



SOUTHERN MAINE SEA KAYAKING NETWORK

August 2002

Paddling With Whales

by: Bob Arledge



A minke whale approaches to within 10 feet of two kayakers

Last Labor Day Dorry Shaw, Laura Blutstein, Charles Duncan and I went up to the St. Lawrence River, near the mouth of the Saguenay River, to paddle with whales. We had a good time, but whales were a little thin on the ground. This year they were not. Dennis Leiner, Bruce Clary, Jon Swan and I went up there this Independence Day and we saw a lot of whales.

We left Portland in the afternoon of Wednesday July 5th and drove up beyond Quebec City that evening. We stayed in a charming motel that was decorated in a quaint Soviet labor-camp motif. We arrived at Tadoussac at the mouth of the Saguenay River late Thursday morning. We picked up some food and headed up to the Paradis Marin Campground.

After we set up our tents we went out for a paddle. It was not long before a minke whale came along heading north parallel to the shore. As I paddled along, the whale surfaced every two or three minutes, sometimes as close as 30 feet. Over the next few days we saw so many minkes that when someone heard a blow someone would say "it's only a minke." The whales came in as close as 100 feet from the shore of the campground. While we were there we saw lots of belugas, a couple of finbacks and a sperm whale. We also saw harbor porpoises, harbor seals, grey seals and Greenland seals. On Saturday when we drove up the Saguenay River, we missed a humpback whale that cruised past the campground.

After we returned to the campground Saturday we went for a paddle. A number of other kayakers from the campground were also out. There was no wind at all and the sea was

glassy. In the space of less than ten minutes the wind ramped up to thirty knots. Everyone headed for the beach, but one woman got blown over. We had an opportunity to practice an assisted rescue just like we have done in the pool sessions.



A minke right off the rocks at the Paradis Marin campground

Dennis has posted his pictures from the trip on his website at www.lighthouseoptics.com/gulf. There is a website www.whalesonline.com that provides weekly reports of the number, type and location of whales sighted in the area.

Monhegan Island – 2002

by: Bill Ridlon

Ah, Monhegan. The trip was finally a relatively easy one after several years of challenging crossings. Even so, we saw a whale again. That raises the average of whale sightings to above 50% each year.

We started out on Friday with 12 paddlers and four ferry people. Undoubtedly, the ferry people had an easier time of it but the Monhegan paddlers don't come for an easy time; they come to be on the water, at water level, at the same level as seals, porpoises, whales, wind, and waves. We had one double, the remainder single boats. We gradually slipped into two groups: the "fast" group and the "slow" group. The slow group saw the whale, the fast group didn't. There's a moral in there somewhere. By the time we reached Monhegan four hours after we left Port Clyde, the fast group was over a half hour ahead of the slow group, but everyone arrived safely and that was what counted.

Most of the participants were veterans. Monhegan has a way of doing that: calling you back each year. We also had four rookies, all of whom seemed to be ready to be a veteran next year. We had a following wind on the way out and a following wind on the way back. It doesn't get much sweeter than that! The return was in two groups: those who returned on Sunday and the lucky ones who stayed an additional day and returned on Monday. Both groups dealt with fog and both groups were successful in getting back to Port Clyde.

We circled Monhegan on Saturday so as to see the entire island from the water side. In so doing, we found that it was very rough on the southeast side and the closer to the cliffs one paddled, the rougher it was. Again, all returned to Fish Beach safely. Some came back immediately, some stopped at the next island, Manana, to do some exploring.

Interested? Go to www.monhegan.com and look at some of the pictures. The following picture was on the site on Monday, July 29th:



These are our boats behind the Monhegan House. Yes, we're quite the celebrities when we come to town.

SMSKN Kayaking Safety Seminar

by: Bob Arledge



Now What?

There have been two kayaking deaths in Maine this year. The first was June 2nd. A 62 year old man who was paddling for the first time drowned on Long Pond in Parsonfield. The second was the next day, off East End Beach in Portland. This was a 27-year-old man who had only been paddling since April.

At the June SMSKN Board meeting, the Board decided to sponsor a seminar for the general public promoting kayaking safety. We asked Al Johnson of the 1st District Coast Guard, Ken Fink of Poseidon Kayak, Tom Bergh of Maine Island Kayak Company, Jeff Cooper of H2Outfitters, and Bob Myron of Maine Association of Sea Kayak Guides and Instructors, to join us to organize the seminar. After several meetings and a great deal of effort from everyone involved, we have set up the seminar. This is it:

The First Annual Kayaking Safety Seminar

Location: The Casco Bay YMCA in Freeport

Date: August 23rd

Time: 6:00 pm to 9:30 pm

The presenters are going to be:

Matthew Bampton - Associate professor of geography at USM. A recreational paddler for over 25 years, Matthew also uses sea kayaks for his teaching and research.

Tom Bergh - Co-owner of Maine Island Kayak Company, Peaks Island, providing kayak training for U.S. Special Forces.

Jeff Cooper - Co-owner of H2Outfitters located, on Orr's Island, Maine, and kayak video producer.

Ken Fink - Oceanographer, one of Maine's first pioneers and authorities on sea kayaking, owner of Poseidon Kayak Imports

Todd Lonergan - U. S. Coast Guard, Chief Telecommunications Specialist.

There are going to be three instruction modules that will be repeated three times. That way we can split the audience into three smaller groups and everyone will be able to attend all three modules. The three modules are:

Rescue Skills and the Essentials- A poolside program demonstrating essential gear and techniques for self and assisted rescues in the event of a capsized. This workshop is designed to get you *thinking*, not just memorizing techniques.

Communications - VHF radios, cell phones, flares, signals, enhancing visibility for safety and emergency situations. What should you carry with you? And how do you use it in an emergency situation? Let the experts show you how.

From Here to There Safely, Navigation for the Kayaker - Learn about how you should interact with other vessels, and how to identify coastal areas of risk to you in your kayak, such as shoals, strong tidal flow, how wind and waves interact making for inherently risky conditions. And, oh yes, Maine fog.

Annual Election Coming Up

Our annual election of board members will be held this October. If you might be interested in serving as President, Secretary, Treasurer, or Member-at-Large, please let Bob Arledge or another member of the current board know. They'd be happy to tell you what sorts of things you'd be doing as a board member. We are looking for some people with new ideas and energy to help guide the club and make it serve our 200 members well!

SMSKN Tee-shirts - Coming to a Meeting Near You

We'll have the brand-new SMSKN tee-shirts available at the August 22 general membership meeting. Be the first on your block to wear one of these snazzy shirts! The comfortable, moisture-wicking Coolmax tees sport our SMSKN logo. If you pre-ordered a shirt, please come to this meeting or a future meeting to pick it up. If you forgot to order one, we'll have extras available for sale. Please bring \$23 per shirt, check or cash (correct change, please!).

Weekend of Skills Clinics

by: Lee Burnsted

For someone who has been sea kayaking for more than 15 years, I have had surprisingly little formal instruction. I set out to remedy that when I enrolled in a SMSKN-sponsored double-header the last weekend in July: an intermediate strokes and braces clinic on Saturday and a Greenland strokes and rolling clinic on Sunday.

I joined 11 other SMSKN members for four hours of excellent instruction from BCU-certified instructors Chick and Ann Carroll on July 27th. We met at Porter's Landing in Freeport and waited a few extra minutes for the tide to fill in enough to launch our kayaks at that sheltered put-in. Half of us headed out with Chick and half worked with Ann. We had a good time tuning our sweep strokes, high braces, back strokes, edging, sculling strokes, and draw strokes. Three members of the group worked on their strokes so aggressively that we got to practice group rescues as well!

With my kayak still strapped to my roof rack, I drove up to Range Pond in Poland the next morning to participate in the Greenland clinic. Keith Attenborough taught us the Greenland forward stroke as well as some of the history of this traditional form of paddling. He wore a neoprene version of a *tuliliq*, a combination paddling jacket, hood, and spray skirt worn by the Inuit. Hank Andolsek demonstrated a variety of Greenland rolls and the balance brace. Keith, Hank, and Mark Daniele coached us on the rolls and balance brace in the relatively warm waters of the pond. When we needed a break from being upside down, we took

turns trying out Hank's harpoon and *norsaq*, a throwing board used to launch the harpoon. (Not to worry, there are no seals in Range Pond!) I came away from the clinic with a new appreciation for the history of our sport and a renewed interest in those skinny Greenland paddles.

Club Communications

by: Bob Arledge

Bill Ridlon, our outgoing Membership Chair, is helping Lyn Suggs, his successor, to learn the job. Handling all of the membership responsibilities and communications is a very big job, especially for someone who is volunteering her time for free. One of the things that makes the job more difficult is dealing with physical letters (snail mail). For this reason we want to encourage everyone who possibly can, to provide the club with an e-mail address that SMSKN can use for communicating with them. We are also going to be using bulk e-mail more frequently to remind you of upcoming events. So for your benefit as well as ours, please try to use e-mail if at all possible.

What's Happening?

See the event list on www.smskn.org for more details, or call the contact listed.

Saturday, August 17: Port Clyde - Georges Islands.

This is an all-day paddle of the stunning Georges Islands, near Port Clyde. We'll paddle about 10-12 miles; moderate abilities needed. We expect an intermediate level of difficulty. Bring a compass, as fog is not uncommon. Start time: 9 a.m. Contact Chick Carroll, 653-8557, chickcarroll76@hotmail.com.

8/18/2002 Sunday

Rough Water Rolling and Rescue Class

Tom Bergh of Maine Island Kayak Company (MIKCO) is offering us an advanced class in rolling and rescues. The class will be given on a day when the ebbing tide meets the swell at the mouth of the Kennebec River at Ft. Popham. This is an excellent place to find rough water. MIKCO will provide one instructor for each four students. The class is an all day class. Tom is offering this class to us for \$85 per day. This is a very good deal. You will need to provide your own boat and your own food and drink. Reservations for this course are not effective until your check (made out to Maine Island Kayak Company) is received by me. My address is: 160 Foster Point Road, West Bath, Maine 04530. Difficulty: 4 - Severe Challenge; Category: Instruction; Location: Ft. Popham, Maine; Meet: 9:00 am, Ft. Popham; Limit: 12; Leader: Bob Arledge, 207-415-1567, bob@arledge.cc.

Thursday, August 22: August Membership Meeting. "Planning Tips for Safe and Happy Paddling" is the title of