knew my situation was critical. If I capsized, no one would see it happen.

I have experienced how suddenly the water "out there" can turn rough and relentless. With nothing in its

way to slow it down, a norther can blow across the flat Texas coast like a runaway locomotive, blasting the islands and sea with sudden, gusting force. On this day, the wind came at a much higher speed than I had experienced before, and with such power it was almost as difficult to push my paddle against the wind as it was to dig in and push against the current that was attempting to either take me to Corpus or cause me to swim with the dolphins and sand sharks.

Suddenly the wind shifted to the northeast. The water surrounding me was flattened by the quick and powerful shift. Then the waves began to hit from the northeast. I had to force the bow of my boat in a new direction pointing away from shore. The waves came in a rhythm of four, increasing in size. As soon as I discovered the rhythm, I was able to count them and hold my course. When the largest wave hit, I fought to stay afloat. After that wave passed, I knew I could then dig in and manage to paddle a few feet ahead through the first and second waves until the third wave hit. Then I would have to start all over again, fighting to remain upright and hold my position through the fourth wave. This went on for about three hours. The trip from the island to the channel leading to the fishing camp is normally a leisurely one and one-half hour trip. On this day, I struggled for three and a half hours with no one in sight for about two of those hours. I remember thinking I could not possibly make it. I remember thinking about the the drowning which occurred in the bay only a week before and I remember thinking of my neighbor's grown son who lost his life in this bay.

I was angry. Angry that the two of them abandoned me in the bay after we agreed to stay together, and angry at myself for not being prepared. Paddler one carried the only compass. I was hoping that I would not suddenly be engulfed by one of those blinding rains and lose sight of the shore.

I did not have flares. My paddle was not tethered to my boat. I learned later it would have been wise to tether myself to my boat (provided I carried a knife to cut the tether, which I also did not have). I did not have a whistle (not that it could have been heard). I

had a life vest that was much too large for me. I did not have a spare paddle. And I did not have on a wet suit. The wind was very cold and I was soaked.

When I finally approached the channel leading to the fish camp, for the first time I was able to rest. I felt sharp pains in my hands as I attempted to unwrap them from around the shaft of my paddle. It felt incredible that I made it. I had come so close to capsizing several times and knew if I had, there would have been no way for me to flip my boat. Not in that rough water, not as exhausted as I was, and not with the weight of my gear and the water that had made its way inside of the hull.

I would never have paddled the bay that day had I known I would be paddling alone. I didn't have the necessary gear. Besides, it would have been foolhardy to do so under those conditions. A friend told me once that when sea kayakers get into trouble and even die, often it is because they think they must be somewhere by a certain time and refuse wait out the inclement weather.

I really cannot blame my predicament on anyone but myself. Sure, I was angry, very angry. But I have to look to myself and realize that I was not prepared. I had been foolish in making assumptions based on other paddling circumstances and other paddlers.

This is the message I learned and I hope to pass on to other paddlers. Go, meet the elements. I heartily endorse testing one's limits. But be wiser than I was. Pack your gear as though on a solo trip and don't always assume that others in your group will be able to come to your aid under really rough conditions. Anything could happen. If the conditions are such that you would not paddle it alone and you aren't 100% sure that your paddling partner(s) will be there, don't do it. Likewise, ask yourself if you can be sure that you will be there for your partner(s). If you can't do that, then forgo the trip and paddle when mother nature will co-operate with your limited gear or experience. Otherwise, the price could be too heavy for the gamble. I was lucky.

By the way, I have ordered a Sea Lion, a closed sea worthy kayak. Nixe

(my Prism) has been a dependable, durable and stable companion and has served me well. I have decided to complement her with a sister. Nixe II is due to arrive within the next week. Meanwhile, I am gathering self rescue gear for sea kayaking. Next time, I will be ready.

Jackie Fenton

BOOK REVIEWS

Two books with a similar topic relating to adventure travels by couples to remote areas of the world with a folding kayak. Paddling mainly on rivers and lakes but with a hint of sea kayaking.

Baja to Patagonia
Latin American Adventures
by Larry Rice

Published 1993, by Fulcrum Publishing, Colorado.

Limpbound, 21.5cms x14cms, 217p
ISBN 1-55591-113-7

The back cover notes: *Latin America is one of the hottest ecotourism destinations for the '90s - outdoor writer Larry Rice writes of kayaking, canoeing and backpacking the wilderness areas of Central and South America.* The author is noted as one part adventurer, one part naturalist and one part writer. *Travelling through Chile, Argentina, Bolivia, Venezuela, Costa Rica and Mexico in regions that have long inspired myth, controversy and speculation, Rice offers off-the-beaten path adventure and travel at its best, with healthy doses of ecotourism and natural history thrown in to illuminate both the grandeur of the landscape and the friendliness of the people.*

Perhaps it was the title that set me wrong with my expectations of this book. I had recommended it to a Wellington paddler who is planning a sea kayaking trip to Patagonia in the anticipation that it would contain a wealth of information about the area. I expected a meaty informative, sea kayaking narrative but instead waded through a rather dry and bland, unexciting account of visits, some guided, to some of the more scenic areas of South America. The paddling

sections are limited mainly to short trips on rivers and lakes including Lake Titicaca and a river trip with a support vessel in Costa Rica. The initial chapter titled 'Paddling through Patagonia', relates not to a several hundred mile trip through the fiords but a trip across Lake Pehoe and down the Serrano River with the last section to Puerto Natales on a fiord. The big drama which opens this chapter was a broken rudder cable on Lake Pehoe, the breakage causing the kayak to become unmaneuverable in squally conditions.

The chapter on a visit to the Fitzroy area, is seemingly bogged down in trying to find tracks, wet and windy campsites and meeting with other backpackers and climbers. There is only brief mention of a first ascent of Fitzroy in 1953, no meaty information relating to some of the epic climbs in the area.

I may be regarded as being a little fussy with adventure narrative books, but encounters with a stud bull (on the other side of a fence) or a monkey, do not rate as dramatic adventure.

There is a smattering of black and white photographs in the text, and a small scale map at the start of each chapter showing general location of the areas visited.

A selected bibliography at the end of the book would be a help to start planning a South American trip but there is no mention of the South American Pilot which is an essential starting point for researching a sea kayaking trip to Patagonia.

Brief insights on the local fauna and flora, and meeting with local inhabitants break up the mundane details of camping, cooking, eating and finding fresh water, but I found the writing style rather monochromatic by comparison with the next book reviewed.

Don't let me put you off reading this book, particularly if you are interested in an 'ecotourist' - a new buzz word? - style account of visiting some of the magic areas of South and Latin America, but as an exciting adventure narrative or a Paul Theroux style book or a how to get there guide, this book does not inspire.

Available in New Zealand at \$40 from Canoe and Outdoor World,

Christchurch. (see Advert.p 9)
*A Boat in Our Baggage
Around the World with a Kayak*
by Maria Coffey
Published 1994 by Little, Brown and
Co., G.B.
Hardback, 24cms x15cms, 278p, col-
our plates.
ISBN 0 316 90770 7
(Distributed by Penguin in NZ, and
available as a softback in 1995).

As with Larry Rice, this is Maria Coffey's second book. Her first, *Fragile Edge*, was about coming to terms with the death of her boyfriend Joe Tasker on Everest. After a trip with a folding kayak on the Sea of Cortez, Maria and her husband Dag decided to take a year off and go kayaking around the world. Sponsored by Feathercraft with a double kayak, the couple paddled in the Solomons, Lake Malawai in Africa, down parts of the Ganges and Danube rivers and after a short sea trip in south-western Ireland, ended up paddling 30 miles to their home from the Feathercraft factory in Vancouver. Very ordinary paddling destinations and not a lot of detail about the actual kayaking but it is the colourful, descriptive writing style that makes this such an enjoyable read.

Just a brief quote from a description of a stormy night spent in a pub at the small Irish village of Bunaw will give you an idea of the writing style and humour throughout the book:

I leaned over to Dag to break the news we were staying the night, but he was busy trying to follow what a ruddy-faced man was telling him.

"For fook's sake, there's thirty-knot winds forecast for tomorrow. It's the likes of me that'll have to go out there and rescue the pair of ye. We'll never forgive you if you go."

An elbow dug into my back. "Sorry for disturbing yees, I'm on a mission from God to get to the bar," the owner of the elbow apologized.

It is difficult to lift the mundane details of camping, travelling and dealing with airport officials into rivetting reading when dramatic adventure is lacking however Maria Coffey's superb evocative descriptions of their paddling destinations and characters met along the way area does this with

with ease.

The maps are not detailed but are adequate, and there is a central colour plate section.

I would suggest this is a superb book to whet the appetite of your better or other half to entice them into a folding kayak.

Available on order through NZ bookshops from the Penguin distributors at \$49.95 with a cheaper softback scheduled for release next year.

Mana Island Sea Kayaking Race

by Tony Jennings
Sunday May 8 1994 saw the running of the inaugural Mana Island sea kayak race. The 22km course designed to challenge paddlers did live up to expectations and did indeed provide a challenge.

I had been contemplating running such a race for a few years, but fears of what might happen with the notoriously unpredictable weather and tidal rips that Cook Strait produces had me worried. Eventually much procrastination and numerous kayaking sorties in the Mana Island area, I decided that such a race could be tackled safely.

What I envisaged was a race that took paddlers out of the confines of harbours, lakes and rivers and into the open sea. A race that tested paddler's endurance, paddling skill and navigation in conditions that would constantly change throughout the event.

The course had paddlers starting at Whitireia Park beach at the entrance to Porirua Harbour. They would then paddle around the coast for 3.5kms to North Point off Titahi Bay beach and then out to sea for 4kms to Mana Island. On rounding a marker, they would circumnavigate the island, a distance of about 7kms, and back to the start.

Race day dawned and Wellington turned on one of its perfect sunny Autumn days. The forecast was for light northerly winds with 15knot southerlies later in the day. Paddlers were warned to expect varying conditions and strong south-going tidal streams.

At the start, 27 competitors ran Le Mans style to their craft, 13 single kayaks, four doubles and six surf skis.

At the 3.5km mark, the field had spread out over 500m and the three skis had taken the lead followed 50m behind by Maara Ave in a Southern Skua and the Max Grant/Helen Jacobsohn combination in a Dusky Bay double.

As the paddlers progressed towards Mana Island, the northerly wind increased to about 15 knots and created a small chop. Many craft had drifted to the south with the tidal stream and had to aim more to the north in order to reach the Mana Island marker. The race was fairly straight forward up to this point with the faster paddlers in the faster craft in the lead.

On reaching the south end of Mana Island, tactics started to come into play. Some paddlers opted to paddle out wide away from the rocky surf zone and others took the shortest possible route through the rocks. The results were mixed.

Max and Helen paddled from eddy to eddy avoiding the south-going tidal stream on the western side of the island and caught up and passed a number of skis and kayaks. Maara Ave took the same approach and took the lead.

While on the western side of Mana Island, conditions roughed up a little and some of the less experienced paddlers lost ground as well as confidence. One double kayak team found the inside conditions difficult, capsized and lost time swimming to shore back to re-board. From the northern tip of the island, it was a long grind back to the start with Maara Ave first home in 2hours 45 minutes, followed by Robert Bryden on a ski two minutes later. Third craft home was the Max and Helen double in 2 hours and 7 minutes. The first plastic boat, Ian Flux in a Puffin, came in 20 minutes behind the leader.

The luncheon and prize-giving went off well with everyone enjoying a scrumptious feed with prize giving of spot and place prizes from Quality Kayaks, Mainly tramping and Capital kayaks. Overall feeling at the end of the race was of definite approval and a desire to see it become an annual event.

News and Views

Tony Jennings recently returned from a solo trip on the North Queensland coast and has promised a trip report. He has supplied the following information:

Maritime Safety Authority Leaflet

The Maritime Safety Authority have asked me to facilitate the production of a Sea Kayaking Safety/Information Leaflet that they will print and circulate through New Zealand. Aimed at the general public, they are keen to have KASK and SKOANZ promote themselves through the leaflet via logos and contact details on the leaflet.

They envisage a three fold A4 size sheet. I have started to draft something up, however it is important that you sea kayakers have input into the contents. If you have ideas or interest in the leaflet, I can be contacted at 6 Spur Grove, Titahi Bay, Porirua. Ph/ Fax: (04) 236 8687

Draft Sea Kayak Safety Course

First of all, thank you all for your time and effort in giving feedback. This is an open letter to all of the respondents in order to clarify some points raised and indeed clarify the intention of the draft.

History of the Draft: The course was initially intended to be a 'theory based' marine course, similar in structure to the Day Skipper or Boat Master courses. Aimed at potential sea kayak guides and other interested sea kayakers, it was to be a marine certificate with a sea kayak emphasis provided by the Coast Guard Federation.

This was driven by the fact that guides requiring to do a marine certificate would find one with a kayak basis more useful. Never the less, the course is supposed to go beyond sea kayaking and cover general maritime knowledge, rules, regulations etc.

Points of Clarification:

1. The word safety in the title: Many respondents commented on the fact that many topics were not directly safety issues. Excellent point! I only used the word safety in the title for want of a better title. I feel that the course is more encompassing and be perhaps called 'maritime knowledge for sea kayakers' or something similar.

2. Practical content: The course is a

classroom based course with no practical content apart from what can be achieved at a desk (chartwork, ropes, etc). Of course there needs to be a practical hands on get wet sea kayak safety course. But again my guidelines were to produce a theory course draft.

3. Time given to topics: The course is supposed to be run in 20 hours or less. Obviously with the range of topics included, the depth to which we can go will be limited. I agree with some of your comments that some topics be condensed and others dealt with in depth. The feedback has been most helpful in this area.

4. Assessed or no?: Should the content be assessable? This was brought up in feedback and I feel for a potential professional guide it should be. For the sea kayaker it does not need to be.

Perhaps we need to re-assess the basic aims of the course as it seems that trying to come up with a formula that suits the sea kayaker, SKOANZ and CoastGuard Federation is a little difficult.

Thanks again for your feedback.

Tony Jennings

Aotearoa Adventure Trail

From KASK member Chris Gulley, who is also the expedition leader.

Beginning in early February 1995, three people plan to traverse NZ from Cape Reinga to Bluff, over three to four months, along what is to be called the Aotearoa Adventure Trail.

Journeying by foot, mountain bike and sea kayak, the expedition aims to complete a challenging end-to-end journey of New Zealand through the most natural setting possible and to raise awareness of the need to adopt and protect such a trail in New Zealand.

The team hopes to serve as the catalyst to replicate other long distance trails in other countries, such as the Appalachian Trail and the Pacific Crest Trail in the United States and the Penine Way in Great Britain.

Sea kayaking sections planned are: Dargaville to Helensville through the Kaipara Harbour
Queen Street, Auckland to Thames
Lake Taupo
Cook Strait

Lake Wakatipu

Lake Hauroko, Fiordland.

The team is doing the journey for enjoyment, and financial gain is not an issue (more like financial drain) - perhaps most importantly the team are committed to the establishment of an end-to-end trail of New Zealand in the future - the Aotearoa Adventure Trail.

If you would like more information or can assist with the planned sea kayaking sections, please write or call: Aotearoa Adventure Trail, 157 Main St., Timaru Ph: (03) 688 8970

Akaroa Harbour - Mini Golf Course

information from Ray Forsyth

An application was made to the Canterbury Regional Council by local residents to construct a mini-golf project over a coastal marine area (0.8ha) within Akaroa Harbour directly in front of the town's commercial area. A similar project is operating on Lake Taupo, on part of the lake foreshore.

KASK management examined the detailed proposal as it required exclusive occupancy of the marine area, although public access and use of the shoreline would not be restricted.

The views of local sea kayak operator, Harry Litchwark, were obtained. Although there are some reservations held about the proposal, we do not believe they are strong enough to warrant an objection being submitted by KASK.

KASK members should be on the look out for any resource consent applications with proposals for use of local marine areas that will affect use by sea kayakers. They are advertised in the 'Public Notices' or 'Resource Management Act' columns of local newspapers - please send a copy of any which are of concern to the KASK secretary.

(While transcribing Ray's letter, I kept flashing back to a certain worst television advertisement on Fair Go recently, to do with collecting golf balls, and pictured sea kayakers in grid iron protection and helmets collecting floating golf balls. Sorry about that little gem. It must be all the wet weather and waves landing on the roof every night...)

If undelivered, please return to Sandy Ferguson, 12 Dunn St., Christchurch. 2