

THE SEA CANOEIST NEWSLETTER

Issue 50

April - May 1994

Editor: P Caffyn, RD 1, Runanga. Ph/Fax: (03) 7311 806

The Sea Canoeist Newsletter is published 6 times a year and is the official newsletter of the Kiwi Association of Sea Kayakers (N.Z.) Incorporated. Subscriptions are \$10.00 per annum and should be made out to K.A.S.K. (NZ) Inc. and sent to Sandy Ferguson, 12 Dunn Street, Christchurch 2. Ph: (03) 332 5155 home, (03) 364 2421 work, (03) 364 2110 fax.

Index

Editorial	page 1
A Whale of a Time	page 1
Double Crossing - Double Quick by Tony Jennings	page 2
Paddling between the Ocean and the Sea by Andy Wurm	page 3
A Mauritius Experience by Ray Forsyth	page 4
unclassified adverts	page 5

Editorial

This newsletter, **Number 50**, marks a small milestone in the history of sea kayaking in New Zealand. Ever since Graham Egarr printed the first newsletter back in 1988, a wealth of material has been disseminated initially to newsletter subscribers and in latter years to K.A.S.K. members. The quantity and quality of the newsletter is largely dependent on trip reports and articles supplied by its readers.

In No. 50 there is a variety of good articles, ranging from Ray Forsyth's interesting experience of instructing sea kayaking on the island of Mauritius, Tony Jennings' well planned double crossing of Cook Strait and Andy Wurm's account of rounding North Cape.

The annual KASK forum held at Picton over Anzac Day weekend was a great success with 70 paddlers attending and an excellent diversity of speakers, instructors and lecturers. Newsletter No. 51 will be a Forum issue as several articles have already been received regarding the forum and the Monday social paddle which was rudely interrupted by a fresh southerly.

KASK SUBSCRIPTIONS

KASK subs are due again for the 1994/1995 financial year. The annual subscription has been held at \$10 for the six bi-monthly newsletters.

A Whale of a Time

Sandy Ferguson lifted this following gem from the BASK newsletter and I have lifted it from Sandy's newsletter.

I am absolutely not making this up; in fact I have it all on videotape. The tape is from a local TV news show in Oregon, which sent a reporter out to cover the removal of a 45 foot, 8 ton dead whale that had washed up on to the beach. The responsibility for getting rid of the carcass was placed on the Oregon State Highways Division, apparently on the theory that highways and whales are very similar in the sense of being large objects.

So anyway the highways engineers hit upon the plan - remember I am not making this up - of blowing up the whale with dynamite. The thinking being the whale would be blown into small pieces which would be eaten by seagulls, and that would be that. A text book whale removal.

So they moved the spectators back up the beach, put half a ton of dynamite next to the whale and set it off. I am probably not guilty of understatement when I say what follows, on the videotape, is the most wonderful event in the history of the universe. First you see the whale carcass disappear in a huge blast of smoke and flame. Then you hear the spectators shouting "Yayy!" and "Whee!" You then hear a new sound like "splud". You hear a woman's voice shouting, "Here come pieces of ... MY GOD!" Something then smears the camera lens.

Later the reporter explains: "The

humour of the entire situation suddenly gave way to a run for survival as huge chunks of whale blubber fell everywhere."

Once piece caved in the roof of a car parked more than a mile away. Remaining on the beach were several rotting whale sections the size of condominium units. There was no sign of seagulls, who had no doubt relocated to Brazil. This is a very sobering video-tape. Here at the institute we watch it often, especially at parties.

But this is no time for gaiety/This is the time to get hold of the Oregon State Highway Division and ask them. when they get done with cleaning up the beach, to give us an estimate on the US Capitol.

KASK A.G.M.

The committee elected at the A.G.M. for the 94/95 year was:

Paul Caffyn, president
Peter Sullivan, secretary
Sandy Ferguson, treasurer
Glyn Dickson, committee
Nora Flight, committee
Phil Handford, committee
Helen Woodward, committee

1995 KASK FORUM

The next annual KASK forum will be held in the North Island, possibly at the Plimmerton Boating Club. This looks an excellent site with a sheltered launching ramp, exposed beaches to the north and south and Mana Island not far offshore.

Double Crossing, Double Quick

by Tony Jennings

Double Cook Strait Crossing

Titahi Bay to Cape Koamaru & Return

For the past ten months Conrad Edwards and I had been planning to make a double crossing of Cook Strait by double sea kayak. Given the major constraints we were faced with in the execution of the trip, we were starting to wonder if it would ever happen. As safety was our main concern we made a policy of only attempting the trip if conditions were "absolutely perfect". On many occasions with favourable weather forecasts we arose at around 0430 hours and went through the ritual of setting the kayak up and leaving the Titahi Bay shore; only to turn back as the conditions deteriorate or weather forecasts changed for the worse.

On some of these aborted trips I am sure we would have been successful however given the crossings demanded at least 41 nautical miles (76km) of paddling at a brisk pace if we were to finish in daylight; favouring caution was a good policy.

The real frustration came in the form of watching the few perfect days slip by due to work or other domestic commitments. The situation got to the point where I started to lose that feeling of anticipation associated with such adventures. I was not resigned to defeat, but I was hardly resigned to victory either.

As Easter arrived, we tentatively set Friday 1 and Monday 4 April aside for a possible attempt. Friday, Saturday and Sunday came with 20 to 30 knot north-westerlies and I did not even bother to check the weather forecast for Monday. About 11pm Conrad phoned to discuss the possibilities for Monday. With the sound of the wind whistling around my house I half heartedly agreed to check the wind first thing in the morning.

At 0735 hours the phone rang and woke me up. As I stumbled out of bed, one glance out of the window was enough to know that the trip was on and we were not ready. By 0920, we were in the Sea Bear double heading out to Mana Island. The forecast was for light southerlies followed by light north-westerlies in the afternoon and

a low southerly swell. The tidal stream information seemed to suggest a general flow south for a bit over an hour, some slack, a north flow for about five hours, a bit of east and then a south flow for five hours.

As we were paddling in the wider section of the Cook Strait narrows we could expect these conditions to be fairly kind to us and in fact helpful. Previous experience and information gleaned from other paddler's crossings led me to estimate that we could knock out the distance in about 11 hours fairly comfortably plus say 30 minutes for lunch. This meant that we would be still paddling for about two and a half hours after dark. So much for our normal pre-dawn starts.

As we were starting late, we put on a bit of pace and by the time we passed the southern end of Mana Island, we were making 5 knots (9.35 kmh). Rating at about 37 strokes per minute, we felt comfortable at that rate. Once passed Mana Island we could make out The Brothers islands and the landforms of the Marlborough Sounds towering behind. The process now was to steadily paddle towards The Brothers and monitor our aspect to the islands and hills beyond.

With the gentlest of breezes over our left shoulders and almost glassy seas we cruised easily towards the South Island. As we approached about the two thirds the way across mark, the swell picked up a little to about two to three metres. We stopped every 90 minutes or so for a five minute snack and drink. Due to rushed provisioning I had the choice of 16 egg and chilli sandwiches, four apples and four bananas.

At 1310 hours, we were about 1nm (1.85kms) and 326 degrees off The Brothers lighthouse, we had made about 18.1nm (33.5kms) in 3 hours 50 minutes, for an overall rate of 4.7knots (8.7kph). Still making great time and feeling good aiming at a spot just south of Cape Koamaru, we hit the north-going tidal rip. Now we had to ferry-glide aiming further south and contend with a short steep chop. After four hours of solid paddling, this last section was quite draining, especially since the wind had recently turned to the north-west. We battled along for about 40 minutes to cover the last

2.4nm (4.45km) and our average speed dropping about 20%.

We raced into the cliff face of Arapawa Island just south of Cape Koamaru and slapped the rock simultaneously with our left hands. We had crossed the strait in 4 hrs 29 min 45 secs. I was pretty chuffed.

We sat in a large eddy watching the rip flow by. I munched on a few more egg and chilli sandwiches. We got the mobile phone out and made a few calls home to report on our progress. "Guess where I am honey?" I asked my wife.

"On the South Island?"

"No about 10 metres off!"

"OK honey, what time will you be home?"

I felt like a big kid showing off, which I suppose is pretty close to the truth.

As we rested for about 40 minutes, I contemplated the return leg. My shoulders were a little sore and I had not been able to pass any water during the paddle. I place a lot of value on drinking and peeing lots. So I made a big dent in the 10 litres of fluid that I had brought along to try and force a result.

At 1430 hours we pushed off into the rip and headed east. Paddling back towards Titahi Bay on the North Island is a lot different from paddling west. The landmarks are very difficult to pick up. The easiest landmark to see in Colonial Knob. Aiming about 10 degrees north of the knob would put us on track for Mana Island and Titahi Bay. Titahi Bay is almost exactly east of Koamaru so with a compass and this knowledge, we were not going to get lost.

As we made our way out, the north-westerly had increased and I kept a mental note of its strength and our progress. We were now paddling at 33 strokes per minute and we were aiming to keep the pace a touch slower than on the first crossing. However as we progressed, our rate and speed crept up again. As the stern paddler, I got the feeling Conrad had a one speed crash gear box, fast. No worries though, the faster we got home, the sooner I could crash (as in rest).

About two hours into the return paddle, I was most relieved to relieve myself of some of the excess fluid,

and felt much better. Though my shoulders were twinging somewhat, a result I am sure caused by using 2.55m paddles. I had been using 2.21m length paddles normally in the double and I think I will stick to those in future.

About this time, Mana Island came more into view and we edged closer. On the first leg we talked quite a lot, now we simply paddled silently, focused on finishing. As the sun set the wind dropped and the light of Titahi Bay beckoned us closer. I knew we getting close as I caught a whiff of a BBQ on shore.

At 1916 hours we beached at Titahi Bay. Some of Conrad's friends were on hand to help us with the kayak. We toasted our achievement with champagne.

Facts

Total distance = 41 nautical miles or 76 kms

Time for 1st crossing = 4 hrs 30 min

Time for 2nd crossing = 4 hrs 46 min

Total time on the water = 9 hrs 56 min

Gear Carried

Knife, sea anchor, pump/bailer, compass, torch, flares, EPIRB, first aid kit, heliograph (signal mirror), buoyancy vests, charts (mini laminated), fire lighting gear, tow line and tow point, split paddle, emergency/energy food, VHF radio, mobile phone, paddle float, spare thermal clothing and wetsuit, hat, sunscreen/glasses, drinking fluid, whistle, watch, radar reflector, tent, sleeping bags.

One can still carry a great amount of safety gear and still go fast.

Tony Jenning

6 Spur Grove

Titahi Bay, Porirua

Wellington.

Paddling Between the Ocean and the Sea

Andy Wurm

Whangaroa Harbour to Cape Reinga

Some sea kayakers love paddling capes and exposed coastlines, so do Ron Hepworth, Peter Moses and myself (2 Seabears and 1 Nordkapp). We decided to attempt the most northern coastline of Godzone.

We had six days of freedom at sea, escorted by gannets, seagulls, shearwaters, penguins, wind and waves, an unforgettable time for the three of us.

Leaving Whangaroa Harbour, our

aim was to finish at Cape Reinga. The anticyclone was with us, most important for this region. Around lunch time we left Totara North, with light to moderate westerlies and an outgoing tide. After an hour we were at the heads and therefore protected from the 15 knot winds.

Four hours later we visited relatives of Ron's at Waimahana Bay, a small Maori settlement with difficult road access, a very nice bay. We were granted overnight stay, right on the beach listening to the gentle surf. Next morning a pile of toast, jam and tea in Cathy's cottage let us forget about the sea and adventures still to come. The fire was going and we had a small problem motivating ourselves to get out and pack in the 20 knot SE winds. These were forecast for the second day. We enjoyed this special place with friendly people.

A clear, cold morning presented a beautiful coastline, right through to Berghan Point, before we hit directly across to Knuckle Point on the northern side of Doubtless Bay, a three hour crossing. Later in the afternoon conditions became more favourable for us with the SE behind us.

Choppy waters resulted from rebounding off the cliffs, still we did good gap shooting through the white water and around rocks and channels, great fun!. Around 4pm we arrived at Matai Bay, a beautiful cove on the Karikari Peninsula.

A cold shower and the silence with hardly any people around let us enjoy the great sunset over the hills. One of the few people welcoming us ashore, asked me whether I had been kayaking six years ago on Whangaroa Harbour with a lady in a red folding Klepper (I had been). We found this out, that this was no joke. The guy, an Alaskan camp manager from the Antarctic deepfreeze program, had not forgotten my accent and sea kayak stories. What a meeting after six years.

The coast through to Cape Karikari is most beautiful with lots of rocks, cliffs and breaking swell, surge, white water but strong currents around the cape and Moturoa Islands.

A total crossing of five hours took us to Raio at the start of Houhora Harbour, with Camel Point as the distinctive landmark. With the tide but

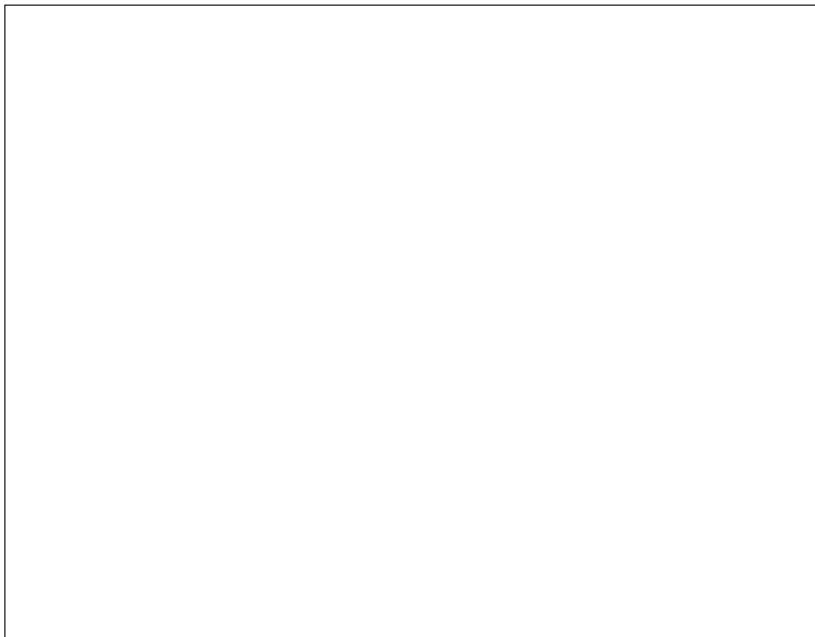
against 15 knot SW winds, it was choppy with brisk but sunny conditions. The swell broke on reefs and just before we hit Camel Point, winds increased to 25 knot westerlies with a short chop and breaking waves. The last 45 minutes saw us fighting into the harbour. We had lots of food, coffee and ice cream and the few visitors of the little camp looked at us quite strangely. But I guess we were too strange for them in our salty clothes. Reluctantly we continued paddling and two hours later we landed through surf on the northern side of Kowhai Beach. The swell lifted to about 1.5 metres and we mediated between the last cliffs (until the northern coast) and the endless Pacific.

The wind was too much for pitching the tent on Kowhai Beach, so we carried all necessities (except the kayak of course) over a sandy saddle and had the most beautiful bay all for us. The one metre surf rolled in through the night, how wonderful such a sound is!

The next day was the longest non-stop paddle of the trip: 6.5 hours slog along the low lying sand dunes of Great Exhibition Bay. A good paddle if one is fit, so I must thank Peter Moses again for making me paddle the 111km "Waikato Killer" (for the second time) with him in Peter Sommerhalder's fantastic boat. Thanks to both Peters.

The swell rose to 1.5 metres off the shoal areas of Parengarenga Harbour, about 5kms south of the harbour entrance. The wind was down to 10 knots (SE) but the entrance looked dangerous. I had a clear picture in my mind of what Paul Caffyn wrote about it. Where is the gap? We paddled about 2kms offshore avoiding 1.5 > 2 metre breakers on a shallow seabed with strong currents. The gap became visible on the northern side, close to the cliff but too small to get in safely, as the breakers rolled in much too close.

With a great respect of this, we landed further north on the first surf beach between Ohao Point and south of Te Totito Point, which is only protected by a tiny reef on the northern end. Today Ron saw, besides lots of fish, a shark and some stingrays. The only open fire on the beach with a full moon will never let us forget this



place (no road access) with the sound of never ending surf.

Ron and Peter pulled me out of a warm sleeping bag just after 5am! A strong expresso with porridge in the dark helped a bit. The white sand looked like snow. At 6.40am Peter broke through the surf first and paddled into the rising sun on the ocean. The full moon over the hills said bye to its night.

The scenery with the noise of the waves and Peter and Ron behind the surf zone drew an unforgettable picture. Silhouettes of sea kayakers in the early morning mist on the Pacific, hard to explain this moment. A one metre swell with 15 knot winds were favourable for North Cape, our aim for the morning.

One and a half hours later, we were right in front of the gap between the cape and Murimotu Island. Breaking surf on a reef! Shall we go for it or not? Paul Caffyn went around the island as I remembered. Suddenly Peter took off and two bigger breakers lifted the Nordkapp up; what a sight! We followed him through a gap in the breakers. Ron hit some rocks with his blade; exciting stuff!

8am North Cape time. It lay on our port side. Happy and satisfied faces looked at each other. We had done the most northern cape of our country. Our morning tea of water, dry bread and chunks of salami was all we needed for just over five hours of non-stop paddling into the eastern corner of Spirits Bay.

Two fishing boats passed us earlier in the morning when we went across Tom Bowling Bay. Between this bay and Spirits Bay, we saw many shoals of fish, kahawai and mao mao, in crystal waters similar to Fiordland. Even two flying fish passed us through the air. Their flight seemed never ending. Petrels, gannets and shearwaters led the way for us. The skipper of one of the fishing boats (Apollo 556) from Awanui gave us cooked crayfish and fresh kahawai which we enjoyed on the beach with half a litre of white wine. What a life.

I rang a friend in Horeke/Hokianga Harbour to pick us up. Siggie came the same night and we ate dinner behind the sand dunes in a small DOC camp.

Our last day already. The highlight of this trip had to be Cape Reinga. Close to 9am we shot off into a 15 knot SW wind with cloudy skies but slight seas. In 2.5 hours we crossed Spirits Bay and looked at the landing in Tapotupotu Bay, which looked OK with a 0.5 > 1 metre surf running. We wanted to go around to the cape and around.

By midday we sat just below the lighthouse; in front the rocks of the cape itself. We were one hour late and the tide was falling already. Strong currents and 20 SW winds presented cape conditions and we decided to turn back to Tapotupotu Bay where Siggie waited for us with the van. How great to have some land transport and a friend like Siggie. We all liked it. He took some good photos of our last surf

landing.

At 1pm, one of my greatest trips ended and three absolutely satisfied and happy seafarers drove back to the big smoke listening to flamenco music with some cans in our hands.

Thanks to Ron and Peter, two great paddlers and friends. It isn't the last adventure we will do together - new plans and ideas are hatching already.

Details

Distance paddled = 180 kms

Dates = 24 > 29 March 1994

Longest day = 6.5 hours non stop

Average distance/day = 35kms

Andy Wurm

45 Waima Cresc., Titirangi, Auckland.

A Mauritius Experience

by Ray Forsyth

A mountaineering author once wrote that 'all good expeditions begin with a phone call,' and that's how this venture started for me in early June 1993. I was asked if I was interested in giving sea kayaking instruction to Raleigh International (R.I.) Venturers for 10 weeks, beginning in July. After an interview in Christchurch, a flow of faxes to London, a medical and various inoculations, I was winging my way across the Indian Ocean via Perth to the isle of Mauritius.

Raleigh International is a British based charitable organization, established about 10 years ago, to give principally young Britishers an experience in mostly underdeveloped countries, doing community and conservation work with the aim of developing their character and initiative and encouraging them to be leaders in their home communities. The sea kayaking experience on Mauritius was the 10 day adventure segment, which is built into all R.I. expeditions.

Mauritius is a volcanic island in the Indian Ocean east of Madagascar, about 20 degrees south of the equator. It is 70 kms long by 35 kms wide, with a population of one million Creole, Indian, Chinese and European extract.

The principal language is French although the island gained its independence from Britain in 1968. Forest clad mountains rise to about 900 metres and the coast is generally protected from the Indian Ocean swell

by a dis-continuous coral reef, forming lagoons and coral sand beaches.

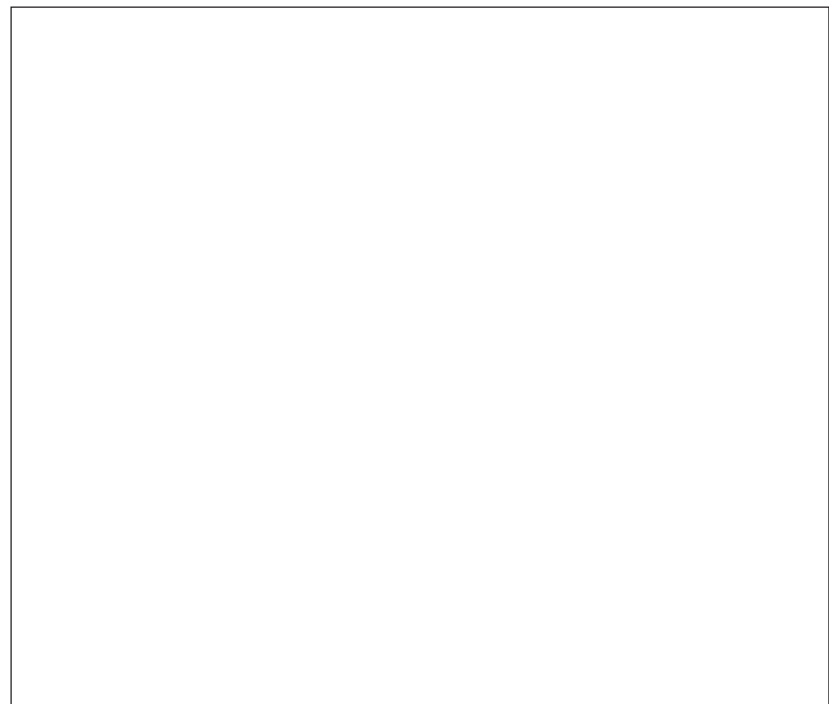
On Mauritius I found myself at a tented base camp, with 80 venturers and 20 project leaders. Venturers are between 18 and 25 years old, but averaging 21 years and are selected after being tested in a vigorous 48 hour weekend in the 'wilds' of Britain. They are selected for their potential and not experience, and I found most venturers had no outdoor experience. Their principal recreation seemed to be shopping and going to 'the club' on Saturday nights. Sixty percent were female.

On arrival at base, they are placed in groups of eight and stay in that group for the duration. Living and working conditions can be demanding and 'designed' to test the individual and the group.

Every 10 days I was given a fresh group for kayaking. All kayaks were doubles with rudders, being sea eagles built by the Easy Rider company in Seattle. They were excellent boats for the purpose and had already been used in Zimbabwe and Alaska.

The venturers spent the first two days in the shallow lagoon close to base, learning the basic safety and handling skills. Thanks to the double's stability they quickly became confident. On the second day we usually did some capsize, to overcome the fear that they'd be trapped in case of a capsize and practised re-entry. This followed by a three day hill trek, and then we packed the kayaks for a five day coastal foray. We'd generally paddle about five hours a day, plenty of stops for swimming and sunbathing, and about mid-afternoon look for a secluded piece of coast to set up tents and tarps. Day temperatures averaged 24 degrees C, night about 15 degrees, and it seldom rained on the coast, although high winds would occasionally hinder us. It became dark about 6pm by which time cooking was usually completed over Trangia stoves. We picked up water from the villages most days.

The groups varied a lot in their abilities and enthusiasm and you could never really relax, but had to be watchful, both on the water and more on land. Project leaders were expected to leave the venturers to sort things out



amongst themselves - 'leading from the rear'.

Occasionally we would have to leave the shelter of the reef and go out through some narrow openings into the ocean and then find another narrow opening into the next lagoon. If it was too rough - and the Indian Ocean swells can be awesome - we would portage.

This was my first experience of coral, and it is a very sharp, rough unyielding material that can easily damage body and boat. Fortunately there were only three capsize during the whole period, and no damage apart from a scratched leg.

I expected some muscle strains, especially to the wrists, and blisters, but probably because we used non-feathered paddles, there were no problems at all.

On the water, communication was a problem and always highlighted at the evening debrief. Having no single kayak, I always partnered one of the weaker participants, perhaps a foreign venturer with limited English, or someone with a co-ordination problem.

I'd generally be in the lead and the group would string out. Stop and they'd stop, and just passing simple advice could mean paddling back and perhaps losing position with the current or drift over coral etc. Using conventional paddle signalling was

not always effective or sufficient.

It had been suggested that a circumnavigation of the island could be done, which I estimate could be done in five days by a good team if the weather and sea co-operated, but at the end there was insufficient time for an attempt.

R.I. is always looking for project leaders and venturers. I'd be happy to answer and queries.

Ray Forsyth
132 Cavendish Rd., Redwood
Christchurch 5

Note: Ray is away paddling in Alaska in the Glacier Bay region from May 13

UNCLASSIFIED ADVERTS

Sprayskirts for sale

Ingrid Wagner at Abel Tasman Kayaks has several German Zolzer spray skirts for sale - they are specifically for real bloke's boats (Nordkapps), and come in several colours: black, blue, hot red and yellow. A sturdy plastic material with heat welded joints. Available for \$80 plus \$3.20 P&P from: Ingrid Wagner, Marahau, RD 2, Motueka.

Kayak for Sale

Nordkapp (raised deck and 200mm rear hatch options). Good condition. \$1750 O.N.O. Would consider a Canadian canoe in part exchange. Mike McPhillips (03) 385 2667
22 North Parade, Richmond
Christchurch.

If undelivered, please return to P.Caffyn, RD 1, Runanga