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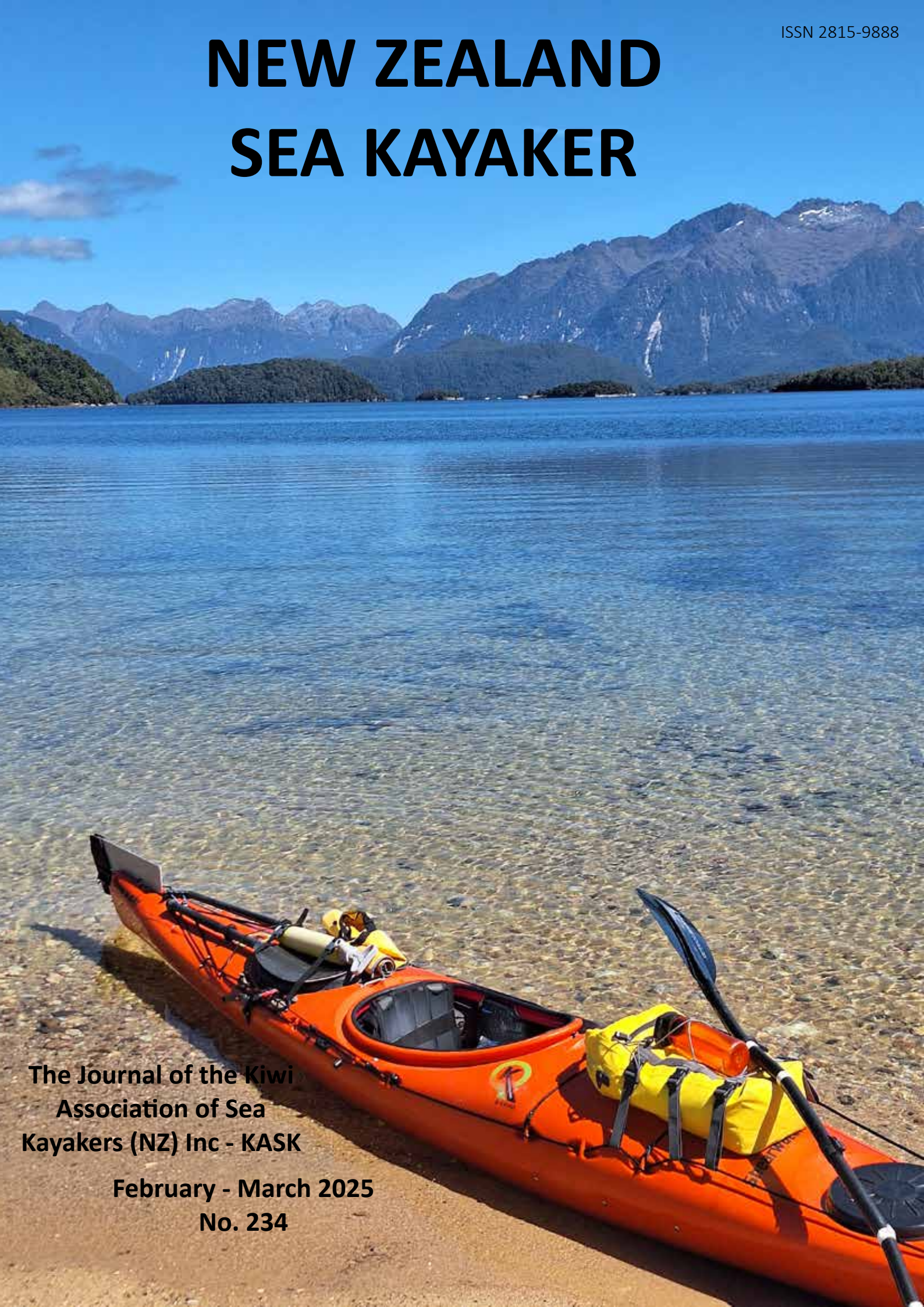
NEW ZEALAND SEA KAYAKER



The Journal of the Kiwi Association of Sea Kayakers (NZ) Inc - KASK

February - March 2025
No. 234

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Cover photo:
Lake Manapouri
By Oliver Winkler

Editing and Layout:
Jacquie James
Email: jacquie@kask.co.nz
Proofing: Peter Van Kuyk

President's Report
By Steve Cooper

Well, what a great start to the year, maybe that's why this magazine is a bit later than usual, we've all been out enjoying ourselves and now it's already nearly the end of April.

It all started with Kayak Fest in Nelson followed by a windy week in Abel Tasman or D'Urville Island depending on your preferences. For me then it was a quick change ready for a couple of weeks touring the North end of the North Island with my sister and brother-in-law, a trip 20 years in the planning. No sooner had I put my sister on a plane to Christchurch than I'm picking up my daughter for her first return trip to New Zealand in more years than I want to think about. Nice to have most of the family in the same hemisphere for a short while though sadly missing my second daughter who was braving out the English spring.

Once I'd shaken off the various visitors it was time for a quick trip up to the far north for a fun day of kayak safety training with an enthusiastic bunch of youths (and adults).

In amongst all that we've had significant changes to the KASK Committee with Shaun deciding to take a well-earned break from his tireless efforts pushing KASK onwards as well as Steve Flack, Mark Aspinall and Caitlin Gillespie also stepping down, the energy, enthusiasm and skills of these people will be missed but, as you'll see in this issue, we have some more than adequate replacements! You should already have received an email from me advising that we have also finally managed to get our bank account moved over from Westpac to KiwiBank so please double check the account details before you pay us any money, the new number is 38-9026-0645553-00.

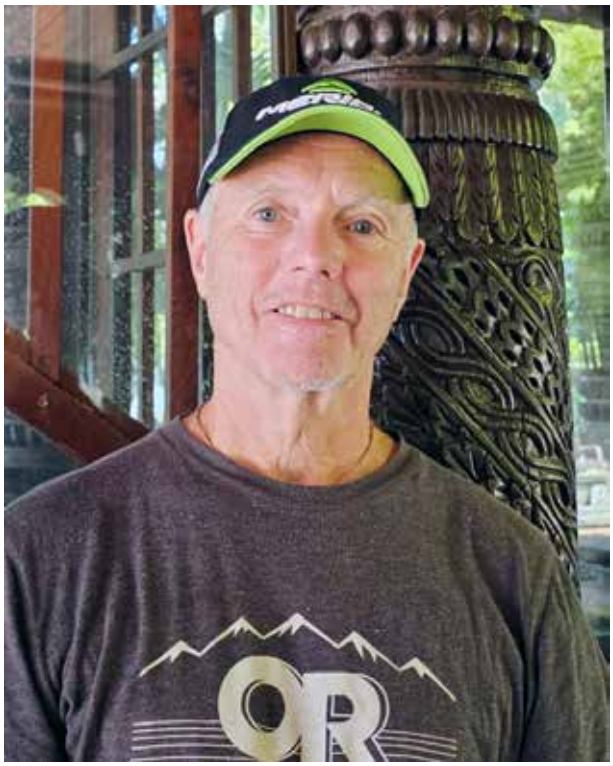
Great to see Dallas and Rose get the Wahine on the Water group moving, let's hope their energy and enthusiasm rubs off on the rest of the regional groups. Strap in (and don your PFD) we have exciting times ahead.

As always, keep getting out there enjoying the water -- Safe Paddling!

Submissions for magazine #235
25th May 2025

The new KASK committee

Introducing Phil, Rose, Nick and Kelvin who are new to the KASK committee (joining Steve Cooper, Chris Henshaw, Ian McKenzie, Dallas Veitch and Lucas Waterworth)



Name: **Phil Beale**
Live: Raglan
My kayaks: Necky Looksha IV and Dagger Stratos
My paddles: I use Greenland paddles (Trak and Gearlab Outdoors)
Occupation: retired

A long story made short:
My wife and I are both enthusiastic kayakers and have been kayaking for 14 years. We started in a double (and proved the divorce boat theory wrong). We now live with a view over the Raglan harbour and can choose to paddle whenever we want.

I have been fortunate enough to have paddled many locations in the North, South and Stewart Islands of New Zealand, as well as overseas in Canada, Greece, and Croatia.



Name: **Rose Campbell**
Live: Nelson
My kayaks: NDK Romany Classic, NDK Sportive
My paddles: Lendal Cadence
Occupation: arts management

A long story made short:
I finally realised my sea kayaking dream three years ago, after moving to Nelson. After fortuitously discovering Nelson Kayak Club's Thursday night sessions I bought a boat ... and the endless gear purchases followed! Through NKC I've developed skills, experience, and enduring friendships that have enabled some amazing adventures. Kayaking is an incredible way to explore the environment and push your limits through rock gardening, surfing and navigation challenges. Now NKC Secretary and newly on the KASK committee, I'm keen to support others, particularly women, to get onto the water and start their own sea-going adventures.
I must go down to the seas again, to the lonely seas and the sky ... and all I ask is my NDK and a star to steer her by!



Name: **Nick Howard**
Live: Christchurch
My kayaks: P&H Virgo, plus a Novacraft Prospector 15 (canoe) and a Moana Kuha 12'6 SUP
My paddles: Werner Shuna
Occupation: part-time instructor/manager at Christchurch Paddleboarding, part-time first aid instructor

A long story made short:
I've always loved paddle-sports, whether it's canoeing, kayaking or stand up paddleboarding. I've had an amazing career so far where I get to introduce people to this incredible activity and teach them a little bit about it! My work before moving to NZ largely focused around running coaching, leadership and safety courses for those involved with paddle-sport. I've always particularly enjoyed journeying, but with a bit of excitement- sea kayaking is the perfect mix of journey and seeing the world from an incredible perspective, but with the excitement of rock hopping and an occasional surf!



Name: **Kelvin Teixeira**
Live: Whangarei, Northland
My kayaks: Barracuda Enigma, Design Kayaks Unplugged, Q Kayaks Swift (SOT), plus an Epic V7 (surf ski)
My paddles: Gram Kajak 9200D
Occupation: ophthalmic (eyeballs) imaging at Whangarei Hospital

A long story made short:
I discovered the joy of kayaking after we moved to Pataua North several years ago. One of our sheds came with some SOTs. Back then, I never realised that our first family paddle (in the safe environs of the Pataua estuary/river) would lead to me becoming 'addicted' to the first recreational activity I've actively pursued. Over the past couple of years I've been developing my sea kayaking knowledge, technique and skills. Who knew there was so much to learn?! But all worth it for the experience of floating inches above the water and exploring rivers, lakes, and coastlines. I sincerely value the camaraderie and friendships gained through sea kayaking; partly why I want to contribute what I can for the cause!

WoW! Wahine on Water gets a KASK kickstart

By Dallas Veitch and Rose Campbell
Photos by Rose Campbell

At KayakFest in February, nearly two dozen women signed up for the Wahine on Water (WoW) programme. Over two days and in three pods, all were out on the water being inspired by the coaching and leadership of kayak legends, Deb Volturno and Esther Ladwig. With their support and encouragement, the groups maximized opportunities to learn, consolidate, and develop new ways of thinking about their paddling through a range of activities.

On the beaches of Nelson and the tents of Tahunanui, the message from women sea kayakers at KayakFest was clear: "We want KASK to support Wahine on Water!" But how? And why?

The "why?" is to provide a space for women to develop their paddling skills in a community that recognises that we face different challenges from men. The end goal is not to paddle exclusively with other women; rather to gain the confidence and experience to join any group of sea kayakers. I had experienced the value of this sort of network while developing my paddling skills in California, under the guidance of excellent women coaches; having such role models who broke down those mental barriers to participation, those interior voices of doubt that clamour loudly "That's ridiculous, I could never do that", was hugely beneficial.

The "how?" had us admittedly baffled when KASK President Steve Cooper approached fellow Committee member, Rose Campbell to be the KASK Women's Paddler Representative and me to support her. What exactly did women want? We decided that an initial exploratory survey was needed to assess geographical spread, what the purpose of a WoW network might be, and to ask for suggestions. We solicited responses from women from KASK, KayakFest, and various Facebook groups including the New Zealand Women Sea Kayakers Network. Overwhelmingly, women want to be connected to other women paddlers, to go on women-led trips, and to have their voice heard at a national level. Rose and I did some brainstorming and conceptualized these desires as overlapping spheres containing possible means of achieving these goals. We hoped this would represent a road map for building a strong and vibrant community of women paddlers that increased confidence and developed leaders to the benefit of the overall New Zealand sea kayaking community.
However, building such a community in New Zealand is challenging, given the large geographic area over which we are spread – how do we connect women who are so far apart? Based on discussion at a subsequent online meeting and responses from a more fine-grained survey, we decided on a four-pronged approach to tackling these challenges:

1. **Building a WoW WhatsApp group for communication**. This would let women introduce themselves, announce trips, events and trip reports. If you'd like to join, contact Rose at rose@kask.co.nz.

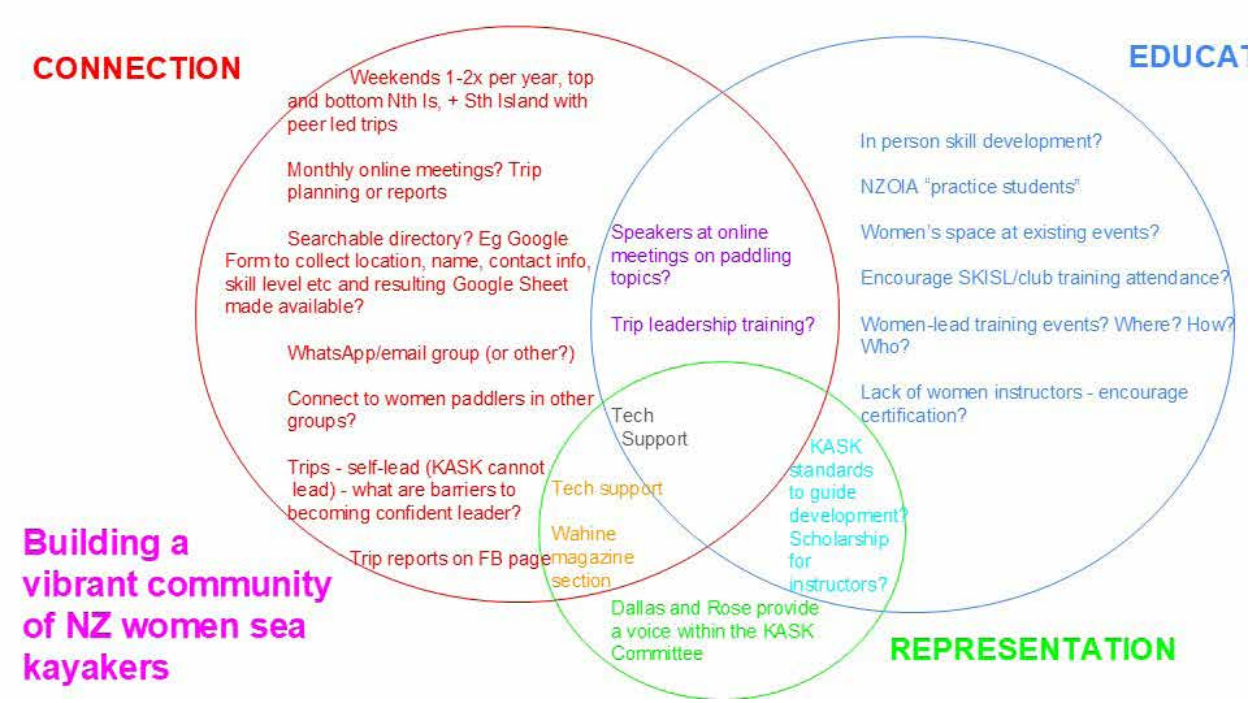
2. **Developing a searchable directory on the KASK website**. This would allow paddlers to find other women by region to set up paddles and so forth. Notably, all KASK members could make use of this; it would not be limited to WoW. Stay tuned as this is a work in progress!

3. **Organising twice yearly development weekends.** These would be held in both the North and South Islands in the spring and autumn, gathering women to develop their skills and leadership abilities through peer-led paddles or paid instruction. Current suggestions are for initial weekends in Raglan and Nelson in October.

4. **Holding regular online meetings.** These would feature presentations by women on trips and expeditions, or skills such as trip planning and navigation, videos of skills with discussion, and the opportunity to announce trips and connect with other women paddlers. The first meeting will be held on 28 April at 7pm and feature Whitney Frame speaking about her upcoming women's kayaking trip to the Inside Passage. Details are available on https://kask.co.nz/events-old/, and on the WhatsApp and Facebook groups.

The level of stoke in WoW is high! Rose and I are excited by the possibilities and are keen to support this network however we can. If you have questions, comments, or suggestions, feel free to jot us a line at rose@kask.co.nz or dallas@kask.co.nz. We hope to be providing regular progress reports.





Brainstorming ideas for Wahine on Water





Deb Volturno leads a Wahine on Water group at KayakFest



KayakFest Photos

Photos by Ian McKenzie



Cathy O'Dowd receiving one of her many photo comp winnings



Oliver Winkler receiving the Contribution to Sea Kayaker award



Robbie Benson-Cooper to whom the choir of 100 sang Happy Birthday, sitting next to multi-photo winner Cathy and David Welch (IKW top of the South convener)



Instructor Daniel O'Connor carving circles in the sand





typical fest scene and the Saturday evening sunset

KASK Fest 2025: A Paddler's Paradise in New Zealand

By Amber Champion

Every two years, New Zealand becomes the gathering place for one of the most exciting and unique event—KASK Fest. It's not just another symposium or paddling event; it's a celebration of community, camaraderie, and personal growth. KASK Fest is a rare opportunity for paddlers of all skill levels, backgrounds, and experiences to come together, share knowledge, push their boundaries, and forge lasting connections.

What sets KASK Fest apart from other paddling events is its deep-rooted focus on community. The sense of belonging starts the moment participants arrive, whether they roll in with their vehicles, pitch tents, or reconfigure their campers. The venue becomes a temporary paddling village, where everyone sets up their base and settles in for a few days of learning, adventure, and camaraderie. The festival draws people from across the globe, each person contributing their unique energy to the experience.

As the event kicks off, paddlers are grouped not by ability or skill level, but randomly by a number assigned to them. This creates a wonderfully egalitarian atmosphere, balancing the groups and allowing participants to meet people they might not have connected with otherwise. This format also ensures that paddlers of varying experience levels work together, fostering an environment of inclusivity and collaboration. For coaches, this setup provides a fantastic dynamic where more experienced paddlers can help guide and mentor less experienced ones. It's a learning experience for everyone: seasoned paddlers refine their own skills by thinking critically about the strokes and techniques they demonstrate, while newer paddlers get personalized attention and the freedom to learn at their own pace.

Day two of the event brought a focus on navigation, incident management, and teamwork. This day was designed to enhance leadership skills, drawing from non-paddling backgrounds and applying those lessons to the water. The highlight of the day was undoubtedly the return journey to the launch site. As the sea breeze picked up and the tide fell over sandbars, the group was faced with currents and wind waves—a true test of teamwork and leadership. Despite the challenging conditions, everyone worked seamlessly together, ensuring that each participant felt supported and that the route met the needs of all.

And just when you thought the excitement had peaked, the group concluded the day with a thrilling offshore capsize exercise. The team worked in unison to recover everyone and get them safely back into their boats, demonstrating exceptional coordination and skill.

The final day of KASK Fest was shaped by the paddlers' own requests. Divided into three larger groups, participants chose to focus on rescues, rolling, or Greenland stroke techniques. I had the privilege of coaching the Greenland stroke group, and although the session was short, the progress made was clear and impressive. It was an incredibly rewarding experience, watching paddlers push themselves to master a unique and challenging skill in such a supportive and collaborative environment.

Reflecting on the event, one of the most striking differences between KASK Fest and other events I coach at is the profound sense of community and collaboration. There's a collective energy among the paddlers that fuels everyone's desire to improve, connect, and support one another. People are eager to push their limits, and more importantly, they're committed to doing so together.

KASK Fest 2025 was a truly unforgettable experience. I can't wait to mark the next one on my calendar—it's an event that every paddler should experience at least once.











KayakFest Competition Photos

Category: Whoopsy Moments or Salty Humour



Going..... by Diana Galbraith



Strange Customs of the Water People by Jane Jacek

Category: Action Shots



Cathy ODowd - Mundaka surf Spain
by Cathy O'Dowd



Cathy ODowd Mundaka surf Spain
by Cathy O'Dowd



We Have Liftoff
by Jane Jacek

Category: Sea kayaking - people or kayaks are main focus



Loch Ewe Scotland west coast
by Cathy O'Dowd

Paddling in Greenland
by Cathy O'Dowd



Category: Seascapes - Includes lakes and rivers where peo-ple and kayaks are nor the main focus



Greenland iceberg by Cathy O'Dowd

East coast of Scotland by Cathy O'Dowd



Category: Coastal Marine Flora and Fauna



Sea lion and pup
by Diana Galbraith



Seal puppy eyes
by Cathy O'Dowd

Bottle-nosed dolphin
by Diana Galbraith



A paddle on drive back from KASK and IKW

By Judith Collett

One of the disadvantages of living at the other end of the island is the long drive home after a KASK event based at the top of South Island. However, if a mate messages and suggests a paddle on Kaikoura peninsula on the way home, then suddenly the drive doesn't seem so long.

So, a couple of nights camping at Peketa campground seemed a good idea to break up the long commute home.

The forecast was ideal, and an early start saw us on the water before 8am and in time to greet some of the boats returning from checking their crayfish pots.

There was just enough swell to create a bit of interest around the rocks - but not too much to be intimidating for someone experiencing this area for the first time.

We did a car shuttle and put in at South Bay using the boat ramp because of low tide.

It was a good time to see all the rocks now so prominent after the approximate 1.5m uplift caused by 2016 Kaikoura earthquake.

We were rewarded with lots of seals especially playful young ones who seemed to enjoy swimming around and under our kayaks.

Although an amazing part of coast, it doesn't feel particularly remote as we saw walkers on the peninsula track, divers, fishermen and other kayakers.

We got to our takeout point after about 3 hours of pleasant mooching around and rock gardening. It was just by chance the recently renovated Pier Hotel was right beside our car - so it would have been rude to decline an opportunity for a beer and snack to punctuate a perfect day on the peninsula.



Kaikoura - where mountains meet the sea



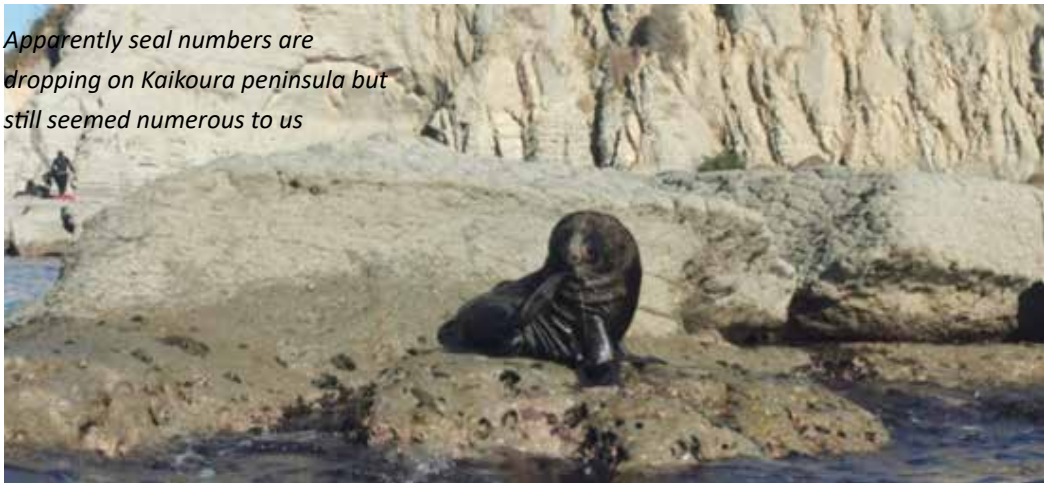
Perfect sea conditions early on



Campfire by the beach night before



Interesting features post -earthquake



Apparently seal numbers are dropping on Kaikoura peninsula but still seemed numerous to us

Tales from the Northland Sea Kayakers Network's Cavalli Islands Paddling Weekend

The Cavalli's are a group of islands along Northland's East coast. The southern-most islands lie several kilometres off Matauri Bay, while the northern-most islands are around 11 kilometres off Mahinepua Bay. The Northland Sea Kayakers Network invited members to a weekend exploring the area in mid-March. Below, some participants share their experiences.

Tara Anderson

We embarked on a kayaking adventure of a lifetime, around the stunning Cavalli Islands. Just after dawn we launched from Matauri Bay to paddle out to our team-mates' catamaran which, once aboard, towed our kayaks out to the remote and rugged outer Cavalli Islands.

With perfect weather – calm seas, clear skies, amazingly clear water and sunshine that made the water shimmer – we set off. The scenery was simply magnificent, with rugged cliffs and picturesque coves revealing themselves at every turn.

Schools of small baitfish darted and jumped through the crystal-clear water, pursued by juvenile kingfish or kahawai. Schools of blue maomao could also be seen through the clear waters and amazingly approached when I knocked on my kayak, allowing me to capture some incredible footage by just submerging my underwater camera.

Around midday we landed on a secluded beach for lunch and a snorkel in the crystal-clear warm waters. Sandager's wrasses, spotties, Parma damselfish, and even a juvenile snapper swam amongst the kelp-covered reefs, making for a magical swim.

Seeking more excitement, some of us kayaked through various caves within the islands. Though the seas appeared calm, the ocean swell surged, rising and falling, providing an exhilarating ride as we navigated through these tunnels.

The breath-taking scenery, stunning underwater vistas and great company it was truly an adventure to remember!

Yvonne Best

The Matauri Bay paddle was an incredible treat. In the company of some highly skilled kayakers, and our support boat hosts Jay and Sandra, helped make my day trip a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

The conditions were close to perfect, and I was lucky to have esteemed marine biologist Tara in our group who took some great underwater footage of schools of fish. I'm a nervous nellie, so was happy to wait outside while others explored Cavalli Island passages and caves.

The other group could be seen catching some waves among the rocks and lunchtime provided the snorkelling fix for some.

Having the support boat meant the group was able to be towed to the top of the islands and then wend their way down the ocean side. Some paddled back to shore, while others took the opportunity to hop back on board and be towed back to shore for the final leg.

I learned about the strengths of various paddles (wing, flat and Greenland) and got a great tip for another sheltered kayak spot in the next bay. I thank everyone for their encouragement and support on the day. I have renewed appreciation for needing to develop my self-rescue, bracing and landing skills. I also highly recommend the paddling safety courses this group helps deliver - they do a tremendous job.







Lynnis Burson

The Northland Sea Kayakers Network comes with a wide variety of skills and enthusiasm. I'd felt nervous about getting aboard Sandra and Jay's catamaran from my floating kayak, as at 80 I'm no longer agile. But miraculously, I got aboard dry. Our kayaks were towed to the Northern group of islands where we split into two groups to enjoy the half-metre swell and explore along the shores, marvelling at the amazing bounty of sea life. Lunch and a swim on Motukawanui's top beach before heading on to the tunnels and passages which make the area so very special.

The next day, Kelvin, Gareth, Greer and I headed for a short paddle from Mahinepua to Motuekaiti Island. This area is quite beautiful and offers numerous passages through the bountiful reefs. There's lovely clear water to view the gently swaying kelp and seaweed gardens. Motuekaiti has a safe horseshoe shape beach on the northern side, but the sandy bay was covered with seaweed and very pebbly on this trip. I was pleased to see the campsite at the western end had been well-used over summer.

Toni Robertson

I had the privilege of hanging with the Northland Sea Kayakers Network for the weekend of 15-16 th March at Matauri Bay. The weather had been booked to perfection with light winds and bright sunshine. Our weekend was made extra special by being able to access the northern end of the Cavalli Islands with Jay and Sandra towing our kayaks behind their catamaran, Enola, and some on the front deck.

First, we anchored off Hamaruru Island where we split into the rock gardeners and the non-rock gardeners. It was quite a thrill for me to have my first experience with the former, being able to observe and participate in ventures that I felt comfortable with.

We then motored south to Te Anaputa Island where the other group joined us, and we did more exploring.

We called it a day with most choosing to motor back on the Enola, except for four of us choosing to kayak the 7km back to Matauri Bay.

On the Sunday, Alistair and I chose to accept Jay and Sandra's offer of passage on the Enola over to Kahangaroa Island where we had a great time rock gardening. The highlight was a massive cave with two entrances. With Lynnis's words ringing in my ears about her friend's kayak being smashed here, I went into quick reverse. Sandra then pointed out the much easier entrance, where we landed after timing the swells.

Kelvin Teixeira

Leading up to the weekend, I must admit feeling slightly apprehensive about kayaking around the Cavalli Islands. Despite multiple experiences of paddling in rough water or reasonable swell, I'd never paddled that far away from the mainland.

But, with no wind and low swell, I was pleasantly relieved to discover the water out at the furthest islands (11 km from the nearest shore) 'felt' the same as it did only one kilometre from shore.

The first highlight for me was paddling alongside kayaking legend Lynnis Burson (just the two of us) around the northern-most outer islands, Horonui and Motutapere. The next highlight was paddling down the north-eastern ocean side of Hamaruru and Panaki islands. The next highlight was lunch – not the lunch itself, but our secluded lunch-stop location (on the north-facing sandy beach of Motukawanui Island) – wow!

Then our 'exploring group' paddled south on the ocean side to the next mini group of islands, including Motuharakeke with its incredible archway tunnel near where the Rainbow Warrior lies on the seabed. Near there, I had another first-in-a-lifetime experience – a large school of blue maomao fish swimming in front and then underneath me. Never have I seen fish so iridescent in colour.

Towards the end of the day, we had the option to go back on the catamaran 'support boat', otherwise paddle the seven kilometres back to Matauri Bay from the mini group of islands of Motuharakeke, Te Anaputa and Te Anaputaiti. Only four of us decided

to kayak back, partly because we weren't ready for the paddling to end, but also to gain the sense of achievement.

All up the day involved just over 20 kilometres of paddling – not the furthest I've done, but certainly the most adventurous and wonderous.

The next day (Sunday), four of us enjoyed a leisurely three-kilometre paddle from picturesque Mahinepua Bay out to Motuekaiti Island, off the end of the Mahinepua Peninsula, where we stopped for snacks, before returning to Mahinepua beach for a swim.

Looking forward to returning next March as I have unfinished business at the Cavalli's – visiting Motukawaiti Island (not too far off Matauri Bay) to land and walk into the huge cave. I could have done it on the Sunday, but decided I wanted to leave something new and exciting to experience next time!






MERCURY



Fossil Point to Mutton Cove (Separation Point)

By Brent Sharp

Monday, 3 Feb, 2025\
Fossil Point to Mutton Cove (Separation Point)
Distance 56km. Time 10.0hrs

I have looked forward with anticipation to this paddle for a long time. It closes the chapter on the South Island west coast. Significant enough in itself. The Spit has a mystique. An aura accentuated by its remoteness and access prohibition. On a global scale; it's huge. 35km long. It's a wildlife sanctuary and a place of regular pilot whale strandings.

Each side of the sand spit endure completely different marine conditions. The northern side contends with the harsh open ocean. While Golden Bay enjoys the buffer and relative tranquillity. It is well known in the maritime world as a sanctuary; or safe haven from adverse weather.

My curiosity with this place is intense. What does the interface look like as the Spit diminishes below the sea surface? And the tranquil Bay clashes with the open sea. How big will the breakers be? How does the tidal range impact the observable length of the Spit? And the extra distance I may have to paddle. How will I know when to make the radical right turn towards Separation Point? Where water depth transitions from tens of meters to just a few inches. And; how much wildlife will I encounter?

Nominally this is a 9-10 hour paddle. Around 55km. 5hrs to the end of the Spit; and 4hrs across the Bay to Separation Point. It's still early days on this trip. Having only done 3 paddle days. I'm not in top paddle shape yet. By some margin.

I have contacted DOC to advise them of my intentions. There is a firm understanding that landing anywhere on the Spit is prohibited unless my personal safety is in peril.

The forecast is marginally better than it has been lately. Expect the early SE'ly offshore; followed by a gathering NW'ly during the day. Peaking at 18kts this afternoon. Better than 25+kt predictions in recent days. It will be a cross wind. Over my right shoulder. When I make the turn at end of the Spit.

Tides are also a significant consideration. LW today is 0800hrs. HW is 1400hrs. The tidal range is 3.5m. I was keen to coincide my arrival at the end of the Spit at; or close to, HW. My assumption is that more of the Spit will be submerged. Or further submerged. Maybe reducing the paddle distance to the turning point. I have been advised that the breakers can extend several kilometres beyond the visible end of the Spit.
Also, the flooding tidal stream is easterly along the outside of the Spit. In my favour. It should be a cruisey morning at least.

An early start is planned. For the 15 minute drive from Pakawau to the cark park at Port Puponga. And the 20 minutes walk through farmland, to the dunes. Where Secala remains stashed above Fossil Point. By the time we arrive at the car park; twilight has advanced sufficiently for me to dispense with my headlamp.

In collapsible supermarket bags I carry the gear that I have recharged (VHF, InReach, phone, battery pack, GoPro); water and food. Secala is patiently waiting in the dunes. The tide is still an hour away from LW. There is a lot of beach between the dunes and the waters edge. A long way to drag a loaded kayak.

It's an easy launch through low surf. For a pleasant change. Behind the breakers, we turn directly into the sun that is emerging over the Spit. A whisper of a SE'ly wafts offshore. We settle in for the first phase of the trip. To the end of the Spit. Where I expect to have the assist of tide and trending NW breeze.

The paddling is easy along a barren sandscape. We stay as close to the shore break as possible. The predicted light (6-8kts) NW arrives by mid morning. There is a splattering of wildlife. Gannets, terns, the occasional seal on the beach. My only obstacles are the occasional outer surf breaks.

The most conspicuous landmark of the Spit arrives. The lighthouse amongst a cluster of trees. We are just over 4 hours from Fossil Point. Making good time so far.
From here the Spit slowly recedes before submerging below the sea surface. It's a fascinating thing to observe. The tranquil shallow sea state of the Bay is abruptly accosted by the turmoil of the open ocean. We are paddling within 20 metres from this demarcation. A continuous line of breakers extends ahead without visible end.

There is 3 hours of flood tide remaining. On both sides of the Spit. The breakers tumble on the ocean side; and disperse over a few inches of water on the Bay side.

The tidal zone on the Bay side is very shallow sloping. And covers a huge area.

Wildlife appears more prevalent in this tidal zone of the Spit. Flocks of gannets and terns swirl overhead. Shearwaters clutter the sea surface. On the submerged Spit, seal rears up on its flippers, for a better view; giving the illusion that it's "standing" on water.

The line of breakers continue. I can see the water depth accumulating on the other side of the breakers. Separation Point is beckoning. Louder with every paddle stroke. The temptation to turn is strong. Every paddle stroke I make further around the Spit; could be one that I'm making towards our destination.
There comes a point where the depth of water on the Bay side of the Spit will appear deep enough to cut through. But there is no telling if that water depth will be enduring. Over that huge tidal zone.
The breakers continue ahead. With no observable end point. I recall Paul Caffyn's advice "Go to the end of the breakers Brent". And I know that this is exactly what I will do. I set aside any temptation and follow the line of breakers. Lynn Paterson has advised that I may have to paddle up to 10km beyond the end of the Spit before turning into the Bay.

Sooner than I expect the line of breakers diminish in quantity and magnitude. The water depth on the Bay side appears more than sufficient for Secala and me. I decide to turn. A key moment. A leap of faith. And it's a radical turn. A course adjustment from 125 to 195. 70 degrees. We sprint across the potential surf zone and over the shallow tidal area of the more tranquil Bay. The bottom is less than a meter deep. But comfortable. And after several minutes fast paddling; gradually deepens. We are in the clear and I focus our attention on the distant landscape. I set a compass course for a more accurate landfall.

There's mixed emotions that the Spit is now behind me. I stop and look over my shoulder at the clump of trees at the end of the Spit. There's a good sense of accomplishment at a successful rounding. And some mysteries of the Spit unveiled. There's also some relief that our destination is directly ahead.

The sea state changes dramatically over the next 20 minutes. The NW'ly that has been more or less astern; is now on my stbd beam. And escalating, as forecast. The flood tide still has 2 hours left in the tank. Directly opposing sea state. It gets lumpy. During the next hour the winds escalate from 12 to 20kts. The sea state is directly on my stbd beam and annoying. Even though I know Secala tracks very well in these conditions; I apply some leeway to be sure. The wind is pushing me offshore. And it's a 4 hour trip across the Bay. On a good day. The sea chop washes over Secala constantly. It's just a matter of grinding through it. There is no opportunity to rest in these conditions. I have made a point of frequently hydrating and nourishing along the way. More than usual. And the body is feeling good.

The sea state diminishes to a more comfortable level at the top of the tide; even though the wind has escalated.

Separation Pt is painfully slowly arriving. My compass course and leeway serve me well.

During the last hour the conditions ease further. Separation Point becomes apparent. The light

structure is closer to sea level than expected. As requested I say “Hi” from Lynn Paterson.

Immense satisfaction that a big and memorable day has been completed well.

A smooth landing onto a golden sand beach to finish the day. A long time coming. The South Island west coast has been overcome. This NW section has been a particular challenge. It is remote and inaccessible. The coastline is dramatic and difficult. Safe havens are few. Not many have kayaked this area. And little is known from a kayaking perspective.

And so; there is a sense now that the journey can continue more fluidly; with less complication. Less restrictions on surf, weather and safe havens.



A dawn launch from Fossil Pt



Separation Point Lighthouse

Why I Kayak: A Personal Journey on the Water

By Richard Harri

Many in Auckland's sea kayaking community will know of Richard Harri's exploits out to islands in the Waitemata Harbour, often in the dark, but we wanted to share his story wider.

Kayaking has become a significant part of my life, offering me not only a chance to explore the stunning landscapes around Auckland, but also a way to escape the hustle and bustle of daily life. The freedom of being on the water is something I truly cherish, and it's a feeling that keeps drawing me back, day after day.

I've always had a connection to water. Growing up, I was a swimmer, and for the past 20 years, I swam 2km a day. Swimming kept me in shape and helped me maintain a sense of discipline. But something about kayaking clicked for me in a way that swimming never did. Unlike swimming, where I was limited to the pool, kayaking allowed me to take my workout into nature. With every stroke of the paddle, I could explore new shores, hidden coves, and peaceful islands like Rangitoto and Browns Island.

The scenery is one of the most compelling reasons I kayak. I love taking photographs of the landscapes I encounter, especially at sunrise and sunset. The colours at those times are richer and more vibrant, and they offer unique perspectives of the natural world. Being out on the water during these moments allows me to capture images that many people never get to see. It's a personal joy that I've been able to share with others through my photography website www.nzprints.co.nz

In the past two years alone, I've completed 400 kayaking trips, including 150 to Rangitoto and nearly 300 to Browns Island — many completed mostly in the hours of darkness. Every trip is different, offering new sights and experiences. I've witnessed everything from the awe-inspiring beauty of sunrises to the thrill of having orcas swim beneath my kayak. These experiences make each outing more memorable than the last.



One of the highlights of kayaking is the feeling of freedom it gives me. When I'm on the water, I'm in my element. I don't just paddle for the exercise; I paddle because it opens up new opportunities for adventure. The bonus of being able to listen to music while I paddle makes the experience even more enjoyable. Thanks to my UE Boom speaker and the "Hey Siri" feature on my iPhone, I can curate the perfect playlist for each trip — whether I'm listening to calming instrumental tunes during a peaceful morning paddle or more upbeat music during an afternoon adventure.

Another reason I prefer kayaking over swimming is the sense of accomplishment I get from each trip. In my previous years as a swimmer, I found myself in a routine, swimming laps in a pool. But kayaking allows

me to push my limits, both physically and mentally. There's something satisfying about paddling across open water, challenging myself with longer journeys, and exploring more distant locations. One of my most memorable accomplishments was completing the 'King of the Gulf' route — a 12-hour overnight kayaking journey around five islands, including Rangitoto, Motutapu, and Rakino. Each trip, big or small, offers its own unique challenge.

I've also learned that kayaking is more than just about the physical journey; it's about mental preparation and safety. Before heading out, I always consider the weather, wind conditions, and tides, using apps like Windy and the Coastguard app to keep me informed. Safety is a priority for me, and I've made sure that my gear is in top shape. I take necessary precautions like carrying a PLB, a VHF radio, and a water bottle, among other essentials.

In the end, kayaking offers me a perfect blend of freedom, adventure, and tranquillity. It's a lifestyle that has transformed my relationship with nature and has deepened my passion for the outdoors. Whether I'm capturing stunning photos, listening to my favourite music, or simply paddling pre-dawn in the dark, kayaking remains one of the most fulfilling activities I've ever embraced.







Kayaking Safety Education Should be Fun

By Steve Cooper

As a consequence of the visibility of the KayakSafe workshops programme I get a few enquiries via the website asking if we can deliver a workshop for various different groups and I try to make sure we follow up on all the enquiries. In early January I received one such enquiry from a teacher at Ngataki School in the Far North. Belinda (Bindy) had been able to get some kayaks for their senior students and was keen to get a course set up for them.



I spoke with Belinda and we quickly established that the idea of running an online classroom session to get the students up to speed with the safety issues to be considered, this could be achieved based on the great online Kayaksafe workshops that Dallas has got up and running this season. But what about a practical session? The issue was one of finding an empty spot in the Calendar where we could get suitable volunteers to one of the more remote spots on the North Island. Eventually I convinced Steve Flack to join me on a little trip about 400 km north of Auckland. But I would be on the South Island in February for Kayak Fest followed by having my sister and brother-in-law over from the UK for most of March (a trip that has been 20 years in the planning so I couldn't adjust that!). We settled on delivering a practical on the water session on Monday 7th April. Bindy also reached out to Kaitaia College to get them involved so I agreed that Steve and I would meet with them on the Tuesday to discuss what KASK can do to assist them.

Monday morning arrived and, despite the horrendous weather in the lead up and Air NZ's best attempts to keep Steve in Napier rather than deliver him to Kerikeri for me to pick him up in my campervan together with John Shaws kayak, Steve and I were at Lake Ngatu scoping out the safety aspects of the venue selected by Bindy.

Our conclusion: A great spot with plenty of options and all environmental risks (like the moderate offshore wind at that spot) having adequate mitigations available.

We were pleased to see Pat from Kaitaia College arrive just before 9:30 with a fleet of his kayaks, a quick discussion with Pat assured us that we had a third competent paddler with us and someone with a wealth of sit on top kayaking experience. So regardless of the actual skill levels of the other adults we would have sufficient cover.

The 19 enthusiastic students from Ngataki school arrived along with Bindy and other staff members from the school at about 9:30. Once all the kayaks and kit were unloaded we gathered everyone round and I asked if everyone was ready to go kayaking. Pleasingly rather than just looking at the leaders for the answer a few of them confirmed they had checked the weather forecast and could also tell me how it might change through the day so they had remembered some of that online session we did!
After a chat about the various basic safety features





required of any kayak and other safety kit, and the importance of wearing a correctly fitted and appropriate type of PFD everyone got kitted up and we checked each other's gear and assigned the various single and double kayaks to people. Steve led 19 students and 5 other adults out onto the lake with me taking up the rear so we could make an initial assessment of where everyone was at with their kayaking.

19 enthusiastic students doesn't make for a serene paddle along a beautiful shoreline but once we got to the predetermined spot by use of whistles, paddles and loud voices we got everyone vaguely organised into a raft. We then split the group into 3 rafts of four kayaks and challenged them to race out to a convenient buoy and then return having swapped the inside pair for the outside pair. The adults ran interference…

We then split into three groups led by Steve, myself and Pat with 6 students in 4 kayaks plus a second adult and each group set off for a paddle part way round the lake with ongoing coaching as appropriate. The group I had seemed to get confused and think it was a standup paddleboarding session, needless to say there was plenty of opportunity to perfect getting back on to the kayaks!

A break for lunch and a rest (or touch rugby for some of course) was followed with another session on



the water for some with Steve and Bindy showing a couple of the more enthusiastic ones how to roll and Pat helping others "refine their kayaking skills". We rounded things off with a debrief and some impressive singing from the staff and students, smiles on everyone's faces and some important basic water safety messages as well as basic kayaking skills taken on board by all.

Apart from a great day of fun and learning on the lake Steve and I had a session at Kaitaia College discussing how to build on their existing kayaking elements in their outdoor programme Steve describing the Paddle Passport system used at Hawkes Bay Canoe Club



as well as the work that Chris Henshaw and others in Wellington do at Aotea College in their kayaking NCEA module. Pat provided some great tips on how he gets things done. Nothing beats getting together and sharing experiences.

Pat and Alexandra are now developing their existing teaching materials and programmes at Kaitaia incorporating the materials and experience exchanged. Pat bought a copy of the Sea Kayaking Safety book and started reviewing it on Monday evening, the school bought extra copies the following day and this will help reinforce the safety sections of their outdoor education programme. We parted looking forward to the next time we will be able to get together and build on what we have started.

I started the discussion with Bindy back in January not being too sure where it would all lead to and wondering if the effort of doing all this in a location that demands a bit more effort to make it happen was the best way to deploy our limited resources. In the week leading up to our trip to Lake Ngatu Windy and other forecasts were nervously reviewed as some pretty horrible weather did its thing across New Zealand, would we even be able to get there! All I can say now is where's the next similar opportunity? If half the participants got half as much out of the two days as I did and enjoyed it half as much then there's nothing better I could have done with my time! If you know of a school or other group that are looking to build on their kayaking competencies then get in touch.





Fitting a bilge pump

By Robby Benson-Cooper

Have been thinking about an electric bilge pump for a while now, not so much because I like gadgets and drilling holes in my kayak, but through our SKISL practises, down in windy Wellington, we get a lot of windy rough days and quite often our rescue practise is real and not staged. Despite what I read on some sites, paddling with a lot of water in your cockpit in rough conditions just doesn't work and you will end up back in the water before you know it. Trying to pump out your cockpit in rough conditions, unless you are rafted up, is just too difficult and really tiring. Getting tipped out in rough conditions is not so bad when there is a soft shore to get washed up onto, but out in deep water or close to rocks you need to get back into your kayak and paddling quickly to get back into control.

Bilge pumps have been around for ages in various forms and keep getting better and smaller. I bought a kit from Expedition kayaks in Sydney, I have one of their kayaks, an Audax, and they make a complete set up for this kayak, so all the thinking had been done for me. It uses a Lithium sealed battery and an automatic sensor pump, without the need for an on/off switch. The battery and pump weighs just under 800 grams, about the weight of a drink bottle. The pump sits behind the seat attached to the bulkhead, and the battery inside the day hatch in a cradle. The pump and battery share the same mounting hole positions so minimal holes. Both the battery and pump are waterproof with 'o' ring sealed electrical connections. The whole set up can be submerged without any problems.

Hardest part of the install is deciding where to drill the outlet hole, fairly large, 19mm. Main requirement is having it above the waterline, not interfere with paddle stroke, and not directing pumped water back at you or back into the cockpit.

The following photos are self-explanatory bar the two water pumping shots. First try was a bit underwhelming so removed the non-return valve from the pump, doubled the outflow.

Worked so well have fitted a bilge pump to my other kayak, an NDK sport, the last two photos are of this kayak.



1- Hole drilled for outlet



2 - Holding bracket for pump, behind seat



3 - Battery bracket mounted

4 - Pump fitted behind seat

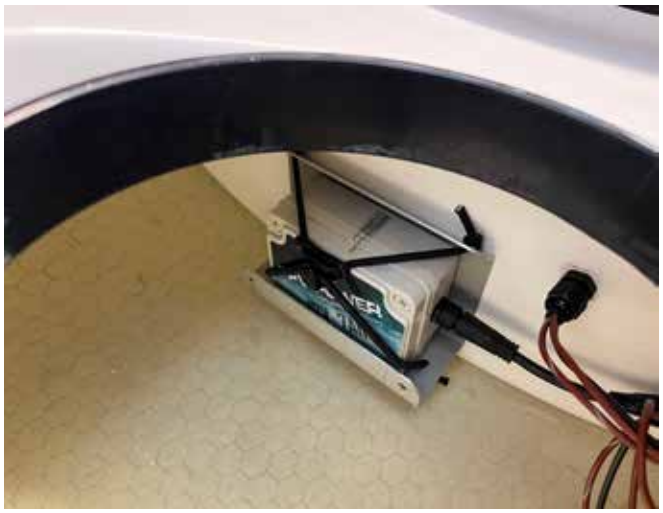


5 - Outlet pipe on side, well tucked out of way





6 - outlet fitting mounted and sealed



7 - Battery mounted in place



8 - Small plug to stop water and bugs when not in use

9 - tether for plug





10 - non return valve in place, note water pattern



11 - non return removed, note water pattern

Paul Caffyn Around Alaska - Part III

More Ice Than You Can Shake a Stick At!

Nome to Inuvik

1 June - 13 August 1991



Off Bridget Creek, I waited in vain for four days for a solid sheet of sea ice to break up. It was like watching grass grow

1991 NOME to INUVIK

Slowed by Ice

In the northern summer of 1991, my cunning plan was to paddle from Nome through Bering Strait into the Chukchi Sea, then around Point Barrow- the northern tip of Alaska - into the Beaufort Sea then eastwards along the coast to the Canadian town of Inuvik in the Mackenzie River delta. This town had road access. A distance of only some 1,500 miles, I expected the paddle to take a maximum of 50 days. This was based on my all-up average of 31 miles per day for the 1990 trip. However, the 1991 trip ended up taking a total of 73 days; very much due solely to ice conditions. What commenced in May as being one of the best years for ice, turned out by August to be a worse than average year for difficult ice conditions.

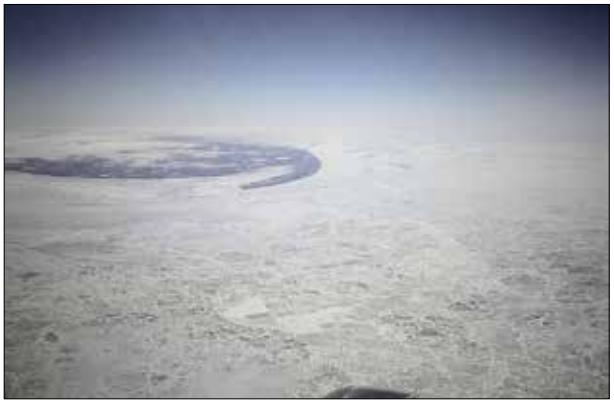
The False Start from Nome

On 1 June 1991, I flew from Anchorage to Nome via the coastal village of Kotzebue. I knew the ice break-up had occurred early at Nome on 6 May, so as the aircraft banked over Kotzebue Sound, I was shocked and stunned to see a solid sheet of ice filling the sound from shore to shore. Not a single lead or glimmer of sea was visible. I could not believe my eyes. I had hoped to cross Kotzebue Sound 10 days or so after leaving Nome.

As the aircraft descended to land at Nome, the sea was ice free with only a few remnant winter snowbanks scattered around the town. My kayak had been in safe storage at Nome for the winter. All I had to do was check my equipment and purchase fresh food



The Alaskan Airline Flight after landing at Kotzebue. A beautiful balmy, summer day



On board the flight from Kotzebue to Nome, this was my first view of a solid sea-ice cover filling Kotzebue Sound. The curving point in the distance is Cape Espenberg

for the first 200-mile leg to Shishmaref. One week previously, I had posted out my five food resupply parcels from Anchorage, to the isolated coastal villages of Shishmaref, Point Hope, Point Lay, Barrow and Kaktovik. Each cardboard box included a letter to the postmaster stating I was a Kiwi paddling around Alaska and would arrive on an approximate date.

Only two days out of Nome, I reached the southern limit of the ice pack. Progress slowed. On 5 June, after launching from an overnight camp on Cape Douglas, I followed a narrow shore lead for only three miles before reaching impenetrable ice. To reach terra firma from the lead, I had to drag the kayak over 200 yards of shore-fast ice. For the next four days, while I waited for the ice to either melt or move offshore, the weather was perfect. Overnight, ice would form on my tent and the sea would freeze but the days were sunny and calm. It was so frustrating to wait on shore while the weather was so perfect.



Harold Ahmahsuk (left) and a friend discuss the perils of walrus hunting from skin umiaks in the old days at Sinuk

Not that I was content just to sit on the beach and wait. I walked six miles along the coast to see if there was a shore lead, which there wasn't, and tried paddling out to sea around the ice pack. Pressure ridges up to 15 feet high, where the floes had been shoved together, allowed me a commanding view across the ice pack. When I began losing sight of shore, and there was still no way on through the ice, I decided to retrace my tracks back to my campsite.

Since this was my first experience with sea ice, I was learning new techniques each day. Landing on the ice floes had worried me immensely since some of the best kayakers have been lost during or after landing on ice floes. In August 1932 Gino Watkins disappeared without trace while seal hunting in the ice floes on the east coast of Greenland. His trousers and sprayskirt were found on a floe, his kayak found floating but of Gino, who had learnt the art of kayaking and rolling from the Inuit, no trace was ever found.

I did have a marked advantage over the old skin boat paddlers in that the hull of my kayak was built from two layers of kevlar. Combined with the swept up Nordkapp bow, I found I could paddle the kayak on to low ice floes with ease. All I had to do was find a low section of floe that was not more than six inches above sea level and was also reasonably flat. At full paddling speed the kayak would slide easily onto the ice where I could step out of the cockpit with dry feet. I learnt quickly to have a rope from the decklines handy to secure the kayak. This was vital particularly if a wind was blowing since the ice was so slippery. Launching was also very easy. Sitting in the cockpit, I simply pushed off from the ice and the kayak slid into the water stern first.

Following four days of watching and waiting for the ice to melt, the novelty of being surrounded by ice



My ovenight camp on an old Inuit hut site at Cape Douglas. Open water eastwards to the next headland



had worn off. I realized that sunny days with warm temperatures were not moving the ice pack - strong winds, big seas and strong currents were required to break up the ice. It was now day eight since I had left Nome. I had halved my daily food ration, and since continuing fine weather was forecast on the radio, I felt there was no alternative but to paddle back to Nome and stock up on more food.

Crossing the Arctic Circle

Back safely in Nome, a spell of bad weather finally arrived. Rain, sleet and snow were accompanied by a strong southerly wind. With a report of favourable ice conditions up to Bering Strait, I started out again on 16 June and reached the small Inuit village of Wales by the 18th. The winter had been harsh. The ice pack had only moved offshore in the past few days. The village's main street was still buried under six-foot-deep snow drifts. The town was only small with a population of some 160 people. Apart from the houses, there was a school, store and a white geodesic dome structure, which contained the post office and town council office.

I was fortunate to see and photograph two walrus skin-covered umiaks, which in 1990 had been used to make a crossing from Siberia across Bering Strait to Wales. Umiaks are a large open boat, built with an internal frame of either driftwood or sawn timber, lashed together with walrus skin cord and covered



The two walrus skin-covered umiaks at Wales. They were used for a crossing of Bering Strait

with walrus skins. They vary in length from 15 to 40 feet and in ancient times were propelled by paddles. Although some are now set up with mast and sail, it is more common for modern umiaks to have a well near the stern for an outboard motor. From Wales to Barrow, umiaks were still used to hunt and harpoon bowhead whales.



Sunlight glows through the translucent walrus skin.The mast step for sailing is visible with a hole in the seat to support the mast while sailing

From a hill above Wales, I had a commanding view across Bering Strait to Big and Little Diomede islands and beyond them, 50 miles away, the snow-clad hills of Siberia stood clear above the ice pack. I was looking out across the migration route for the American Indian population when they moved eastwards from Asia across the Bering Land Bridge. Thousands of years later, the Eskimos and Aleuts migrated across the land bridge into Alaska and then the sea level rose, slowly submerging and cutting off this migration route. South of the strait lay the Pacific Ocean and the Bering Sea, while to the north lay the Arctic Ocean and the Chukchi Sea.

To the north, the ice pack's southern fringe lay only a few miles away. Only 18 miles along the coast from Wales, towards my first food dump at Shishmaref, I hit impenetrable ice. I was held up for another two days before crossing the Arctic Circle on 25 June.



A selfie after crossing the Arctic Circle

There was no marker or stake behind the sand beach to mark this latitude of 66 degrees and 33 minutes. It was my very first time in the land of 24-hour daylight. To celebrate this auspicious occasion, all I could do was hold up the map and snap a self portrait. As I paddled northwards towards Barrow, I would not see a sunset again until late summer when hopefully, I would be nearing the end of my trip.

Sandy beach backed by a low dune ridge formed this next long section of sweeping shore to Kotzebue Sound. Further inland, low bare tundra flats extended as far as the eye could see. The ice pack was always close against the beach, sometimes with a narrow continuous shore lead, where I could paddle in a straight line but at other times, small floes were packed in tight against the beach. The tightly packed floes required zig-zagging, backtracking and even bashing the kayak bow against small floes so I could open a passage just wide enough for the kayak. When the ice formed an impassable barrier, I would land and wait patiently for the ice to move. I could have dragged the kayak across the ice, but I was determined to paddle every inch of the way around Alaska.



My first experience of sea ice - melting floes all around. Is this an icy duck? In the background, the hills beyond Port Clarence

Kotzebue Sound

At Espenberg, the site of an old fish camp and now a summer home for a reindeer farmer, I landed to climb onto a dune and look across Kotzebue Sound. The outlook for a quick crossing of the sound looked bleak. Beyond a narrow shore lead, a continuous sheet of sea ice stretched as far as my eye could see.

I met Freddie Goodhope, an Inuit reindeer farmer, and his wife Janie. Although it was 2:00 pm, Freddie was just getting out of bed when I arrived. He and his family had been out all night seal hunting from a skiff in the ice. Freddie invited me to join him in an aluminium runabout to check his set nets up river. The catch of five whitefish and trout was boiled up for breakfast at 4:00 o'clock in the afternoon!

Freddie farmed a herd of 288 reindeer, which were corralled twice a year, once for dehorning and again at freeze-up to give the animals their shots to ward off disease and parasites. When selected animals were slaughtered, the meat was either flown to Shishmaref, or taken by skidoo and sled across the snow-covered tundra.

Kotzebue Sound at its narrowest point is 35 miles wide. Because of the ice pack, I could not take this shortest course when I launched at 7:30 am on 26 June and was forced to follow the shore lead eastwards. One promising lead headed northwards but after four miles it came to an absolute dead end in solid, unbroken first year ice. I had no option but to backtrack to the shore lead. I tried several more leads but they always came to a dead end.

Hovering above the ice was a mirage or band of white, but I kept seeing a short section of blue mirage above the ice to the north, which I felt sure lay above open



Freddie Goodhope steers his runabout up-river at Cape Espenberg to check his set nets



water. No matter how I tried, I couldn't find a lead that headed in the right direction. Several times I landed on the ice and climbed onto pressure ridges to search for a lead. At 12:30 pm, I was feeling demoralized and tempted to turn back to Cape Espenberg.

One last time I landed and climbed on top of a pressure ridge. Half a mile away, there appeared to be a lead and I could hear the sound of breaking waves working in the lead. Normally in the densely packed ice floes, there was virtually no sound, just the gentle dripping of melt water into the sea and lapping and surging under the floes. When I heard the sound of chop, I knew there was an area of open water. It had taken me five hours to find this lead..

I knew it would lead to open water, as a low westerly chop was tossing. Hour by hour, as I paddled, the lead went on and on and the wind kept lifting. The lead would close down to a narrow gap then open up into a broad open area. Mid-afternoon, I landed in the lee of a large floe and pulled the kayak onto the ice. The chop was beginning to break over the kayak decks. This was one great advantage of paddling in ice - I could stop in the middle of Kotzebue Sound for a pee and a look-around, and pull on my survival suit.

Twelve hours after launching, I broke clear of the ice onto open water. Two hours later, I ground the kayak bow onto a gravel beach on the north side of Kotzebue Sound. When I tried to stand up, my left knee was all knotted up. Too long locked into the foam knee rests. I staggered around for a minute or two like I had been on the turps!

The ice had turned a 35 mile open water crossing into a 50 mile ice dodge. I was immensely relieved to be ashore again, after 14 hours on the water. This was the longest crossing I had to complete for the 1991 trip.

Brown Bears

By the time I reached Cape Beaufort on 6 July, I was considering myself fortunate. I had not seen a single brown bear. But paddling past a gravel beach, backed by gentle rolling tundra slopes, working my way through loose pack ice, I saw a movement on shore. Two bulky shapes, moving across the tundra towards the beach – they were too big for Arctic foxes, too solid for caribou.

They were big coastal brown bears! Standing on hind legs, they sparred and pawed at each other as they neared the beach. I lost sight of them behind a stranded ice floe and pulled out my two cameras. Then I put on speed and glided out from behind the floe towards where the two bears were scrapping on the beach. I kept my arm movements very slow as I drifted in close to the beach. The bears glanced in my direction but otherwise took absolutely no notice of me.

Clouds of mosquitoes hovered thickly around the bears. They were magnificent specimens with black patches of fur around their eyes. When they walked into the sea, directly towards the kayak bow, my heart began to pound. I realized they were simply trying to get rid of the annoying clouds of insects. One bear came so close, with just his head out of the water, he could have touched the kayak bow with his paw. I felt no threat from the bears and it was obvious the bears felt no threat from me. It was a magic moment - almost an unbearable one - a great highlight of the Alaska trip.



What do we have here?
Is this breakfast?



21 July 1991 - leaving Barrow for the next leg along the north Alaskan coast to Kaktovik

Barrow - the Northern Tip of Alaska

Late afternoon on 17 July, I was struggling to reach the town of Barrow. Swirls of thick cold, clammy fog limited visibility to 200 yards. An onshore wind had forced the ice pack hard against the beach, leaving only short stretches of shore lead where I could paddle in a straight line. The kayak took a hammering as I used the bow as a battering ram to force a way through the floes. I nearly capsized while skating at speed over a low tongue of ice. I had not seen a projecting knob of ice, and at speed, it nearly flipped me over. Only a desperate slap support stroke kept me from a dunking in the icy water.

The fog was so thick it was difficult to estimate the distance remaining to Barrow. I could hear the sounds of vehicles and machinery so knew it was close. The ice was really bad, packed hard against the beach, forcing a snail's pace. Through the murk I noticed an old Inuit chap strolling along the gravel beach.
"How far to Barrow?" I called out.
"Keep paddling for half a mile and land by some skiffs parked on the beach," he replied.
"Where have you come from?" the chap asked.
"I started this year from Nome and camped last night at Skull Cliffs."
The Eskimo chap looked at the fog and the ice packed hard against the beach and said, "You've just come from around the corner, haven't you?"

For the next three days I stayed with Geoff and Marie Carroll, which fortunately coincided with a spell of bad weather, snow, sleet, rain and strong winds. Geoff worked as a ranger for the Fish and Game Department, keeping track of the numbers of caribou, bears and bowhead whales. Marie, his Inuit wife, was a representative for the North Slope Borough on the International Whaling Commission.

Hunting of bowhead whales was still carried out from Barrow in late spring. When the first lead formed offshore, umiaks were towed on sledges behind ski-doos to open water where the hunters waited until a whale was spotted. The umiaks were launched and the whale was killed by harpoon and darting gun. After a kill, many of the Barrow townsfolk helped to winch the whale onto the ice where it was cut into small pieces. The blubber and meat were shared out amongst all the villagers. Bowhead whales grow up to 60 feet long and weigh as much as 60 tons. The umiak men had to be highly skilled to avoid being capsized by a harpooned bowhead.

Geoff Carroll was a member of the 1986 Steger International Polar Expedition, which reached the North Pole by dog team and sled. Ever since, Geoff has been fond of Greenland huskies and kept a team of 12 dogs tethered at the back of his house. Geoff asked me if I would like to join him exercising the dogs. Although it was supposedly summer, with no snow on the ground, sleet and snow were falling as



Geoff harnessing the excited dogs at Barrow

we harnessed the excited dogs. Normally in summer, the dogs remain tethered with little or no exercise, so the dogs were overjoyed for the chance of a romp over the tundra. Clinging to a big freight sled with clouds of steam from the dog's breath and bouncing over the tundra on the sled was a magic experience.

Barrow, with a population of over 3,000, is one of the largest Inuit settlements and is the center of local government for the North Slope Borough, the world's largest municipal government. At the modern supermarket I was able to stock up on fresh food, meat and milk for the next 360 mile leg to Kaktovik. When the sun rises on 10 May in Barrow each year, it does not set again until 2 August - no wonder this country is called the 'land of the midnight sun.'

Reaching the Border

On July 21, I farewelled Geoff at Point Barrow, the northernmost tip of Alaska, and paddled from the Chukchi Sea onto the Beaufort Sea. By this date in a normal year the icepack has broken up and moved offshore, however 1991 was turning into a bad year for ice. No freight barges or vessels had been able to near Barrow let alone the producing oilfields at Kuparuk and Prudhoe Bay.

For the next 15 days I dodged through the ice, mostly under cloudy skies and often through thick fog until I closed on the goal of my Alaska trip, the border between Alaska and Canada. On a cloudy evening on 4 August, I slowly maneuvered my way through tightly packed floes alongside a gravel beach until abeam of a navigation tower near the border. I landed, climbed a 20 foot high mud bank, and walked across a broad tundra terrace to a low bronze plinth. On the east side, was Canada and on the west, Alaska. For four years of planning and three years of paddling, I had been struggling to reach this solitary bronze monument. There was no one to take a photo or to say, "Well done, old chap," so I had to settle for a self portrait hugging the border monument.



Sea ice in the background, tundra in the foreground with a selfie of Paul hugging the pointy border plinth, between Alaska and Canada

Since there was not a decent campsite near, I climbed back into the kayak and paddled into Canadian waters. Although I had completed my trip around the coastline of Alaska, it was by no means the end of the 1991 trip - another 240 miles lay ahead to reach the road end at Inuvik.

Northwest Passage

Ever since leaving Barrow, I was paddling through ice-laden waters where some of the great names in Arctic exploration had attempted to find the elusive Northwest Passage. Starting with John Cabot in 1497, the British made a concerted effort to blaze a trail through the passage, culminating in the 1845 Franklin Expedition, which virtually disappeared without trace with the loss of two ships and 129 men. In the following years, search parties on both ice and sea made the final connection for the Northwest Passage, however it wasn't until 1906 that the first complete sea traverse of the Northwest Passage was completed. In August of that year, Roald Amundsen passed through Bering Strait in the 47 ton herring sloop *Gjoa*. With a crew of six, he set off from Norway in 1903 and spent two winters at Gjoa Haven, carrying out scientific observations and exploring by dog team. In the summer of 1906, Amundsen's goal was Bering Strait but poor ice conditions forced him to winter over for a third year at King Point.

Snow was piling up on the sleeves of my survival suit as I neared King Point. An Arctic front had passed through only hours before with gale-force winds and freezing temperatures. When seas began breaking over my shoulder, I landed through surf on a very exposed beach. With no shelter and chilling temperatures, I was almost an exposure case within minutes. Fortunately, as it was only 50 miles from the Mackenzie



The virtue of proximity to the Mackenzie River mouth; a driftlog windbreak built in minutes

River delta, driftwood was piled thickly at the head of the beach. I used an Inuit trick to quickly build a solid wall of drift-logs behind which I could shelter from the biting wind. Using slivers of the resin rich timber, I had a fire going in minutes and was able to warm up with a hot brew of tea.

When the wind and sea eased I paddled along to King Point and landed to see where Amundsen and his men had spent 10 long months waiting for the ice to break up. It was a desolate place, a long gravel spit backed by a small lagoon with rolling tundra slopes inland. I would have liked to spend more time there, but as it was so cold and sleet was still falling, I decided it was far warmer paddling the kayak.



Must be close to the finish of the Alaskan paddle; not only proper small trees but also the remains of a strip-built Canadian canoe

The Mackenzie River Delta

On August 11, I finally left the icepack astern and entered the swift flowing, murky waters of the Mackenzie River delta. For another two days, I plugged upstream against the strong current for 80 miles. I was heading for Inuvik but trailing a cloud of mosquitoes and steam as I sweated in warmer temperatures. At 7:15 pm, on 13 August, I ran the kayak bow onto a mud bank at the Inuvik barge dock. The Alaska trip was finally complete.



A strange mixture of fulfillment, achievement and disappointment - that the end of the Alaskan trip is only minutes away at the Inuvik barge landing.
13 August 1991

Summary for 1991 - Nome to Inuvik

Total distance covered: 1,511 miles
Start to finish time: 73 days
Rest & Recuperation days: 1
Icebound days: 8
Weatherbound days: 12
Total paddling days: 52
Total non-paddling days: 21
All up average: 20.7 miles per day
Paddling day average: 29.1 miles per day



KASK, the Kiwi Association of Sea Kayakers (N.Z.) Inc., a network of New Zealand sea kayakers, has the objectives of:

1. promoting and encouraging the sport of sea kayaking
2. promoting safety standards
3. developing techniques & equipment
4. dealing with issues of coastal access and protection
5. organizing a bi-annual Sea Kayak Fest
6. publishing a bimonthly magazine.

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Stewart Island
Bill Watt
Ph (027) 495 9288
email: williamwatt@outlook.co.nz

NZOIA Outdoor Instructors Assn
www.nzoia.org.nz

Coastguard Boating Education
Ph: (0800) 40 80 90 (09) 361 4700
email: info@boatingeducation.org.nz
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