

# ATLANTIC COASTAL KAYAKER

October 2019 Volume 28, Number 7



## The Lakes of October Issue



**Yakgrips®**

CascadeCreek.com

*The Rhythm Of The Ocean*

*Autumn Gales 2019, Fishers Island Sound*

**Autumn Gales 2019  
Fishers Island Sound**

Main event dates: Nov 1-3  
British Canoeing week: Oct 28-31

Kayak Waveology's International  
Guests Attending are:  
Jeff Allen Juan Paulo Ceron, JP  
Rick Cooper Peter Jones  
Axle Schovers Harry Whalen  
Eila Wilkinson

All info can be found at [www.Autumngales.com](http://www.Autumngales.com)

**Driftwood Kayak**

excursions • workshops • getaways

**Paddle The Maine Island  
Trail at Stonington  
& Deer Isle**

*Find Your Inner Paddler*

**617.957.8802**  
[www.driftwoodkayak.com](http://www.driftwoodkayak.com)

Coaching People and  
Changing Perspectives

**NDK DEALER**

Kayak  
Waveology.com

[www.kayakwaveology.com](http://www.kayakwaveology.com)  
(860) 304-4000

Take a trip you'll never forget

Immerse yourself in the Maine wildlife  
and scenery that YOU want to  
experience. Custom trips and tours.  
Personalized Registered Maine Guide Training

[www.maineGUIDE.com](http://www.maineGUIDE.com)  
(207) 729-6333

Alice's Awesome  
Adventures

**Betsie Bay Kayak**

**High Performance  
Kayaks from Ancient  
Inuit Design**

**BBKAYAK.COM**

Your Mothership is Calling  
*Just Bring Yourself*

Join us on our live aboard ship,  
*Mirage*, for an all-inclusive sea kayak  
tour of Florida or the Bahamas.

[KayakVoyagers.com](http://KayakVoyagers.com)

**TopKayaker**

Keeping your kayak  
in Top Shape since 1998

Authorized Parts Dealer For  
All Major Kayak Brands  
Sit-in or Sit-on

**TopKayaker.com**

# Newbury Kayak & Canoe

291 High Road, Newbury MA 01951  
 978-465-0312  
 NewburyKayak.com




# NANUQ KAYAKS

Portland, Maine




207-805-6884  
 nanuqkayaks.com  
 High Performance Sea Kayaks



# Atlantic Vacation Homes

The largest selection of vacation rentals on Cape Ann and across Boston's North Shore.

Waterfront • Pet Friendly • Kayak Rentals



Book direct with us: 978-910-0010 or [www.atlanticvacationhomes.com](http://www.atlanticvacationhomes.com)



# CHARLES RIVER CANOE & KAYAK


Padding Store  
 Tours and Trips  
 Kids' Paddling Camps



[www.PaddleBoston.com](http://www.PaddleBoston.com)

31st Annual

# DELMARVA PADDLERS RETREAT



Oct 10- 13, 2019  
[delmarvapaddlersretreat.org](http://delmarvapaddlersretreat.org)



# MAINE ISLAND TRAIL ASSOCIATION

Discover the Maine Island Trail this summer! Over 200 island and mainland sites from Kittery to Cobscook.


Your membership supports island stewardship.

[WWW.MITA.ORG](http://WWW.MITA.ORG)



# Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Water Trail

[smithtrail.net](http://smithtrail.net)



[floridapaddlingtrails.com](http://floridapaddlingtrails.com)

# Florida Paddling Trails Association




Florida Circumnavigational Saltwater Paddling Trail



Missoua Community

# NORTHERN FOREST CANOE TRAIL

[WWW.NORTHERNFORSTCANOETRAIL.ORG](http://WWW.NORTHERNFORSTCANOETRAIL.ORG)



740 Miles  
 4 States and 1 Province  
 27 Rivers and Streams  
 16 Lakes and Ponds

The Northern Forest Canoe Trail (NFCT) links the waterways of New York, Vermont, Québec, New Hampshire and Maine.

Atlantic Coastal Kayaker publishes  
April to December.

**Publisher**  
Tamsin Venn

**Editor**  
David Eden

**Website**  
www.atlanticcoastalkayaker.com

**Atlantic Coastal Kayaker**  
224 Argilla Road  
Ipswich MA 01938  
(978) 356-6112 (tel,fax)  
ackayak@comcast.net

**Deadline for all materials is the first of the month preceding the month of publication.**

Letters are welcome. Please send emails to David Eden at [dweden@atlanticcoastalkayaker.com](mailto:dweden@atlanticcoastalkayaker.com) and snail mail to the address above.

### On The Cover

T: Tammy heads out onto Lobster Lake, Maine, for a rough, windy crossing. Photo by David Eden.

B: David enters Chesuncook Lake, Maine, Mount Katahdin in the background. Photo by Tamsin Venn.

The leatherback sea turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*) is the largest of all living turtles. It can easily be differentiated from other modern sea turtles by its lack of a bony shell. Instead, its carapace is covered by skin and oily flesh. Relatives of modern leatherback turtles have existed in some form since the first true sea turtles evolved over 110 million years ago during the Cretaceous period. Leatherback's front flippers can grow up to 2.7 m (8.9 ft) in large specimens, the largest flippers (even in comparison to its body) of any sea turtle. Of all the extant sea turtle species, *D. coriacea* has the widest distribution, reaching as far north as Alaska and as far south as Cape Agulhas in Africa.

## In This Issue

### Features

<b>First Blackburn in a Ski.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>The "Northern Summit" Trip: After Thoreau.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>The Maine Greenland Kayak Festival.....</b>	<b>29</b>

### Departments:

<b>News &amp; Notes.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Review: The Last Lobster.....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Review: Seaweed Chronicles.....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Flip That Kayak!.....</b>	<b>36</b>





Main Event Dates: Nov 1-3, 2019  
British Canoe Week: Oct 28-31, 2019

## Sign Up Now For Autumn Gales

The Autumn Gales, led by BCU Level 5 coach Greg Paquin, will take place Nov. 1-3 in Fisher's Island Sound, Ct. The main event is preceded by British Canoe Week Oct. 28-31. Autumn Gales is entering its second decade of being a premier rough water event on the East Coast and is held in one of the few areas in the U.S. that has tidal currents worthy of holding British Canoeing's Advance Sea Kayak Leader Training. Fisher's Island Sound provides paddlers a great location to learn and gain experience with rough water paddling.

High level coaches and rough water guides create an environment where paddlers can test their comfort zone, gain confidence, and continue their skills' growth and seamanship. A low coach/guide to participation ratio allows for a lot of individualized coaching. The event is geared towards a variety of paddlers - those that have a solid foundation on flat water and have experienced some bouncy water to those looking to hone their skills in the bigger stuff.

Be a part of a fun community and sub-culture of rough water paddlers that are empowering to be around - sharing knowledge, exploring, and building confidence.

<http://www.autumngales.com/guests--guides.html>



## Increased CO2 Levels Help Tidal Wetlands

According to an article by Andrea Michelson in the October 3, 2019 smithsonian.com newsletter, the effects of increased CO2 in the atmosphere may actually have an unexpected positive effect on salt water marsh plants in the very areas of highest concern as sea lev-

els rise.

Most of us are aware of the positive effect on plant life of higher CO2 levels, since the gas is a necessary precursor to photosynthesis. More CO, more photosynthesis, more plant growth, natch. But, as Michelson writes:

"A team of researchers at the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center (SERC) working in a marshland on the Rhode River in Edgewater, Maryland, recently took a closer look at how high levels of CO2 affect marsh plant growth. They knew that carbon dioxide has a positive effect on the overall biomass of marsh plants and assumed that individual plants must be producing bigger stems. But the results of the study, recently published in Nature Climate Change, actually showed plants producing smaller but more plentiful stems."

According to the study that the author references:

"The total biomass of marsh sedges growing in high-carbon dioxide chambers increased by 20 percent, but the biomass of individual stems shrunk 16 percent."

This effect is apparently caused by a change in the ratio of carbon dioxide to nitrogen available to the sedges, causing the roots to grow deeper into the soil in search of nutrients. As clonal plants, marsh sedges also grow new stems as they spread their roots. But because of the relative lack of nitrogen, these new stems are "shorter and skinnier."

"The wetlands of today will be able to survive a higher rate of sea level rise than the wetlands of yesteryear. While the rates of sea level rise are accelerating, there are mechanisms by which these ecosystems with their plants and microbes might be able to increase their rate of elevation gain."

Another way the marsh plants help build up soil is with their stems, which can slow water flow and allow sediment to settle. Even though the study found that individual stems were less robust in the presence of the gas ratio change, the clonal aspect of the plants meant there were more stems, largely counter-acting the effect. The marsh soil level has a net rise due to the change, increasing the world's wetlands' ability to buffer against the increased ferocity of ocean storm surges. That, plus the ability of the marsh to trap and store carbon in the soil, makes it a key component of the planet's ability to withstand the worst effects of cli-

mate change.



### **Moulton Avery's Birthday Fundraiser**

For cold water guru Moulton Avery's birthday this year, he is asking for donations to National Center for Cold Water Safety. Its mission means a lot to him and he hopes people will consider contributing as a way to celebrate with him. As he says:

"Every little bit will help me reach my goal...Accurate information on cold water safety is vital to anyone venturing onto cold water, whether their sport is canoeing, kayaking, sailing, fishing, hunting, paddle boarding, board sailing, surfing, open water swimming, scuba diving, rowing, surf skiing, or motor boating. It is also mission-critical for risk management, occupational safety, emergency management, search and rescue, and any commercial or military operations in which immersion in cold water is a possibility.

"The National Center for Cold Water Safety was established to reduce the incidence of close calls, injuries, and fatalities due to cold water immersion. Research and program activities at the Center are devoted to bridging the gap between basic scientific and medical research and the practical application of that knowledge in support of cold water safety. We believe that the most effective way to promote cold water safety is to:

- \* Provide information that is medically and scientifically sound, practical and easy to apply, and based on real-world experience.
- \* Focus on prevention rather than after-the-fact treatment.
- \* Expose misinformation.
- \* Partner with any individual, group, or organization interested in the promotion of cold water safety.

The National Center for Cold Water Safety is a valuable resource to which both individuals and other organizations can turn for accurate information, technical assistance, and training on the subject."

Happy Birthday Moulton!



### **Hoffmeister Attempts North American Circumnavigation**

Just when you think adventure paddler Freya Hoffmeister may hang up her paddle and write her memoirs, she's back at her amazing ability to conquer long distance paddling in sometimes impossible conditions. She has paddled around two continents - Australia and South America - and is now on her third, North America. Like South America - Hoffmeister completed the expedition in stages between 2011 and 2015 - she will paddle North America in stages as well, in a time frame of eight years - or 11 or 12. She's not sure. Her solution to completing the 30,000-mile circle, which will end in New York Harbor, is to approach it from both ends, paddling north in summer and south in winter. She started in Seattle in March 2017 and this past summer followed Alaska's wild west coast. Between trips, she returns to Germany to see her son and run her businesses - two ice cream stores and a Christmas store. Unlike many of her other expeditions which are solo, she has a companion - Fylkir Saevarsson - making the epic journey with her. All he has to do is keep up. Freya's normal distance is 25 miles a day, more when she's solo. To follow the expedition, visit <http://freyahoffmeister.com/>

### **Florida Coastal Challenge 2020**

The Florida Coastal Challenge starts Feb. 28, 2020. It is an expedition-style adventure race for kayaks, canoes, and small sailboats sponsored by WaterTribe. The race follows the entire coast of Florida starting near Alabama and ending at Fort Clinch. It merges with the Ultimate Florida Challenge, a shorter segment of

the larger race, at Tampa Bay. Paddlers have the option of crossing over the state using the St. Mary's and Suwannee Rivers including a 40-mile portage connecting the two rivers.

The Challenge has five stages and the optional stage to complete the loop. The first stage is the Alabama border to Cedar Key, then Cedar Key to Fort DeSoto, then the Everglades Challenge to Key Largo, Key Largo to Sebastien Inlet, and from there to Fort Clinch. WaterTribe also has challenges in North Carolina and more recently Minnesota.



### Not All Plastic is Forever

There's bright news in the plight of Great Pacific Garbage Patch - floating plastic bits that swirl in a giant cocktail in the currents of the Pacific Ocean, twice the size of Texas. Scientists at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, Mass., have determined that polystyrene - best known as Styrofoam in disposable coffee cups and food containers - is not quite as lethal as once thought. Previously scientists said that polystyrene could take thousands of years to degrade. But in a new study, five scientists found that sunlight can degrade polystyrene in centuries or even decades, according to a recent article in the *The New York Times*. Most are aware that sunlight can cause plastics to degrade. The new study demonstrates that sunlight goes further and breaks down polystyrene into basic chemical units of organic carbon, which dissolves in seawater, and trace amounts of carbon dioxide considered negligible. The new findings will help provide a more accurate, and possibly optimistic, accounting of plastic oceanic pollution.



### More News on Ocean Plastics

In October, one year after its test launch of System 101/B, Ocean Cleanup has announced that its plastics capture system is working. Ocean Cleanup created a third-of-a-mile-long tube with a dangling screen to gather up the floating plastic in the Great Pacific Garbage Patch between California and Hawaii. Engineers say the system is not only collecting plainly visible pieces of plastic debris, but also large ghost nets associated with commercial fishing, and microplastics as small as 1mm, a feat the company says it was pleasantly surprised to achieve.

The device aims to cut the amount of plastic in that area by 50 percent in five years. Ocean Cleanup raised a staggering \$40 million for the project. The company said its main challenge was slowing down the system with a parachute sea anchor, to allow faster-moving plastic debris to float into the system. Next task up is returning the plastic to land for recycling.

### Coast Guard Rescues Missing Kayaker Off Manchester, Mass.

Coast Guard crews helped find a missing person Saturday, Sept. 14, near House Island.

A good Samaritan reported seeing an overturned orange kayak near Salem Channel to Sector Boston



*This is a photo of a found kayak in Salem Channel, Saturday, Sept. 14, 2019. Coast Guard Station Gloucester rescue crews got underway in search of a missing kayaker reported earlier that day and were able to locate the man alive less than an hour later wearing a life jacket. Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Nicole Groll.*

watchstanders at 2:24 p.m. Shortly after, the wife of the missing kayaker called Sector Boston watchstanders reporting her husband overdue.

Two rescue boat crews from Station Gloucester and crews from the Salem and Beverly Harbormasters launched. When they arrived on scene, the kayak held a dry bag containing a set of keys and a t-shirt.

After searching for about an hour, the Beverly Harbormaster rescue crew found the kayaker wearing a life jacket. He floated in four-foot seas for about three hours.

"A life jacket really saved this man's life," said Ensign Isabella Stoyka, the duty public affairs officer for Sector Boston. "If his kayak was labeled, we may have found him sooner."

The water temperature was 66 degrees and winds were about 20 knots.

His kayak was not labeled.

If you are going out on your kayak, the Coast Guard

recommends you check the weather, tell someone where you are going and when you will be back, wear a lifejacket, have a sound-making device, and label your kayak. If you are paddling at night, make sure you have a light.

A Coast Guard Station St. Petersburg 29-foot Response Boat-Small II boatcrew rescued two people holding onto a capsized canoe in Bullfrog Creek near Apollo Beach, Florida. The survivors were transported to Williams Park Marina in Riverview, Florida. Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class David Micallef

### **Coast Guard Rescues Two From Capsized Canoe In Apollo Beach, Fla.**

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. Oct. 9, 2019 - The Coast Guard rescued two people from a capsized canoe in Bullfrog Creek near Apollo Beach, Florida, Wednesday morning.

A Coast Guard Station St. Petersburg 29-foot Response Boat-Small II boatcrew arrived on scene and located two people holding onto a capsized canoe and retrieved them from the water. Hillsborough County Sheriff Office also responded with a fireboat and salvaged the canoe. The two people and boat were safely transported to Williams Park Marina with no medical concerns.

"It was an outstanding effort between the Coast Guard and local agencies locating these two people from the capsized vessel," said Chief Petty Officer Kris Rady, executive petty officer of Station St. Petersburg. "We were glad to see both people wearing their lifejackets, and we always encourage the public to do so for these instances."





## My First Blackburn in a Ski

By *Melissa Meyer*



*Straitsmouth, mile 10. I was fighting off a foot cramp and hoping I didn't have a weird look on my face when this photo was taken. Photo courtesy of Wesley Echols.*

**A**nother Blackburn is in the books. It's such a fun race and supportive community, I'm always excited to sign up. Then, come the 2/3 or 3/4 mark, I'm even more excited to be done with it.

I came in "first place," which honestly is not much of a feat considering I was the only person in my boat class (female HPK. There were a few other gals in tandems and SS20s). I knew going in that this race would be against the men and the clock. I held off a few of the men, and the clock ticked by 3 hours and 23 minutes; not too bad. They had hats for the class winners this year, which as my friend pointed out are quite a bit more wearable in polite society than medals.

2019 was my first Blackburn in a surfski; I've raced it a couple times previously in sea kayaks. And now I'm borderline obsessed with surfski racing. How has it come to this?

I contacted Wesley last year after the Blackburn to ask for a lesson on how to use wing paddles, and he wrote back with a still from his race video and said "Is that you?" Yup. He and Chris C. had chugged by me in the

middle of the race and we all remembered the encounter, mostly because we all said things to each other but none of us heard what any of the others said. (I thought I remembered Chris advising this dude I had stuck on my tail how to better draft me; I said something like "Hey! I'm trying to win a race here!"). So I set up a lesson with Wesley and walked away that day with a Jantex wing. A few weeks later, I was buying his Stellar SR and changing my Lighthouse to Lighthouse registration from "sea kayak" to "surfski."

So I enjoyed the tail end of the 2018 racing season, and looked forward to giving this new toy, which looks and behaves a lot like a kayak, but makes rather different demands of its paddler, a proper shakedown in 2019.

Truth be told, I had toyed with the idea of getting a surfski for a few years already. I raced last year's Blackburn in a Rockpool Taran, which my bae and I got for downwind fun and long cranks. We considered them a "surfski crossover" boat (they're 18 feet long, 20.5 inches wide, and have rudders).

---

I quickly realized that I had gone from a big fish in a little pond (the vast majority of sea kayakers don't care much about speed) to a big pond full of big fish. Surf-skiers are into racing; it's what they do.

I've been in six races (has it really only been that few?) since I got my SR, and still, my dominant hope, as I launch myself onto the water, is "please don't let me embarrass myself." The sheer cognitive load was enough to slow me down in the first couple races: concentrating on posture, rotation, catch, the wing stroke, my heart rate, which muscles I was using when, controlling the rudder rather than (my ingrained habit of) edging, not to mention watching the water for rocks, current seams, waves to ride, competitors to draft (or shake), and which darned buoy we are supposed to turn on. I decided that something had to give, and chose to mostly ignore drafting opportunities; I've made some half-hearted attempts since, but that remains an unexplored frontier.

And there are all the little race hacks: How much water should you bring? Where do you carry it? That could modify the trim of the boat, which changes its performance, especially in wind. Do you pin your hydration tube to your PFD? Do you even wear a PFD? And for the longer races, where you might actually need to eat something to keep pushing: maybe tape gel packs to the hull like I saw Dana do at the Blackburn? I put bite-sized pieces of energy bar in my PFD pocket (already unwrapped is key!).

So I am learning a lot about racing. When I say that this year's Blackburn was a weird race for me, I guess that just means I don't know enough about my typical performance to explain what happened.

In every other race, I've been limited by my aerobic capacity. (Well: my speed in that upwind groaner at the end of Ride The Bull was strength-limited.) But my heartrate for most of the Blackburn was far slower than my normal racing rate. I knew I wanted to push harder, but different parts of my legs and feet kept threatening to cramp up. I simply couldn't push as hard as I normally do. Why? I was careful with nutrition, hydration, and electrolytes leading up to the race. Was it the heat? The humidity?

It all started quite well. I left the starting line strong and was able to hang on to the back of the main pack of men for most of the Annisquam. (Close enough to draft!

Maybe I'll sidle over toward him. Nah, he moved away. Maybe this other dude? Ack, this wake is pushing me around. Screw that. Note to self: learn to draft later.)

As the ocean opened up in front of me at Annisquam Light, just 30 or 40 minutes into my race, I noticed my heartrate dropping, but for whatever reason could not work any harder. The main pack of men moved off into the distance and it became, as far as I was concerned, a solo race against the clock. My cadence drooped too, and the music I had playing in my head (Oasis - What's The Story, Morning Glory) slowed down until it didn't make sense anymore, at which point the record started skipping and I think I listened to the same five or six bars of that song for a long time until I passed by a sea kayaker I know and he broke me out of it.

I kept trying to rally, but each time a new body part would feel crampy and I would have to back off. It was incredibly frustrating, because I didn't even feel like I was working hard (even though, in the only sense that mattered, I was working as hard as I was able). I knew if my leg cramped up, that would almost certainly mean a capsize. It occurred to me later that, had I actually capsized, it probably would have helped my overall time. If heat was my problem, then dorking around in the water for a minute or two trying to rub out a cramp and remount would have cooled me down nicely. Ah, well. Next time!

Speaking of capsizing, I was also surprised by the number of boat wakes which, running every which way at once, made for a pretty technical paddle in places. Expecting hot and flat from the forecast, I had swapped in my four-inch rudder (oh, yeah - at the finish line I found that my "weedless rudder" was dragging weeds between it and the hull. Another race hack I need to learn?) and I wished for the more assertive steering of my eight-inch rudder at times. Occasionally when I'm paddling, I'll see a big wake coming and preemptively throw a brace, and then I know I must be getting tired and it's wearing on my psych. At those times, I'll often speak to myself out loud: you got this babe, just punch through it. I am in complete control of this boat.

I nursed myself along until I made it to the breakwater, and then in the harbor for the final two miles I was able to push hard again (though still nowhere near my usual race heartrate). Must have been excitement for the beer, or more likely, the energy bar bites I ate somewhere around the halfway point were starting to kick in.

I had been hearing one of the OC-6s behind me for the last three or four miles (hup! hooooou), and I managed to stay out in front of them to the finish. Yeah! Different boat class, and their heat started after mine, but they provided the little bit of competition I wanted there at the end.

So that was my first Blackburn in a surfski. I'll be back next year. Now that I've got a surfski, will I ever paddle a sea kayak again? You bet; IMO there's nothing more seaworthy than an NDK, for playing in rocks and tide-races, leading and protecting groups on exposed trips, and of course camping. In cold water, I still think the

ability to roll is very important.

But for racing? And downwind summer day trips? I'm a convert. The great benefit of paddling a surfski instead of a sea kayak is that I have got a tan on my legs, for perhaps the first time in my adult life.

Just kidding. It's the joy of using the right tool for the job. Want to go fast? Surfskis are ergonomically set up for powerful strokes, leg drive, proper torso rotation, and a tight catch. They're light and long and streamlined. They're no-fuss craft for skimming across the surface of water as fast as possible. They are racing machines.



*Melissa paddling the 2018 Blackburn Challenge in her Rockpool Taran. Photo courtesy of Wesley Echols.*

*Right: Fighting the headwinds of Ride The Bull. Photo by Olga.*



*Below: At the finish. Photo by Leslie Chappell.*



Reprinted with permission from





# Lakes of October



## The "Northern Summit" Trip: A Journey After Thoreau

*By Tamsin Venn. Photos by Tamsin Venn and David Eden.*



*Jim Cole, David Eden, and Cindy and Chuck Horbert set out onto Lobster Lake on a fine Maine morning - Day Two.*

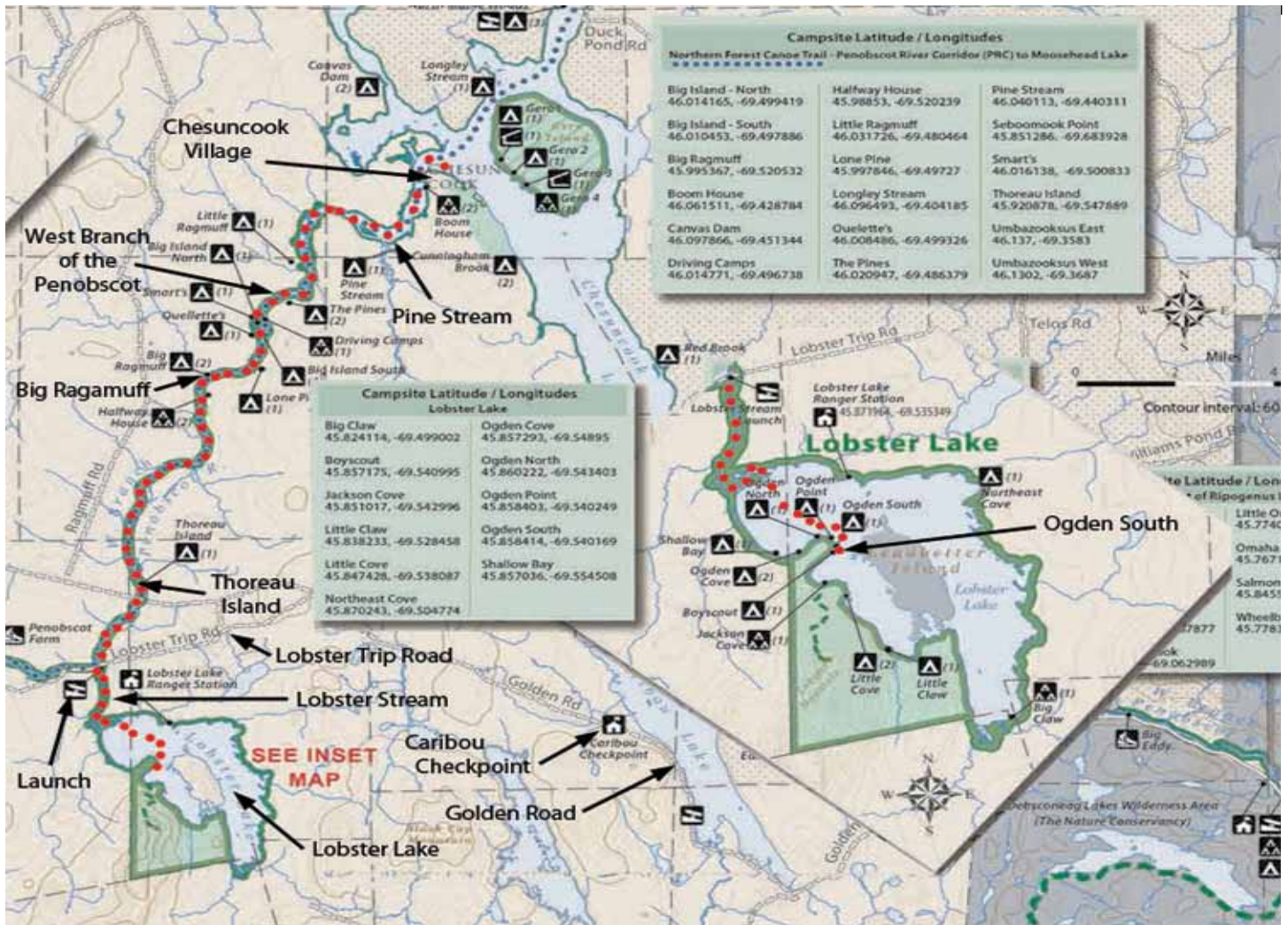
**T**he trip from Lobster Lake to Chesuncook via the West Branch of the Penobscot River in Maine's North Woods is a favorite for many. Lobster Lake is said to be the prettiest lake in Maine, the West Branch current moves you along on flat water with no portages and one set of mild rapids, campsites are well maintained, the river's character changes, and the views are stunning. The route is part of an ancient canoe trail used by the Wabanaki Indians (People of the Dawn) to travel the woods via lakes, ponds, rivers, and streams connected by portages.

After many campground-based day trips in the Adirondacks with the Rhode Island Canoe & Kayak Club, we signed up for this five-day expedition led by RICKA Wilderness Chair Chuck Horbert. We felt confident

that Chuck was familiar with our ways and vice versa, so confidence could be had by all without a lot of unknowns.

Before we left, Chuck let us know that the number one concern on this trip is to be safe, number two is to be safe, and number three is to have fun. We followed the prescription and ended the trip with a clean bill of health, plus many wondrous memories.

Our group would be Chuck, wife Cindy with dog Trixie, Jim Cole, me, David, and Milly, our dog. The plan was to drive to Greenville, Maine in northern Maine Tuesday, Oct. 1, spend Wednesday-Sunday on the water, four days and four nights. We would put in on Lobster Stream, head south and across Lobster Lake to camp



Our route in red, south to Ogden Point on Lobster Lake, then north again onto the West Branch of the Penobscot River and finish at Graveyard Point on Chesuncook Lake.

two days; hike Lobster Mountain (2,055 feet high) for great views; day three paddle back north on Lobster Stream to the West Branch of the Penobscot to Big Ragmuff campsite, a total of 12 miles; day four nine miles to Pine Stream campsite; day five a short paddle to Graveyard Point in Chesuncook for take out. We were going to take our time, camping along the way. The current was strong due to recent rains, so we were assisted most of the way down.

For various reasons, we decide to skip the hike on Lobster Mountain and get out on the West Branch a day earlier, so we put off the 40-mile round trip shuttle to Chesuncook Village until after our night on Lobster. Chuck was very accommodating. We also had concern about the weather. The latest report was temperature drop into the 30s at night, and several days in the mid 40s, as well as possible rain and even snow. Ironically, it was Jim Cole who had come from Florida who expressed the least concern about the cold.

## Day One: Lobster Lake

After spending the night in Greenville at the very basic motel and breakfast at Auntie M's, we headed out Lily Bay Road past Kokadjo and First Roach Pond, where the road turns to gravel, over Silas Hill Road to the Golden Road (see below) where we went through the Caribou Checkpoint, then left onto Lobster Lake Road, about 55 miles total to the Lobster Stream put-in, mostly on unpaved road.

The road is in pretty good shape, but Silas Hill is a bear with lots of potholes and sharp rocks. You need an updated Maine Atlas & Gazetteer. We use the National Geographic Allagash Wilderness Waterway South illustrated topographic map, which includes the back roads, is waterproof, and didn't instantly come apart at the folds, the way our Adirondack maps do. We highly recommended it.

The Lobster Stream put-in lies several miles off the Golden Road. It has a wide beach, good for launching



L: The launch beach on Lobster Stream. R: David's first attempt at (over) loading leads to his first dunking. Milly does not look sanguine about our chances.



Heading upstream (uncertain, because the flow can reverse) on Lobster Stream towards Lobster Lake.

about eight to ten boats, with large grassy parking lot which is packed in the summer. There is also a very clean outhouse. Today we are the only group at the site.

Mishaps start to occur. David tries to enter his lightweight Hornbeck canoe the recommended way by sitting sideways and flips over backwards, due to the heavy load. Strike one. Back to shore, pump out the boat, empty boots, re-enter and try again, meanwhile socks, pant legs, and amour-propre soaked. Second entry using the straddle technique is successful. Off we go, southeast to Lobster Lake, down the watery lane of spruce and fir, the sky moody and dark, the wind push-

ing us swiftly along.

The current here is determined by the height of land. Lobster Lake and the West Branch are at a similar elevation so the current is negligible but can change direction during peak runoffs.

Did I mention this trip is also historical? Here is Henry David Thoreau's description in 1853:

*"After paddling about two miles, we parted company with the explorers, and turned up Lobster Stream, which comes in on the right, from the southeast. This was six or eight rods wide, and appeared to run near-*



*We move out from the protected Lobster Stream into the high, gusty winds and confusing waves of Lobster Lake.*

*ly parallel with the Penobscot. Joe said that it was so called from small fresh-water lobsters found in it. It is called Matahumkeag of the map. On account of the rise of the Penobscot, the water ran up this stream quite to the pond of the same name, or two miles. The Spencer Mts., east of the north end of Moosehead Lake, were now in plain sight in front of us. The king-fisher flew before us, the pigeon woodpecker was seen and heard, and nuthatches and chickadees close at hand. Joe said that they called the chickadee Kecnunillessu in his language."*

(It should be noted that the lake has a shape very similar to that of a lobster's claw, an odd coincidence.)

Thoreau is best known for Walden, an account of his two-year retreat to the woods in a small cabin in Concord, Mass. But he also wrote several essays about the northern Maine woods to which he journeyed three times in 1846, 1853, and 1857. Posthumously a publisher collected the essays into a book - The Maine Woods. He took two trips down the West Branch to Chesuncook. His trip in 1853 started at Moosehead Lake after he took the stagecoach from Bangor.

We swiftly move 1.5 miles down to Lobster Lake follow-

ing a lovely avenue of fir and spruce open to the sky, which gives way to alder and swamp as we enter the lake. Here we feel the full effect of a north wind, probably blowing ten to 15 and gusting higher. Everyone says the winds on the lakes up here can be nasty. They are right. There are wave trains coming from at least two directions. We take the whitecap waves broadside with some attempts at quartering. Our loaded Hornbecks are low to the water and vulnerable. Several waves break into David's boat. And Milly, in my boat, gets drenched. The good news is I know she won't jump out.

We all intensely concentrate on the next wave to hold the boats steady, as we make our way across the northwest cirque to Ogden Point. Our plan is to round Ogden Point, then camp farther on at Little Cove for access to the trail up Lobster Mountain.

We round the point to the merciful lee, hop onto the beach. It is only then we notice that Jim is missing. We heard no call or whistle, even though the wind was blowing from him to us. Every type of disastrous scenario goes through our heads. Scanning the lake with binoculars shows no sign of Jim. It's 2:00 p.m., I say, lots of daylight left, and Cindy says, we have to find him



Above - L: The sand spit at Ogden Point. The wind here is blowing a steady 15 mph with higher gusts. R: A view of a cloud-topped Big Spencer Mountain from the spit.

Below - L: Our tent at Ogden South. This setup, with tent and extra tarp will shelter us, with some setup variations, for the trip. R: The kitchen in the much sunnier morning of Day Two. All the campsites in this area have the tarp support poles over the tables.



today. Yes.

Chuck forces through dense underbrush as he follows the ledges north along shore to reconnoiter. David and I unload our boats and paddle along shore back the way we came. The boats are much more manageable unloaded. What had been a nervous slog through the waves becomes a delightful dance. We make it past several points, and around the corner comes Jim, in his steady fashion, paddling his Old Town Canoe. He had gotten tired and pulled out onto one of the other campsites for a rest, hanging his orange flag in the tree if we came looking for him.

Lack of cell service prevents any calls. From then on

Chuck and Jim carry walkie talkies. I can vouch that none of us had ever been happier in their lives to see someone. I hug him, Cindy bursts into tears, and Jim says, "Hey, I hung the flag in the tree." Jim is a long time paddler with several wilderness adventures in this area under his paddle, including all the foibles of such. Chuck regales us with these tales every night around the campfire. In retrospect, it's not going to be easy to lose Jim.

We do not feel like budging at that point and move gear just down shore via connecting path to the more protected Ogden South campsite. Ogden Point is on a lovely sand spit with water on both sides and is great in the summer for swimming and the breezes to keep the



bugs away. Today, we want to be away from the strong, cold breeze.

Ogden South has a picnic table with a tarp pole over it, fire ring, bench, and an outhouse, as do all the campsites on Lobster Lake (13 in all) and along the West Branch. (Although the outhouses we found were well-maintained, you have to take your own handcleaner and toilet paper.) The campsites are some of the nicest we have ever seen, and the rangers even leave cut and split firewood at some sites. Our menfolk do most of the splitting of the downed wood you are allowed to use (no fire permit necessary). Bring both a saw and an axe.

The view here is stunning, out to rocky islets with cormorants perched on top, the shoulder of Lobster Moun-

tain slumping downward, bright in the flaming colors of early October. The table top of Big Spencer Mountain frames the lake, changing colors as the light fades and clouds dissipate. This is why some call Lobster Lake the most scenic lake in all of Maine.

We set up camp, fire up the two-burner Coleman. Luckily for us, Cindy and Chuck find a huge crop of edible oyster mushrooms. Cindy is an experienced mushroomer, and warns David away from the even more plentiful honey mushrooms, upsetting to some digestions. Cindy is making a group dinner tonight, so she harvests a mess and fries them in olive oil to go with her chicken sausage stir fry and fresh green beans from her garden. We are going to eat well on this trip with such additions.



Above - L and R: Oyster Mushrooms - *Pleurotus ostreatus*. C: Honey Mushrooms - *Armillariella tabescens*. **WARNING:** The honey mushrooms has several near look-alikes, at least one of which is deadly poison. Never pick mushrooms for eating unless you know exactly what you are doing.

Below - L: Our first morning in camp positively sparkles. Big Spencer Mountain in the distance. R: Lobster Lake is mild after its rampaging the previous night. Mt. Katahdin in the distance.





*Above - L: Milly watches Jim, Chuck, and Cindy approach the confluence of Lobster Stream and the West Branch of the Penobscot River. R: We're on the West Branch at last.*

*Below: For just this short time, the West Branch is like a sheet of glass.*



**Day Two: Thoreau Slept Here**

Next morning, we set out into calm water and sunshine, a welcome contrast from the day before. Behind us

Spencer's summit is frosted in snow. The distant line of Mt. Katahdin (Ktaadn to Thoreau) is visible to the north. A bald eagle flies low and right over my head at Ogden

Point this morning. I know it's going to be a good day.

We stop at Lobster Stream put in. The menfolk take the cars for the shuttle to Chesuncook, about 22 miles each way on gravel roads. It will be a couple of hours. Cindy and I set up camping chairs in the sun, which fortunately stays out. We witness the arrival of two groups of guys. All of a sudden things are hopping, one group headed to Lobster Lake, the other up the West Branch, mostly in kayaks. We are concerned several of the kay-

akers in the first group are not wearing pfd's, especially after witnessing lake rage the day before. Chuck comments to them, "This must be the group leader, he's the only one wearing a pfd." No one reacts, no one puts on their pfd. Good luck with that.

The menfolk are back, David grouching about the dust bath he got being last in the car line. We set off, about 3.5 miles to Thoreau Island, just past the Golden Road bridge. It is a narrow island, one of two large islands on



*Above - L: Cindy climbs up the "cliff" access to the Thoreau Island campsite. R: Fortunately, we do not find the island as wildly overgrown as Thoreau did. Quite civilized, in fact.*

*Below: Ghosts of canoeists past.*



the West Branch, like a ship's prow facing upstream, parting the waters, where the campground is located.

The water is up, from recent rains, and the access is terrible, very steep. Last time Cindy and Chuck were here, they could land on a beach and had to wade out into the river and sit down in order to get wet (August). Now the river runs right by the bottom of the steep log stairs, making access tricky. We pull the boats up the steep bank after passing up the gear in fireman style, to minimize on-land injuries hauling up the bank.

Tent sites are gorgeous in a dark pine forest with cut-outs of the river gleaming through the branches, a soft bed of pine needles, and plenty of firewood. We park our chairs on the bluff and watch the West Branch swing by as afternoon deepens into early evening. The dogs romp. Milly can run freely around the island and not get lost in the wild Maine woods. Life doesn't get much better than this.

That night we combine our bean chili with the Horberts' buffalo chili, fry up our corn muffins, and it's a meal.



Above - L: A lovely avenue of spruce and fir. R: Our tentsite at Big Ragmuff right above the stream.

Below - L: The falls on Ragmuff Stream. R: An odd fungus next to our tent.



---

Around the campfire, David reads the passage in *The Maine Woods* where Thoreau stays on this island for a night. The history is once again palpable, in large part because the landscape has not changed a lot from the mid 1800s when Thoreau came through here. It is difficult to think of Thoreau mooning around philosophizing when you visit Walden Pond in summer, when it is hopping with sunbathers, swimmers, and other visitors. Here it is more believable.

We make it to nine p.m. (This becomes a goal each night - no one can sneak off to bed before the magic hour.) It is freezing, again. I clutch the dog like an electric pad but she is small. I keep rolling off my lightweight inflatable sleeping pad. Grrr. The only drawback to this site is that you can hear occasional traffic on the nearby Golden Road.

### **Day Three: Thoreau Fished Here**

Friday morning, 7:45 a.m. I wake to the sound of David clearing water off the tent tarp. One side a deluge, the other side a deluge. Must have poured in the night, but I slept through. Water drops sputter on the fly, don't know if it's rain or drips from the trees; I hope it's the latter. It is. In morning take-down pauses, we sit on bluff, watch the river split, swiftly move by.

The current goes one way, low mists race up the other way, like the ghosts of canoeists past. Soon the sun comes out and all is well, and we strip down; but shortly after we get on the water, clouds and wind move in and it's cold and unfriendly, and we put everything back on. Someone commented once, you can get all four seasons in one day up here.

The river is once more a lovely avenue of spruce and fir reflected in the water, the clouds dark and wild, and it starts to rain. We stop at Halfway House camp site, about five miles up, for a rest stop and quick lunch.

We decide to keep going to the next campsite at Lone Pine to get some mileage under us. Only, this will involve going through the rapids. My throat and stomach constrict. I get a crash course in white water from all these experts: Aim for the apex, follow the downstream V, avoid pillows, follow the wave train. Last time I did whitewater was 30 to 40 years ago in northern Canada with a lot of issues. Jim helps me with training on smaller riffles.

It starts raining hard, then ice pellets. We pull over at Big Ragmuff about a half mile down, to regroup. The

deciding factor is a pile of pre-chopped firewood by the fire ring left by a considerate ranger. Executive decision: we're staying. The good news is no rapids today. The bad news is rapids tomorrow.

That concern aside, Big Ragmuff is a lovely spot with two campsites right next to each other in a wooded glade, and a short walk up the trail brings you to a lovely waterfall in Ragmuff Stream. Thoreau stopped here to fish for trout with his companions when he came through.

We read more Thoreau by the campfire, this time of his climb up Mt. Katahdin. His writing can be difficult to follow, but then he nails a description or observation, it is a splendid thing. Many know his most famous quote, "in wildness is the preservation of the world." But the reading of his climb up Katahdin leads you to wonder, did he make it to the top? The answer is no.

At 9:00, we head back to the tent and are lulled to sleep by the burbling stream, until we are less than lulled, as the cold air moves in.

### **Day Four: Thoreau Searched for Moose Here**

Next morning the sky is clear blue, frost hangs on everything. Nonetheless, I feel buoyant - the clear air, the pointy spruce, the water sailing by, reflection of a gold canopy in the water. Life is good.

Here is how Thoreau describes this section:

*"My eyes were all the while on the trees, distinguishing between the black and white spruce and the fir. You paddle along in a narrow canal through an endless forest, and the vision I have in my mind's eye, still, is of the small dark and sharp tops of tall fir and spruce trees, and pagoda-like arbor vitae, crowded together on each side, with various hardwoods intermixed."*

The rapids start a mile and a half from Big Ragmuff, about 100 yards past the southern tip of Big Island where the river splits. The shallower section is on the left. We take the right.

As planned, I follow David until he gets stuck in the shoals taking photos, and then I follow Jim who very decisively points his paddle left or right in the best direction to go. He notes back in the day these were the first rapids he ever rode, and it hooked him on whitewater forever afterward. They are really fun.

---

The rapids continue for longer than we anticipate and are not all that gnarly, leading to a discussion of whether these are Class One rapids or merely quickwater, probably a mix of both.

Soon we land at Little Ragmuff for a break. This is a roomy campsite, with a long and wide grassy plateau overlooking the water, not as scenic as Big Ragmuff and shaded unless you go down to the broad beach. Right after you leave Little Ragmuff you get a brief glimpse of Katahdin.

The river changes character after Big Island, which we enjoy. It's like going through different worlds, from a channel of trees and flatwater, to a channel of trees with rapids, to sand/gravel banks and rocky bluffs. Eventually the river comes more sluggish

We head off for Pine Stream campsite, our intended stop for the night, located just beyond Pine Stream, which Thoreau and his companions went up in search of moose. Thoreau like the rest of us was dying to see a moose. He was rewarded with a sighting. "They made me think of great frightened rabbits with their long ears and half inquisitive and half frightened looks," he wrote.

Meanwhile a situation has developed. One of the guys from the group we saw earlier passes by in an unloaded kayak. His sense of purpose is suspect as he quickly moves ahead and we guess that he is trying leapfrog us and secure the campsite at Pine Stream, to have his group's annual bonfire on the rock ledges there. After

40 minutes, we see him several hundred yards ahead. David realizes what's what as soon as we see him rush off again and paddles like hell to catch him up. He almost succeeds when the guy realizes that David is right on his tail and speeds up. The race is on!

Unfortunately, he is at least 25 years younger than David and, needless to say, he arrives at Pine Stream before us. We can hear him chopping firewood back in the forest. Chuck indicates that we have more rights as all our campers are present, with the group leader's name on the camping permit. We start to unload. The guy says you don't have to get worked up about it, then sits on the ledges and waits for the rest of his party, which trickles in over the next two hours. Awkward.

They work it out, and all is friendly in the end, even though we took their bonfire away from them. It is a spectacular spot and am glad we stayed, especially since it's not clear if the next campsite down the river will be free. The wind, which has been rising all day, has become nearly a gale, requiring some major adjustment in David's tarp design. We set up camp in various stages and have a lovely afternoon, sitting on the bluff watching the river go by. Chuck yells, "Moose!" and we just catch sight of a huge moose with big antlers rising from the river on the far shore, then disappearing into the alders.

I ask everyone what their highlight of the day is. For Chuck, it is getting everybody through the rapids clean; seeing the moose; and kicking everyone else off the



*The changing river. L: Rocky banks that Jim says were an old rapid before the Ripogenus Dam was enlarged. R: Chuck and Cindy passing a gravel and sand bar along the bank, with snow-sparkled Mt. Katahdin in the distance.*



*Above: A narrow canal through an endless forest.*

*Below - L: The photo that grounds David in the shallows. R: Following Jim into the "rapids."*









*Deep dusk makes a Rorschach test at Pine Stream Camp.*

### **Previous Page**

**Top** - L: The ledges at Pine Stream are basalt beautifully glacier polished and grooved. R: Chuck splitting firewood, a daily ritual.

**Center** - L: The high winds necessitates a rethink of our tarp configuration. R: Shadow pictures on the tarp in the setting sun.

**Bottom:** Chuck contemplates the ineffable beauty of the Maine woods.

campsite. LOL. For Jim, just being out here in the wilderness for the first time in several years. For Cindy, "being warm." For David, "at least I made that son-of-a-gun work the last two miles!"

Dinner that night is mac and cheese, with salmon, tuna, and hot dog, followed by smores. At the campfire, we no longer read Thoreau. We are Thoreau.

### **Day Five: Takeout at Graveyard Point**

Next morning, frost is on everything. Our water jugs are frozen. The peanut butter is frozen. The water in the dog's bowl is frozen. The only items not frozen are in the coolers. The grass crackles as we walk on it. Big puffs of breath mix with the smoke from the campfire and the river is fogged. Temps must have hit the mid-20s in the night.

As we go about breakfast and take down the tents, we keep looking at the river's changing color and mood, hoping to see moose. They are active early morning and dusk. The crew scanning the river isn't lucky, but Jim sees a huge moose pass right by him near the out-house (and stays strategically by the door until it wanders away).

We are on our way by ten. The sky is gray but the water placid, and the day serene, which is a good sign since none of us want to battle Chesuncook Lake in high winds. It's about three miles or one hour and 15 minutes to our shuttled cars at Graveyard Point.

The river is wide and sluggish, we ground out in a few places on sandy bottom. We pass the outlet for Caucomgomoc Stream which goes to the lake of the same





**Above**

*Top - L: The old cribs (log boom anchors) still span the West Branch near its mouth. R: Katahdin comes into view as we enter Lake Chesuncook.*

*Bottom - Takeout on the beach at Graveyard Point.*

**Previous Page**

*Top - L: Ice fog on the river Sunday morning. R: Loading up.*

*Center - L to R: Milly, Tammy, David, Cindy, Trixie, Chuck, Jim.*

*Bottom - L: Jim paddles through another Rorschach test. R: Chuck and Cindy on the last stretch.*

name, another old byway.

We pass the two Boomer Island campsites and see no one there. We had expected our kicked-out party to land there, but we see them across the river on Gero Island.

Gero is a big broad island difficult to distinguish from mainland, known as the Gero Island Ecological Reserve with four campsites. Its shoreline changes from the drawdown of Chesuncook Lake, which happens in

the fall to avoid spring floods. One feature on Gero is a stand of natural growth white pines with an average diameter of nearly four feet. As you round the peninsula, you get a full view of Mt. Katahdin, topped with snow.

We pull out at Graveyard Point in Chesuncook Village. ("A place where many streams empty in," is one of the several meanings given for the name, this one by one of Thoreau's Native guides.) We retrieve the cars in the field, load up. Chuck and Cindy will take Jim to pick up his car at Lobster Stream, then plan to exit the woods



L: The old apple tree. C: The current cemetery site. R: The old church/school.

via the Golden Road to Millinocket after stopping at Abol Bridge for lunch at the restaurant there, a popular stop on the Appalachian Trail. We meet them there.

Graveyard Point is the first site of the burying place of Chesuncook Village. In 1916, when Ripogenus Dam was enlarged and Chesuncook Lake grew to 26,000 acres, the locals moved the graveyard to higher ground. Before leaving, David and I visit the old church/school and the graveyard.

When Thoreau came here in 1853, he would have found a small community starting up to support the logging industry, anchored by Ansel Smith's 80-foot-log house. Lumbermen came in winter to chop down timber, then float logs to Ripogenus Lake and down the Penobscot to Bangor in the spring. In 1971 that era ended when the Great Northern Paper Company towed the last log booms down the lake.

Many outdoor types used to stay at the Chesuncook Lake House, first built in 1863, overlooking the lake and Mt. Katahdin. It tragically burned to the ground in March of 2018. The new owners are in the process of rebuilding it, and the framing is up, to the relief of many.

Chesuncook is a time and place several degrees removed from modern life. In October the old apple trees are bearing fruit, and it is a treasure to eat one of these heirlooms, like tasting a piece of the history.

Thanks to Chuck for being such a great leader and to Cindy and Jim for being such upbeat and experienced companions. We are so lucky.

## The Golden Road

*Sweet to ride forth at evening from the wells,  
When shadows pass gigantic on the sand,  
And softly through the silence beat the bells  
Along the Golden Road to Samarkand.*

*Extract from James Flecker's verse play, "Hassan."*

The Golden Road is the privately owned 96-mile road that links Millinocket to the North Maine Woods. The 32 miles from Millinocket to Ripogenus Dam is mostly paved but the rest is gravel requiring a high clearance vehicle and 20-mph recommended speed limit (which everyone breaks). The name refers to the great cost to the Great Northern Paper Company to complete it in 1975 and then maintain it. Four companies now own the Golden Road and permit recreational users and hunters to use it for a fee, which we paid at the checkpoint. Warning: This can be a confusing process as to exactly what is owed for both the visitor and camping fee per person per night.

The main traffic are loggers; bear and moose hunters; nature watchers; and recreational users like ourselves, many of them large groups of kayakers and canoeists.

## Resources:

**North Maine Woods** [www.northmainewoods.org](http://www.northmainewoods.org) or (207) 435-6213. Information about camping, gates and fees, state of the roads, publishes maps/guides.

**Northern Forest Canoe Trail** [www.nfct.org](http://www.nfct.org). The West Branch of the Penobscot is part of the Northern Forest Canoe Trail. Guidebook and map.

**Allagash Wilderness Waterway South Trails** National Geographic illustrated topographic map, waterproof, tear resistant - \$11.95 on Amazon.

**The Maine Atlas and Gazetteer** 35th Edition, 2018 - \$16.32 on Amazon.

The Maine Woods, Henry David Thoreau

**Quiet Water Canoe Guide Maine**, 3rd Edition. By Alex Wilson and John Hayes. Appalachian Mountain Club Books. Info on Lobster Lake. - \$19.95 from AMC.



# Traditional Kayaking



Coaches returning from Ram Light. L to R: Ernie Forgione, Greg Stamer, Ginni Callahan, Tom Bergh, Cheri Perry, Tuner Wilson.

## The Maine Greenland Kayak Festival

**By Liz Johnson. Photos courtesy of Maine Island Kayak Co.**

Kayakers around the world are drawn to the simplicity and grace of the Greenland paddle. It's the perfect tool for rolling, but its application goes far beyond rolling and paddling in protected waters. Some of the world's outstanding paddlers today use Greenland paddles for extensive expeditions and rough water paddling.

Maine, home to the world's first island trail, has a particular historical connection to Greenland. It seemed natural to celebrate that heritage, while helping Greenland paddlers develop the knowledge, skills and experience for exploring Maine's unique coastal environment. So the idea for the Maine Greenland Kayak Festival was born.

An outstanding line-up of coaches and Registered Maine Sea Kayak Guides agreed to teach classes on Journeying, Rough Water Management, Surfing,

Rocks & Obstacles, and Beginning and Advanced Rolling. Greg Stamer, Ginni Callahan of Sea Kayak Baja Mexico, Dan Segal, Vernon Doucette, Turner Wilson, and Cheri Perry joined Tom Bergh and Liz Johnson at Maine Island Kayak Company on Peaks Island for this ocean event.



Greenland paddles ready to go.



*Ginni Callahan leads the way in Rough Water Management. Photo by Lynne Basileo.*



*Rocks & Obstacles class.*

Peaks Island and the surrounding waters, islands, and ledges offer a unique paddling environment: from the calm, protected area by MIKCo's beach, to channels between islands affected by tidal currents, to paddling in the exposed ocean swell around rocks and under towering cliffs. These "micro-environments" provide a perfect gradual progression for paddlers to experience a wide range of conditions in close proximity.

As we built Greenlandic skills out on the water, we also built community. Participants from Quebec to Virginia to Nova Scotia filled the 8th Maine Regimental Lodge. The 8th Maine is an amazing venue: an historic, Civil War era regimental hall perched above Whitehead

passage and our "ocean classrooms." Our communal living and eating together at the Lodge renewed connections, encouraged new friendships and even impromptu kayak instruction! The event was a wonderful success, thanks to our great group of paddlers. As we lingered on the Lodge's huge wraparound porch after dinner, the full harvest moon rose over the ocean. The conversation hushed as we watched the spectacle that moves the tides, drawing us into its circle.

**Next Page:** *Clockwise from top left: Getting ready for class. Greg Stamer demos in the dining room. Boats on the beach. When in Maine.. Turner Wilson and Ginni Callahan. (Photo by Lynne Basileo.) Dan Segal in a traditional skin-on-frame.*





## The Last Lobster: Boom or Bust for Maine's Greatest Fishery?

By Christopher White

Review by Tamsin Venn

St. Martin' Press, 2018

256 pages Illustrated

\$24.29 hardcover at Barnes and Noble

ISBN 1250080851, 978125008085

The Last Lobster takes its title from Captain Julie Eaton's big fear: "... the nightmare of finding her traps completely empty one morning. Or just one specimen there: the last lobster."

Environmental writer Christopher White, author of *The Melting World* and *Skipjack: The Story of America's Last Sailing Oystermen* covers Maine's recent developments in the lobster industry. The state's lobster harvest tops 130 million pounds - six times the average haul in the 1980s and is valued at \$1.7 billion annually. Lobstermen are doing well, taking home upwards of \$200,000 a year. The millennials are buying bigger boats, new trucks, and homes.

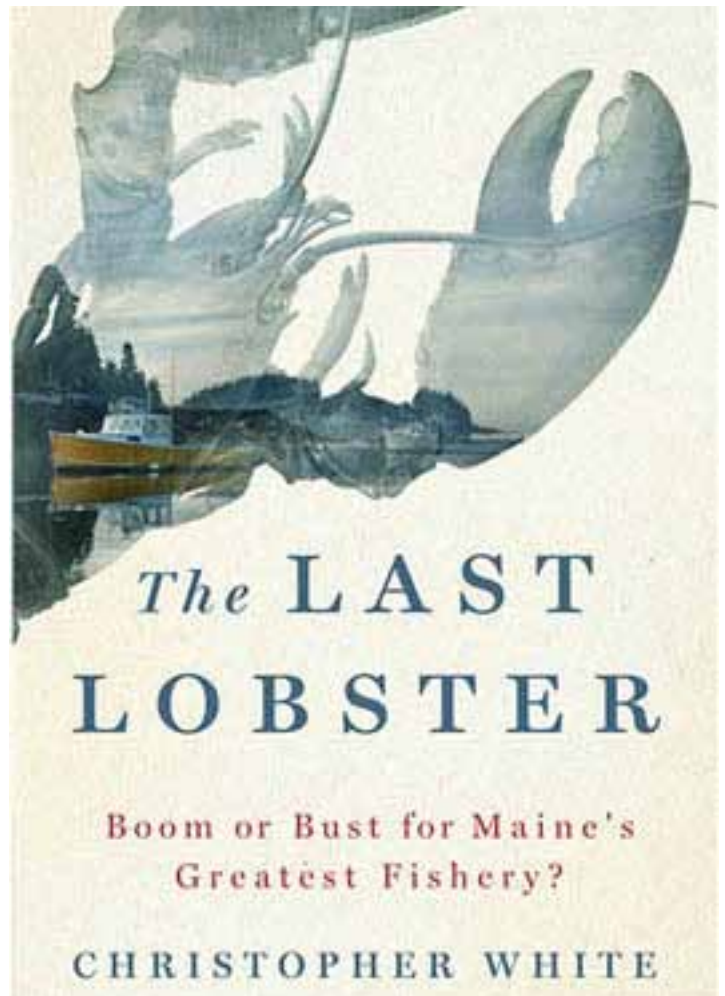
The big question the book poses is, can it last?

White explains the population explosion is due to climate change, along with loss of larvae predators like cod and adherence to regulations. As the Gulf of Maine heats up, the lobsters move farther north for colder temps, at a rate of 3 to 4.3 miles a year. That population shift has resulted in a northward migration of 215 miles in the last 50 years. The lobster industry in Long Island and Massachusetts is all but dead, he notes.

Those same conditions, however, could result in the end of the industry in Maine, he says. Since the book was published in 2018, signs have been pointing to another shift.

White selects Deer Isle as his base camp to study the industry in depth. He chooses Stonington because it is still an authentic lobstering village, i.e. you can see lobster traps in the front yards near the harbor.

"I could gauge a town's purity by how many Maine license tags appear on pickups at the town dock. Too many out-of-state tags and it's a lost cause," he says.



He also chooses Stonington because the apex of the lobster population where the stocks are most dense, is now located here in Penobscot and Jericho Bays.

"No one knows for sure when the march began. Lobster populations do not migrate in the classic sense," he says but each successive year, larvae establish themselves farther north or northeast.

The book is fascinating for the very thorough research he does covering climate change, price changes, unionization, lobster's life cycles, supply and demand, the huge rise of the Asian market (pre-Trump tariffs), backed by data, but mostly for the portraits of the charming, gritty, and delightful people who work here.



---

White rises at dawn to go along for the ride with several captains who become his main sources: Capt. Frank Gotwals and his sternman, Alyssa LaPointe, on the Season; Julie Eaton, captain of the Cat Sass, and her husband, Sid Eaton, captain of the Kimberly Belle; and the next generation, Gotwal's stepson Jason McDonald, who is known to sell a day's catch of nearly 1,000 pounds of lobster.

Besides being a leader in the community and working 750 traps, Gotwals is a celebrated Maine songwriter and guitarist in his 60s. He grew up in Northampton, Mass. His father was a music professor and his mother a choral director at Smith College. A love of music and the water are his two passions.

Julie and Sid Eaton both have their own boats and compete ferociously with each other for the most pounds of lobster caught per day, but both share a tendency to seasickness and eat no breakfast before their pre-dawn departure. Julie Eaton prefers to be called a lobsterman, as one of the increasing number of woman captains, even though women have only four percent of Maine's commercial lobster licenses.

White takes us through their day, picking up coffee at Harborview General Store which opens at 3:00 a.m., spotting the colored buoy, gaffing the buoy line, hauling up traps, removing the lobsters, freshening the bait, measuring the carapace for the legal limit (three and a quarter inches), and throwing back females with eggs (notching the tail fan if necessary as an indicator) and undersized lobsters, in a sustainability system imposed both by themselves and outside regulators.

White follows Gotwals as he checks his 750 traps where 600 lobsters are a modest day's catch. Gotwals notes, "It's like playing blackjack with six decks in the shoe. The odds are always in favor of the house." By "house," he means nature.

Needless to say, the work is hard and dangerous. During this boom, lobstermen are fishing six days a week. They face the dangers of falling overboard without a lifeline (very few swim), flipping the boat in 16-foot seas, getting a foot caught in an outgoing line. The strong sense of community helps ease the risk.

The finances are also uncertain.

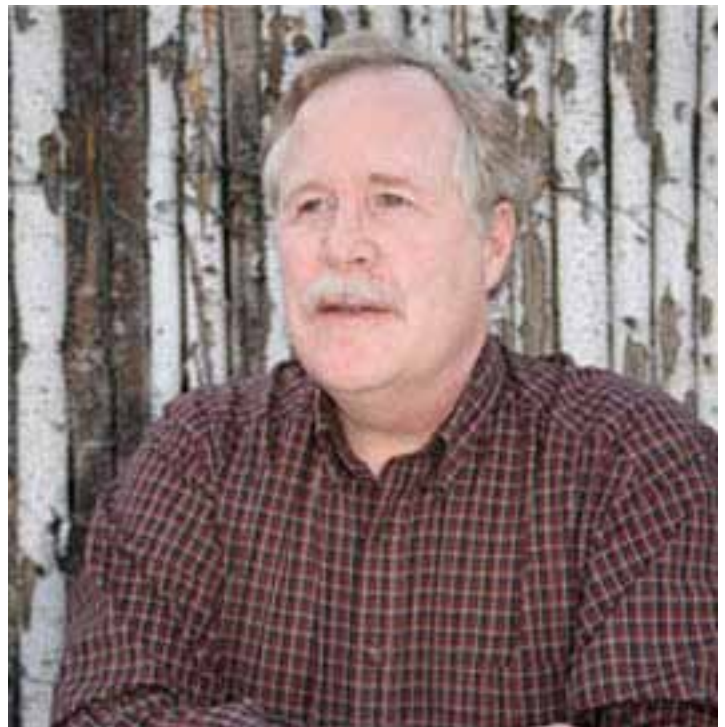
"The stocks seem secure," says Frank. "The fishery is

sustainable. At least some would say that. Yet I worry about the economics of the lobster industry. That's not secure at all."

Says White, "In the summer of 2013, when temperatures were running high and the harvest was six times that of prior seasons, lobstermen reported seeing some shedders molt twice in the summer. They began earlier, too - in June. Rapid molting, say some scientists, brings more of the population to harvest size in a shorter amount of time. The timing of molting in lobsters - like that of crabs and butterflies - is brought on by temperature, nothing more. Turn up the heat and a lobster changes its clothes.

"Frank's words inspire me to search for answers. Is there a trend in the Gulf's temperature? How is any pattern in the ocean tied to local weather, if at all? How is lobster affected - not in theory, but actually on the ocean floor."

Follow along with White as he wrestles with these and other questions, combining as he does up to date research from the scientists at the Darling Center at the University of Maine and other recent studies, plus the ones who know best - the lobstermen themselves, who have seen boom and bust cycles through generations of their families and are nothing if not resilient.



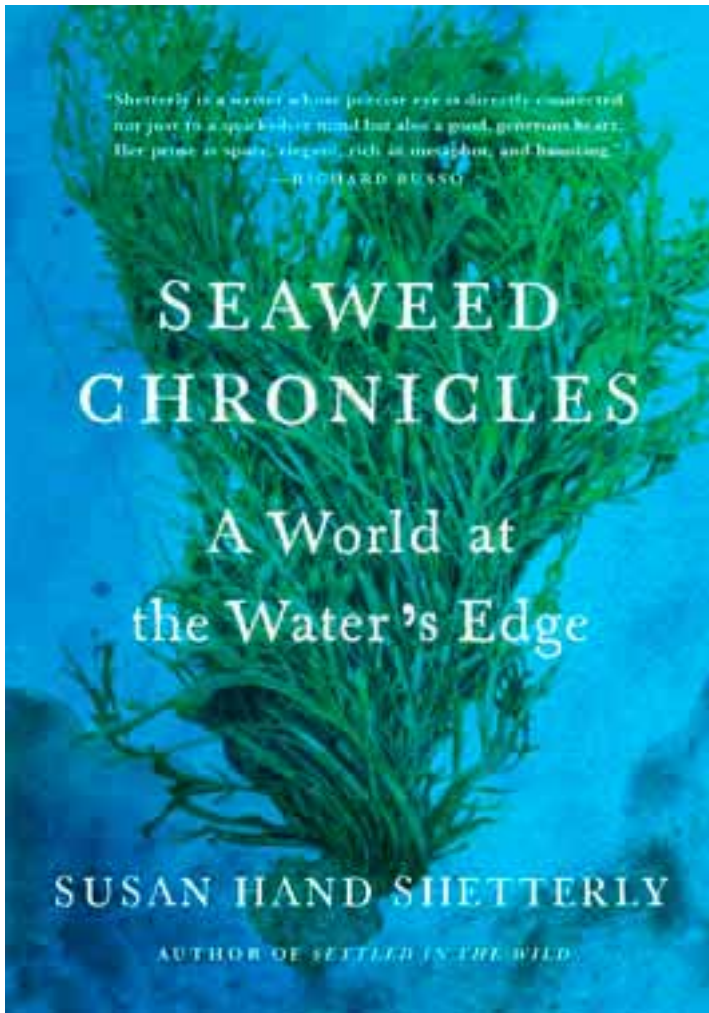
*Christopher White.*



## Seaweed Chronicles: A World at the Water's Edge

**By Susan Hand Shetterly**

**Review by Carl Little**



As they had with urchins, harvesters took as much as they liked, putting a dent in an important link in the food chain.

In her book *Seaweed Chronicles: A World at the Water's Edge*, Blue Hill-based writer Susan Hand Shetterly takes up another, more recent Maine coast gold rush: seaweed harvesting. While it has always been a resource, seaweed is experiencing a boom. "Kelp is the new kale!" declares a T-shirt, while a host of new health and beauty products promotes its benefits.

Pressure on the resource is full on.

Shetterly begins her study from a rather unusual place: Winslow Homer's famous painting *The Fog Warning*, 1885. While acknowledging the drama of the scene - the fisherman in his dory hauling on oars to get to the mother ship before the fog cuts him off - she focuses on the halibut at his feet. At the time the canvas was painted, Shetterly explains, the halibut catch had started to nosedive. The collapse of inshore fishing led fishermen to hire themselves out to Grand Banks ships. The painting is a warning, "not of fog," she writes, "but of how quickly a good thing can disappear. Shetterly recounts the subsequent plundering of the Gulf of Maine and the "feeding down the food chain," from largest to smallest species. She also highlights the ongoing shifts in ocean currents and temperature, what some scientists refer to as "a regime change." Using an expression usually applied to banks, she notes that the ocean is not "too big to fail."

This seaweed story unfolds through a series of encounters with men and women "who work and live at the shore." It's a very hands-on account; in several cases, the author helps out with the harvesting, enduring chilly journeys over Maine waters to capture her eye-witness accounts.

Shetterly approaches the subject from many angles - and places. One chapter describes Donna Kausen's flock of Romney sheep overwintering on Flat Island in Pleasant Bay off Addison. The sheep are able to sur-

Algonquin Books, Chapel Hill, 2018  
288 pages Science & Nature  
\$24.95 hardcover at Workman.com  
ISBN 9781616205744

Shetterly's *Seaweed Chronicles* explores history of plunder: Seaweed as Maine's next gold rush product set in context.

One April day some 25 years ago, fine mesh fyke nets suddenly appeared in the estuary that leads to the Somesville Mill Pond. The market for elvers, glass eels favored by Japanese diners, had exploded, with astronomical per-pound prices driving the new fishery.

---

vive the harsh weather in part by eating kelp thrown up on the shore by storms.

"It's a thin line between flourish and perish out here," Shetterly observes.

A good bit of text is devoted to the biology of ocean food systems, highlighting how removing a link from the aforementioned chain can provoke challenges to the survival of numerous species. The chapter "Ghost Fish" addresses the fate of alewives and cod, which have reached a stage in the Gulf of Maine called "commercially extinct."

Shetterly often brings the story back to the personal. She describes her ancestors planting "lazy beds" - gardens that used seaweed as a foundation for growing potatoes - on the Irish coast, her children studying tide pools when they were little, and her work with neighbors in Surry to revive the alewife run in Patten Stream. Reflecting on the latter project she writes, "A functioning ecosystem is a living mosaic as strong as we can make it."

Well-known marine and wildlife biologists are called on for insight, among them, Steve Katona, former College of the Atlantic president and now director of the Ocean Health Index for Conservation International; Robin Alden and Ted Ames of the Maine Center for Coastal Fisheries; Dr. Brian Beal, professor of marine ecology at the University of Maine at Machias; Nance Sferra, Maine stewardship and management director for the Nature Conservancy; and Brad Allen, bird group leader for the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. It's an all-star line-up.

One of Shetterly's interviewees, Paul Venno, whose family has "farmed and fished in Cape Rosier since before the Revolutionary War," makes a point early on that carries through the book: It's the "big operations" that are doing the harm, not the small harvesters, several of whom Shetterly profiles in the book. Indeed, the principal villain is Acadian Seaplants Limited, a vast and secretive enterprise based in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. "If there's a Goliath in the seaweed business," says Shetterly, "this is it."

By book's end you know a great deal about seaweed - its anatomy and diversity, how it's harvested and cooked, and its role in cultures and diets around the world. The prose is an engaging blend of biology and

storytelling, bringing to mind the writings of Susan Hubbell, late of Milbridge, John McPhee, and Rachel Carson. Like these authors, Shetterly is able to bring natural history to life through eloquent prose. Describing her friend Sarah Redmond harvesting dulse off the coast of Sorrento in Frenchman Bay, she notes how the color of a seaweed rope rising out of the sea "lights up the surface like a line of votive candles."

Like Carson and company, Shetterly also sounds the alarm.

"Between climate change, extinctions, and international trade," she warns, "we erase or imperil thousands of years of evolutionary adaptation and set off new bouts of survival of the fittest." If the seaweed situation seems grim, Shetterly also sees hope in regulation and stewardship. "When we put wild systems first," she avers, "we are passing on the gift of life to many species, including our own."

*Carl Little contributed an essay to Nature Observed: The Landscapes of Joseph Fio.*

*This review first appeared in Island Institute's Working Waterfront newsletter in January, 2019*



*Susan Hand Shetterly.*



# Flip That Kayak!



## Find great deals or post your own gear for sale!

*Klassified ads for personally-owned gear are free to subscribers; \$0.25 per word, per issue for all others. Photos are \$5 each. We will run your ad for two issues. Deadline for ad submission is the first of the month before the issue of publication. NOTE: If seller is advertising more than one item, contact info is after the LAST item.*



*CLC from Tom*



*CLC 17-foot Puck Purnell.*



*Roger Crawford custom.*



*Ralph Heimlich's WS Arctic Hawk.*

**VALLEY AVOCET LV TOURING KAYAK:** fiberglass, white/white, 15'11", width 20.5", skeg, good condition, \$800.

**KOKOTAT TROPOS OTTER:** paddler jacket, stowable hood, WS, lime/cream, \$70. For both, Na nj-medici@yahoo.com or (978) 281-3823. (9)

**LOOKING TO BUY TANDEM SEA KAYAK:** For wife and I to paddle around the Chesapeake Bay. Willing to pay \$1,000 to \$1,500 cash. Willing seller should be able to ship kayak to Virginia. Tsongus@gmail.com (9)

**QCC 600X:** 16'8"x 21", 43 lbs. in kevlar, rope skeg, narrow but not twitchy—and fast, good for a woman or slender man to 6'3". Foot pegs adjust while sitting. Second hatch cover with compass. Light blue and maroon over white. Bought new in 2008, used about 30 weeks over nine years. Stored inside. Plus professionally-made Greenland paddles, helmet, NRS titanium wet-suit, NRS eVent dry top (gaskets replaced last year), Immersion Research spray skirt, Aleutian deck bag, Kokatat Poseidon PFD with customizable pockets, custom canvas cover, and more. \$2,000 OBO. vhme.137@gmail.com. (6)

**2015 NDK ROMANY CLASSIC:** Wire skeg, underdeck pump holder, Valley day hatch cover. Blue over white.



*Marty's Lincoln Isle Au Haut.*



*Okoume Baidarka Double*

---

\$2,915. Contact Jesse 864-884-4957 or jhtjr51@gmail.com. (6)

**BETSIE BAY RECLUSE:** Greenland-Style. 2007-original owner; 19' long and 20 1/2" wide; weight 32 lbs. For paddler 175 lbs. & greater; spray skirt, cockpit cover, Tuktu Greenland Paddle, Brooks Tuilik (large), and other accessories; Excellent Condition (stored indoors/only fresh water use); \$2750 (\$4500 value); Photos available on request; Contact Charlie ccummins55@gmail.com or 518-234-9235 in Albany, NY area; Meet half way possible. (7)

**NDK EXPLORER:** Navy over White 2002. 17' 6" Overall Length. 21" Beam. 10" cargo hatches and 8" day hatch. Fiberglass, drop down skeg, deck lines, deck compass. Custom foam seat, or original seat can be reattached. Cockpit cover and spray skirt. Stored in garage, usual scratches from use, two small punctures fixed with fiberglass patches. Still very seaworthy craft. Located in Sloatsburg, NY. Asking \$1000. More pictures available. Contact Greg Sullivan at gregsullivan1@mac.com (7)

**KOKATAT DRY SUIT:** Men's XL Front Entry Gore-Tex with relief zipper and integrated socks. Cobalt/mango. Excellent condition, used 4x's. \$500. Located in Springfield NH. Contact Linda 603-763-4824 or 4LindaHowes@gmail.com (6)

**CONN KAYAK INSTRUCTION 20-YR BUSINESS** for sale. Principals only to michele@kayak-Adventure.net

**THREE FIBERGLASS KAYAKS: two MARINER II'S, one SPRITE.** Spray skirts, flotation and werner paddles. \$800.00 takes all. Stonington, Maine. John 207 367-2634. or johnartz48@gmail.com.

**CHESAPEAKE LIGHT CRAFT - REDUCED PRICE!** Two 17-foot kayaks; tapered skeg; one white 47#, one red 42#; varnished decks; painted cockpits; fore/aft water-tight compartments; comfy seats; adjustable foot pedals; knee pads. Great boats. Each includes Greenland paddle. NOW \$600 EACH. Available in Connecticut. puckpurnell@mac.com (10)

**ROGER CRAWFORD KAYAK.** 16'8" x 22" x 54 lbs. Avid kayaker, master boat builder, and kayak repair expert is offering his "spare" kayak for sale. If you like the all-time great design of the Nigel Dennis Romany, then you will appreciate this kayak as its design and performance are extremely close to the Romany. Weighs

about 13 lbs. less than many popular fiberglass kayaks. Excellent condition; only used lightly a few times. Very seaworthy craft in rough conditions; very good primary and secondary stability and is easy to "roll." Keyhole cockpit for an average sized person. Medium volume; enough capacity for a 4-5 day trip. Construction is carbon fiber and vinylester resin. Very strong boat; reasonably light weight. Rigged with every feature and built-in safety gear for serious open water use. Test paddled by high level kayakers, all impressed with its performance and construction. Retail value of at least \$3800. Much too good a kayak to be just sitting on the racks in my boat shop and needs an owner who will appreciate and enjoy it. \$1200. Located in Marshfield, Mass. Roger Crawford, 781.837.3666, roger@melonseed.com (12)

**STELLAR 18-FOOT RACER - S18R.** In like new condition. Advantage layup. Weight: 39 lbs. Length: 18' Width: 21". Stored inside and meticulously maintained. Very limited use. Skirt and cockpit cover included. Pictures available. \$2,100. Contact Phil, nelowk2@gmail.com. (12)

**CLC LIGHT TOURING.** By Chesapeake Light Craft. Two watertight compartments, comfortable seat, cockpit cover. Adjustable foot pegs. Nearly new. Used only on fresh water - no scratches! \$1550.00. Contact Tom, tch@conroyhayden.org

**WILDERNESS SYSTEMS CAPE HORN 170.** Moulded plastic, like new, with rudder. Fast, easy to roll, tracks arrow straight, weighs 59 lbs. Cockpit works with wide range of paddlers. Great for extended trips. Stored indoors. Asking \$1000.00. Will transport half way. Call or text Paul at (413) 427-9460. (12)

**ROMANY 16. 1998,** asking \$1500 cash. Skeg, built-in bilge with deck pump, built-in compass, racing green, yellow cockpit trim, in good condition, original owner. Dave Leshan, Cataumet, MA 02534; (267) 475-7493 or (267) 475-7561. dmleshan1@gmail.com (12)

**OKOUME BAIKARKA DOUBLE.** 21 feet. Epoxy fiberglass construction. Always kept in a garage. Three hatches and keyhole type cockpit. Beautiful and very fast. \$600.00. Located in August, Ga. Contact Steve for more information at superqicksilver@comcast.net (9)

**EPIC ENDURANCE 18 2008.** Fast, comfortable touring boat. Greg Barton won the Blackburn in one of these, so it may still be competitive in the fast sea kayak class.

I use the boat for general day paddles and camping. 18'x21". Great shape for a 10 year-old boat. Stored indoors. Proprietary layup. Under 50 lbs. \$1500. **MARINER II 2010**. Legendary boat designed by Matt and Cam Broze. Hard chine. Kevlar and carbon fiber layup gel-coat. 45 lbs. 17'11"x21.5. New hatches. \$2000 (cost \$4000 new). **BETSIE BAY VALKYRIE 2001**. 17'x20" Rare all fiberglass layup. White. Low-volume traditional Greenland boat. Ideal for maller paddler. VCP hatches 40 lbs. \$1000. **PADDLES-WERNER IKELOS** 215 cm, carbon fiber, crank-shaft. Lots of power, very buoyant, good roller. Very little use. New price \$400. **WERNER SHUNA** 215 cm carbon fiber bent shaft, ideal touring paddle. New price \$425. Asking \$300 for either. Jon at (207) 371-9539 or southwindbmd@gmail.com (9)

**WILDERNESS SYSTEMS TCHAIKA**. Fast responsive boat ideal for smaller paddler. 14' long, 21.75" wide. 34 pounds. Yellow deck, white hull. \$500 OBO. **EDDY-LINE SAMBA**. Great condition. Stable but lively boat for small to medium paddler. 13'8" length, 22.5" wide. 43 pounds. Red deck, white hull. \$1,300 OBO. Pick up north of Boston. Contact: nldmhead@icloud.com (8)

**P&H SCORPIO MKII**. Two sea kayaks: Blue HVCLX 17'7", Yellow LV CLX 16'8". Each used only a few times each year. Asking \$1000 each or both for \$1800. Price includes Werner 2-piece straight shaft paddle per kayak and cockpit seals. Also Snap Dragon Armortex spray skirt used 1 X only. \$100 OBO. Will provide photos on request. Available in Marlborough, Mass. amy@goudzwaards.com (3)

**WILDERNESS SYSTEMS TSUNAMI 140 DURALITE**. Kayak with rudder. Excellent (like new) condition - Used infrequently and stored indoors. Duralite is a lighter version of the current Tsunami material (rotomolded polyethylene) by 8 to 10 pounds. Weight: 44 lbs. Length: 14' Width: 24" Pictures available. \$950. Contact Phil, nelowk2@gmail.com. (3)

**KOKATAT GORE-TEX DRY SUIT**. Size small, cobalt blue, front relief zip, latex neck and wrist gaskets, integrated socks, never worn, tags still on, \$1000+ new. Asking \$500. Contact blelli123@gmail.com. (10)

**ROMANY EXPLORER like new. Another ROMANY EXPLORER excellent condition. VALLEY NORDKAP JUBILEE** with light layup. More than \$4,000 new. \$1,850 to \$2,250. Not paddling as much now. anbzeller@gmail.com (6)

**NECKY NOOTKA DOUBLE**. Lightly used, spray and hatch covers. Kevlar and really light for its size. PRICE DROP \$1,000.

**FEATHERCRAFT KLONDIKE DOUBLE**. Royal Blue. Hardly used. Stored in original bags. With spray covers and all original equipment: PRICE DROP \$1000. The Necky is 1990's and the Feathercraft is 2005. All stored inside. I am lightening our load of kayaks after years of dreaming kayaking. I am willing to deliver half-way in New England. Ted at tboneelhill@gmail.com. (6)

**NECKY NOOTKA OUTFITTER** double sea kayak. Fast, stable, expedition caliber, with huge center cargo hatch. 22'5"/100 lbs with wheels, paddles, leashes, skirts & pump. White, with red trim. Perfect for big waters, fresh or salt. Great for extended island hopping along the coast. This is a 'sister' ship to the one that supported the Gulf of Maine Expedition, May to September, 2002; from Provincetown, Mass to Cape Sable Island, Nova Scotia by kayak. No problems going anywhere. \$1,800. (\$1,500 w/o gear); OBRO. Delivery Possible. (802) 254-3666 or Lmacyak@gmail.com. (12)

**VALLEY AQUANAUT (2005)**. Fiberglass, 17'7", looks like new and in very good to excellent condition. Always stored in a garage, new front and rear hatch covers, foam block instead of back band. NEW REDUCED PRICE: \$1,500.00 See: <https://providence.craigslist.org/boa/d/valley-aquanaut-sea-kayak/6694338936.html>. Also two Thule J-bars and racks with c-clips (items show wear and tear but structurally still sound). Asking \$35.00. For more info, contact Fred at g33zr@gmx.com or text 401.569.6038

**P & H CETUS HV. 2017** used approximately six times, 18'3" x 22.5", expedition lay-up, keel strip, compass, custom cockpit foam. \$3000.00. Call Tim at 401-783-6287 before 9 p.m.

**SHEARWATER** stitch and glue kayak designed by Erik Schade. \$1400 Built in Erik's class in July 2018. 17' by 22" Greenland-style with keyhole cockpit, foot pegs, carbon epoxy on hull and front and back hatches with bulkheads. Photos on request. aikijerry@gmail.com