

# THE SEA CANOEIST NEWSLETTER

Issue 58

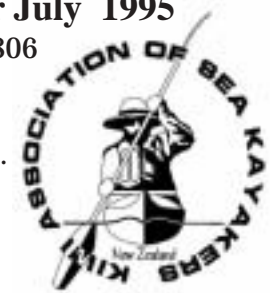
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## EDITORIAL

The response to the KASK handbook scoping document was excellent and pleas/demands for written sections will shortly be sent out by Peter Sullivan. I would like to aim for a launch date at the KASK Picton forum in April 1996.

Deadline for material for Newsletter No.59, Oct/Nov is mid November. Where possible with trip reports, please try and include a small map showing the route followed to help readers follow your route. Please keep articles flowing in.

## KASK Mid Year Report

Peter Sullivan has compiled an excellent mid-year report for KASK activities in the six month period since the KASK AGM. He had been busy with a host of correspondence. Membership currently stands at 208 financial members with 46 still to renew subs. A total of 240 copies of each newsletter are printed, with approximately 220 mailed out, while Sandy stores the remainder for archives and for supply to new members. Eight go overseas via the editor with contra overseas exchanges. The system for newsletter production is working well; Paul sends Peter a master copy, who then organizes printing and the mail out, while Sandy supplies the address labels and money for stamps.

The scoping document for content of the KASK handbook was sent out to 38 members, with 27 responses received to date. Peter summarized the responses and listed those people willing to write sections or take on an advisory role. The responses were all positive with excellent input on additional topics. Paul has fledged out a handbook outline while Peter will shortly be firing out requests for various sections to be written.

## From the Canterbury Sea Kayak N/L No.8

A Mexican newspaper reports that bored Royal Air Force pilots stationed on the Falkland Islands have devised what they consider a marvellous new game. Noting that the local penguins are fascinated by airplanes the pilots search out a beach where the birds are gathered and fly along it at the waters edge. Perhaps ten thousand penguins turn their head in unison, watching the planes go by, and when the pilots

turn around and fly back, the birds turn their heads in the opposite direction, like spectators at a slow-motion tennis match. Then the paper reports, the pilots fly out to sea and directly to the penguin colony and overfly it. Heads go up, up, up, and ten thousand penguins fall over gently onto their backs.

## Kayaks around the Kimberleys

Two Victorian paddlers, Greg Caleo and Hugh Sullivan, paddled into Broome in Western Australia on July 19, after completing a 1534 kilometre paddle in two single kayaks from Wyndham. A note in a West Australian newspaper goes on to say, the paddlers 'will never forget the countless shark and crocodile attacks they encountered during a 101 day trip around the Kimberley coast. Scratches on the rudders of their 4m kayaks show close to pair came to serious injury on their journey.'

Greg and Hugh are both outdoor education instructors, spent nine months planning the trip which was conceived during a cold Victorian winter's night. Hugh Sullivan had previously visited this rugged stretch of coastline and convinced his mate, who had never been to WA, to take a closer look. They set out from Wyndham which is at the base of Cambridge Gulf, on April 10.

Paddling between two and six hours a day, the pair's biggest concern was getting plenty of fresh water each day after their desalinator broke. They felt privileged to have seen one of WA's longest, most isolated and beautiful coastlines.

## *Deceptive but 'Orrible Offshore Winds*

by Paul Caffyn

### **Introduction**

Wind is the curse of sea kayakers. It generates the bulk of problems that arise, choppy seas, capsizes, wind chill, weather tide effects, surf and so on.

There is however an exception; a following breeze, or one quartering from astern, can be a real boon in aiding progress through surfing rides.

A breeze on the beam requires continuous corrections for drift and more concentration on balancing the boat.

A breeze on the nose, or quartering from the bow, generates soul destroying, tiring, very wet, slogs.

The most deceptive and horrible wind blows offshore. Deceptive in that conditions may appear flat calm against shore with a light breeze wafting offshore, but with increasing distance offshore wind strength increases dramatically. Cluffed coastlines or those with marked topographic relief such as dune ridges, or swathes of forest, are particularly deceptive. Lurking sea kayaker traps are wherever those continuous cliffs or dune ridges are broken by gorges, fiords, steep sided valleys and narrow entrance bays.

Recently I received a swag of E mail messages from Sandy Ferguson relating to a party of New South Wales sea kayakers who were subjected to the deceptive but 'orrible offshore winds at Jervis Bay, south of Sydney. I can sympathize with the N.S.W. paddlers' predicament, for yours truly was caught during the Australian trip along way offshore immediately south of Jervis Bay by a sudden, dramatic wind shift, that left me with such a struggle against an offshore wind that I felt like throwing in the towel and abandoning the trip. Limping into the lee of St. Georges Head I coined the phrase, 'Wind was definitely the curse of the canoeing class.'

An article on offshore winds is pertinent, particularly after the article by John Ramwell in the last newsletter on the Lyme Bay tragedy.

### **Wind Strength**

Above an altitude of 500 to 600m, wind has an unobstructed flow over the sea while below that height, there is increasing frictional or drag effect between the air and the surface over which the wind is blowing, resulting in a diminishing of wind speed as the ground or sea is approached.

The amount of wind strength reduction depends on the nature of the surface; over forested hilly terrain the air flow will be less than that over open sea because of greater frictional drag.

Approximate values have been determined for frictional drag: over open sea a wind 500m above the sea reduces by about 33% at sea level, while over land the reduction is 66%. Thus a 30 knot wind at 500m will produce a 20 knot wind over the sea and 10 knots over land.

There is where the 'deceptive' description for offshore wind applies, for a factor of 50% can be applied to wind when it blows from land out to sea. A gentle breeze of 6 knots inland becomes a moderate wind of 12 knots offshore and a 15 knot wind inland becomes a near gale of 30 knots at sea.

The height and nature of a coastline govern the zone width of calm, sheltered water in offshore wind conditions:

- a. a long beach with a low sand dune ridge providing minimum relief, dictates a minimum width with the offshore wind felt at the water's edge.
- b. a continuous line of vertical cliffs will provide a maximum width of calm, sheltered water, naturally depending on the height of the cliffs which govern where the offshore wind hits the sea.

### **What is the Problem for Sea Kayakers with Offshore Winds?**

The obvious problem with offshore winds is being blown offshore. Where there is no off-lying shelter, such as a reef or island, and the next continent is thousands of miles away, the chances of survival without a radio or batphone are zilch. I maintain that once a wind rises over 30 knots, paddling progress into the wind grinds to a halt. With wind strengths over 40 knots, strong forward paddling is overcome by wind and chop drift down-

wind, with resultant seawards drift.

No matter whether a kayaker is five metres, 50m, 500m or 5kms offshore in 35+ knots of offshore wind, the situation is the same. The chance of reaching shore is slim from 5m out and zilch from further out.

Any misadventure such as a dropped paddle or capsize, both occurred with two paddlers off Jervis Bay, result in instant seawards drift and a greater distance to reach shore after recovering from the misadventure.

By way of example to those who have yet to experience such conditions, I struck diabolical offshore conditions during my first day in the Bering Sea, on the northern side of the Alaska Peninsula with a gale force wind blowing offshore over a low dune ridge and flat tundra inland. The sea was flat calm, a low surge against a gravel beach, wind ripples close inshore and an increasing density of whitecaps with distance out from the beach. Deceptively good paddling conditions, but bear in mind the 50% increase in wind strength from land to sea, and conditions more than 10m offshore were well beyond my limit to reach the beach. I spent many hours crabbing my way along the beach, the kayak at a 45 degree angle to the line of the beach to check offshore wind drift, the bow rising and falling against the beach with each surge. I was fully aware of the risk, realizing the next stop offshore was the ice pack and unbearable polar bear country.

### **Cluffed Coastlines & Kayak Traps**

At the base of a long continuous line of cliffs, excellent shelter is afforded in strong offshore winds. Steep hillsides close to the coast, continuous dune ridges and tall forest also offer shelter close to a beach.

But wherever that continuous line of shelter is broken abruptly, for instance by a narrow fiord, narrow bay or harbour entrance, gorge, river or stream valley, the offshore wind is funnelled through that break with unbridled force, causing williwaws and violent gusts or bullets of wind. And it is the violence of the turbulence that can cause the loss of a paddle or a capsize.

Many sheltered bays and harbours

have narrow entrances which open back into broad areas of calm water. Jervis Bay in New South Wales is a classic sheltered bay, which has a narrow entrance with tall cliffed headland on both sides and we have many such examples in New Zealand. Offshore winds funnel through such narrow entrances with double or triple the wind strength of that inland.

Also where a continuous line of cliffs of steep coastline is broken by a headland or cape projecting seawards, increasing wind strength must be expected often accompanied by williwaws and strong gusts or bullets of wind.

### What to Look For

An increasing density of whitecaps with progressive distance offshore are the best indicator of strong offshore winds, along with spray fanning seawards off breaking wave crests.

White spray dancing over the water, indicates a wind funnel with bullet like gusts of wind lifting spray off the sea.

### Suggestions for Remedial Action

1. If an offshore wind is blowing at the launch site, be prepared to abort or shorten the length of the trip.

2. if caught in a sudden or gradual change to an offshore wind, turn tail immediately and run for the beach or nearest shelter. Sea conditions will deteriorate as the wind continues to blow offshore.

3. When faced by a wind violently funnelling out of a harbour or fiord etc., either return to the launch site or attempt to land and wait until the wind strength abates.

Patience is the order of the day. If there is any doubt, it is better to wait.

4. When caught on an exposed coast by a change to offshore wind conditions, hug the coast intimately, even if this adds considerably to the distance paddled for example by paddling around the curve of a bay.

5. Do not make straight line crossings of the narrow entrances to bays, fiords or harbours. Paddle upwind into the feature far enough before kicking out on the crossing. This is to combat ensuing wind and chop drift during the crossing and ensure reaching the far side safely.

### Weather Forecasts

Marine forecasts relate to powered vessels and not paddler powered kayaks. Offshore winds commonly knock down the sea state, diminishing swell size and generating reasonable fishing conditions for powered vessels.

Listen to the marine forecast and if the stated wind direction is offshore in your area, be extra wary before commencing a paddle.

We know forecasts are not always accurate, hence a final decision to paddle or not must be made at the launch site.

### Points to Remember

1. Offshore wind conditions are deceptive, with calm water and light breezes against the beach. Always look for whitecaps offshore.

2. Wind strength increases by 50% when passing from land to open sea.

3. Narrow topographic features funnel offshore winds, with dramatic turbulence.

### Further Reading

'Coastal Radio and Weather for New Zealand Fishermen.'  
ISBN 0670 844039

This is an excellent resource for New Zealand paddlers, not only with an excellent layperson's guide to weather by Kenneth Brierley but with a full listing of marine communication systems throughout the country.

Paul Caffyn

### Book Review

#### Rivers Running Free

Canoeing Stories by Adventurous Women

Edited by Judith Niemi & Barbara Nieser

Reviewed by Ray Forsyth

This is a book about adventurous and exploring impulses in women, about travelling in wild places by canoe and kayak. Although many of the women travelled great distances in North America, the substance of the stories are the journeys of mind and spirit. These extracts from published books and private diaries start in 1905 and only a couple include sea kayaking. But as easy reading of women's beginning participation in one facet of outdoor recreation, it is an interesting read for winter days.

There is an extensive (but North American) list of books by and about women and paddling, instruction and canoeing history.

First published by Bergamot Book in 1987;

First Seal Press Edition 1992.

My copy was from the Canterbury Public Library.

Ray Forsyth

### Sea Kayaking Sydney Style...

by Glyn Dickson

While on the far side of the ditch recently for my sister's wedding, I had the fortune to be bodily hijacked and forced into a kayak for a morning's paddle out of Sydney Harbour. Kiwi Bruce announced these plans and stated that if I wasn't waiting outside the door at 7.30am on Sunday morning, certain parts of my anatomy would be slowly and painfully removed.

The day dawned bright and clear. Quite a change to the liquid sunshine Auckland has been experiencing this winter. Off to the Sydney Sea Kayak Centre by the Spit Bridge in Middle Harbour, with white sandy beach and boats moored peaceful in the day. The craft Bruce had organized for me was a Mirage which is made in two sizes, a 17 footer, and my one, a 19 footer. It looked the part with swept up ends, three hatches, and an interesting rudder which was like the rear part of a Nordkapp HM hull, that actually pivoted.

The footrests were in the right position luckily as to shift them involved wing nuts and tying knots in the steering lines. A drink bottle and some safety gear, then out onto the water. The mirage felt quite stable in flat water, the fine ends and straight keel making it difficult to turn unless railed over. Good for tracking ability but compromising manoeuvrability. The cockpit height was low above the knee positions but the large cockpit allowed a knees together paddling style clear of the knee braces which was more comfortable.

From the Spit we headed out of Middle Harbour and into the main harbour. At this point you're quite close to Manly, and the next destina-

tion Sydney Heads. Traffic was generally light for a Sunday, but watch for the Manly catamarans which pass through at around 25 knots.

An easterly swell was running at 1.5m through the heads, so that with a tail wind (and chop), and swell rebounding from the shoreline, sea conditions were confused. Bruce was looking comfortable in his Sea Bear, while I was concentrating and in readiness for the odd support stroke. Out of the heads and next stop New Zealand straight ahead, so we turned left and worked our way around towards the open water side of Manly.

A large concrete building on the cliff top aroused my curiosity. Bruce announced it to be the North Head sewage treatment plant. This of course is something of an anomaly as 'treatment' consists of pumping with a little macerating. High tech though... Rather than just pouring it out at the foot of the cliffs (which they did until quite recently), they pump it some kilometres out to sea so it's more difficult for it to blow back onto the beaches. It reminded me of the Bondi situation five years ago where the outfall was at the base of the northern point. The local radio jocks had rewritten a song as follows:

*I do love to be beside the seaside  
I do love to be beside the sea  
I do love to step on hypodermic needles,  
And pick up a lovely dose of hepatitis B.*

*I do love to swim among the condoms,  
Tampons, bacteria and pooh,  
Lying naked in the sun,  
A melanoma on my bum,  
Beside the seaside, beside the sea.*

A play in the surf at a point break marked half way, before stopping in at Shelley Bay which is a nice sandy beach tucked away from the surf. Turn around and paddle back for a total time of three and a half hours.

Sydney Harbour is a fantastic piece of water if you like modified coastline. It's fascinating to explore, which will take several days if you want to see most of it. There are several different shops that hire gear, while the selection of kayaks give you a chance to try something different.

Glyn Dickson

## *Trip Reports*

### **Hollyford River to Milford Sound**

by Max Grant

Kayak: plastic Puffin

Paddles: 218cm medium blade for river & rough sea  
230cm narrow blade for Lake McKerrow & Milford Sound (two splits)

Equipment: EPIRB, flares, waterproof handheld 2 way radio, Macpac Minaret tent, six days' food, plenty of warm clothing & a good 'sou-wester' hat.

By the time I'd finished packing all my gear into the kayak, it was 1pm and I was finally ready to set off down the Hollyford River. The day was warm and sunny, the river cold and low, with snow down to the river's edge.

The 21km stretch of river between the end of the road and the confluence with the Pyke River contained many grade 1 rapids, a few of which were blocked with logs and had to be portaged, and one grade 4 rapid at Cascade Creek. The Cascade Creek rapid was about 150m long and would have been a thrill in my white water kayak, but with my loaded up sea kayak, it was a one hour portage. I was thankful at this point that I had opted for the plastic sea kayak, as I literally dragged and dropped it over boulders which would have caused major damage to a fibreglass hulled kayak.

I kayaked on for another hour before making camp for the first night on the river bank 6km from the confluence with Pyke River.

During the night, the expected depression moved onto the area and when I awoke in the morning it was snowing lightly. After a good hot breakfast I started down river. I had only been paddling a short time when I came across a family of three red deer drinking at the river edge. The stag, hind and fawn stood their ground as I drifted towards them. At a distance of 20m, they turned and disappeared into the bush. This was the first time I'd ever seen deer from my kayak and to have been able to get so close was a wonderful experience.

After reaching Pyke River, it was another 9km to Lake McKerrow and the Lake McKerrow Hut. This part of the river was very similar to the Whanganui River, only the water was crystal clear. After a hot meal, I continued across Lake McKerrow. Although the weather was not the best, I couldn't help notice the beauty of the lake. It is surrounded by dense vegetation right down to the lake's edge, and steep snow covered peaks appeared above the mist. With a wind at my back, I made good time across the lake and down the last part of the Hollyford River to the sea and the Martin Bay hut - 21.5kms for the day.

A new hut has been built at Martin Bay, a few hundred metres south of the old hut site on the river bank. This is good for any kayakers as you can land and the hut without having to go over the river bar.

Next morning I was a little disappointed not to see any Fiordland Crested penguins which are known to be on Long Reef Point. Offshore sea conditions were not too good with a one to two metre swell from the north. As the weather forecast was worse for the next day, I decided to make a run for in and headed out for Milford Sound, 46kms down the coast.

From Martins Bay to Yates Point, I stayed 1 to 2kms offshore, to avoid a confused sea most of which was caused by several shallow reefs and some large rocky outcrops. The shoreline was steep and covered in bush, but I passed several beaches where a kayak could land with suitable camp sites. Once past Yates Point, the sea became calmer and after I rounded Dale Point, and entered Milford Sound, the sea became dead flat. And as an extra bonus, the sun came out. At the entrance to Milford Sound, there are a couple of places where a kayak could land on the southern shore.

About 6pm I hit the beach at Milford, quickly got changed and put in my last radio message to the Milford Sound airport control tower. (I carried a low frequency handheld radio with which I was able to talk to any aircraft in the area). The chap in the tower responded, "Well done canoeist! When will you be back?"

The question took me by surprise,

and I had to think quickly before I answered.

“As soon as I can get back. It has been an amazing trip.”

Max Grant

### *Fighting the Easterlies*

*by Andy Wurm*

*Auckland to Waikawau Bay*

2 to 6 April 1995

Distance: 110 kms in 4 paddling days.

Ron Hepworth and I set off from Auckland to Tauranga. A new part of coastline which we haven't paddled before, was our goal. On 2 April we left Eastern Beach/Howick, hitting out into the Hauraki Gulf and decided to paddle the southern part of Waiheke. We needed three hours till the south-eastern point of the island and had a lunch break. Ten to 15 knot northerlies with an outgoing tide was perfect for the day. Looking back, we saw clouds and thunderstorms moving south over Auckland. The last bit through the channel to Pakatoa Island brought a 15 knot headwind and slight choppy conditions.

Before we left Auckland I had obtained permission to land and camp on Pakatoa Island for one night, on a spot where we would not be visible to rich holiday makers. This was in order to leave early next morning for a crossing of the Firth of Thames.

Our objective next day was the west coast of Coromandel Peninsula, north of Colville Harbour. We paddled about 50m apart for the four hour crossing without land protection. Two fishing boats greeted us and were shocked when hearing of the end of our trip - Tauranga. The closer we neared Happy Jack, the windier it got and sometimes I thought the island was never coming closer. Entering the crystal clear waters of Elephant Cove, with stingrays visible, reminded me of Arid Island. It was warm, with great views to Waiheke and Pakatoa islands. We took our time and enjoyed a substantial feast of salami and cheese sandwiches, before continuing to a pebble beach near Ohohi Stream where we pitched the tent. Huge old Pohutukawa trees gave a magical and special touch to this place, especially when the sun set.

The forecast next morning brought bad news, 25 to 30 knot north-easterlies. We called the day off, and filled in the time with short walks, a great bath in one of the streams and reading books. Late afternoon, heavy wind squalls and lots of rain in the ranges. I wanted to continue and was tired of sitting around looking out to sea.

Next day, my wedding anniversary, the forecast was reasonable, 20 knot north-easterly winds with a two metre easterly swell. We packed and two hours later hit Cape Colville. Kaiiti Point started with a tide race while the other points had minor tidal streams. The coast became more and more beautiful the further we paddled south.

Just at the wrong moment off the Cape, Ron's steering cable clicked out in the cockpit, at his feet. He managed nicely in the conditions and we landed in a sheltered corner of Jackson Bay where the rain started. After Ron fixed his steering, we decided to continue although it was tempting to wait for better conditions. After leaving the bay, 20 knot headwinds hit us. Rain sprayed in our faces but worse was the so called moderate sea. It looked pretty wild out in the channel. Ron paddled further offshore in the channel to avoid the rebound waves from the rocky coastline, while I remained closer to the cliffs. The swell was around 2m in height. We fought our way eastwards but soon decided to surf into Fletcher Bay. We had had enough. Landing was OK on top of a tiny bar near a stream. The west side of the bay had dumping surf on a stony beach.

We had coffee from my espresso cooker before walking up to a viewpoint on the walkway to Stony Bay. After observing sea conditions on the east side of Coromandel with binoculars, we should have gone on. Anyhow I promised Ron a birthday cake next day, but not in Fletcher Bay. We walked back and met a farmer and Wayne, a local sea kayak operator, who was helpful with marine forecasts. Later I looked at a notice board at the tiny DOC camp and guess what I read: 'Cakes made to order.' I couldn't believe my eyes. My order that night was for carrot cake with a creamy coffee dressing.

Next morning, I had an unforgetta-

ble birthday, with a cake and a candle which would not light because of the wind. All the residents enjoyed eating with us. Soon after 10am we left through a surf while the camp residents waved farewell. We headed for a gap in a reef off the pinnacles. Again strong currents and a seagull feather was splashed on to my foredeck. The only but special birthday present - but what a way to get it. Conditions improved as we paddled, but after a good hot cuppa on one of many pebble beaches in the bay, we hit the open sea again. A perfect 10 knot north-east breeze turned into a 20 east-south-easterly within half an hour. Rebound waves off the cliff built up. We were soon fighting bad weather, rain, confused seas, and a two metre plus swell. The beautiful coastline was hidden by rain, spray and clouds. Conversation was impossible and we paddled apart quite a distance.

Waikawau Bay was in sight and we landed though a gentle surf. The lady caretaker of the DOC camp gave us the latest forecast, 25 to 30 knot north-easterlies, with thunderstorms and gale force winds up to 35 to 40 knots. That's it. We gave up. The ever blowing easterly winds were too much.

We left the kayaks to be picked up later and hitched a ride with DOC to Thames. One day later Coromandel was flooded and the bay had West Coast surf conditions. When we picked up the kayaks a week later, DOC told us the kayaks nearly floated next to their house.

We hope to find the time next summer to finish this leg to Tauranga before continuing around the Bay of Plenty and further south.

Andy Wurm.

### *Wanted to Buy*

Two secondhand, single, plastic sea kayaks in good condition. Anything considered.

Contact: Sue Newton  
16 Cooper St., Karori  
Wellington  
Ph: (04) 476 3539

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