



W.A.K.E.

WHATCOM ASSOCIATION OF KAYAK ENTHUSIASTS



March, 2006

Volume 25 Issue 3

MARCH 21, WAKE MEETING FEATURING:

REIVERS DUSTIN & LARRY BUSSINGER — IS A SURFSKI A KAYAK?

DOWNTOWN BELLINGHAM LIBRARY

DOORS OPEN 7:00 MEETING STARTS 7:30

MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD

By Ted Ullman

Spring is coming, I see the light! I went out with the first "Easy Paddle" on March 4th with five other WAKE members. The weather was perfect, partly sunny with a freshening breeze on Lake Whatcom. See a description of our day later in the newsletter along with future scheduled "Easy Paddles."

Let's have a look ahead for WAKE:

Sterling Donaldson, a founding member of WAKE and amazing kayak builder and technician, will be hosting a kayak repair seminar at his shop, Sterling's Kayaks and Fiberglass, on April 8th. Sterling can be reached at 398-2410, or <http://www.sterlingskayak.com>

There will be an outdoor sports Expo on April 15th and we will have a table promoting WAKE. It looks like it will be a good event with a lot of kayak related vendors and activities. <http://www.whatcomoutdoorexpo.com/>

If anyone would like to take a shift volunteering at our table please contact Norm Nielsen at 647-2531 or nordicnorm@comcast.net.

The board is getting together some great events. The Swap and Demo Days on May 6th. Body, Boat Blade training May 13th and 14th. A WAKE sponsored trip to Sea Sechelt Inlet on May 26-29. A mini symposium on June 24th and Mercia (the kayak goddess of Canada) will be putting on a great training in July.

Along with some great meetings and a few other trainings to be announced, I'd say this is a pretty hot board. Now all we need is for Andy and Lisa to announce a surf kayak weekend.

Evergreen Aids Foundation is teaming up with J.T. of Island Outfitters to put on the first annual AIDS/HIV awareness paddleathon in Anacortes: Positive Paddle - Paddle Positive (change of original schedule to July 1st).

J.T., guarantees it will be a great event for kayakers from all over Washington, put it on your calendar. Invite your paddling friends from Seattle and points south to meet you at this event. If you'd like to help promote this event in the Bellingham area please contact Wendy or Becky at 360-671-0703.

WAKE LOOKS FORWARD TO SEEING YOU THERE.

WAKE'S MISSION STATEMENT:

TO FURTHER THE ENJOYMENT, KNOWLEDGE AND SAFETY OF KAYAKING BY PROVIDING TRAINING AND A WIDE VARIETY OF TRIPS AND SOCIAL EVENTS TO OUR MEMBERS AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC.

"NO ONE GOES HUNGRY ON A WAKE TRIP"

EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE

By Dawn Groves

The WAKE newsletter includes a new regular column called Equipment Maintenance. Written by Dawn Groves, this short feature will cover a variety of maintenance suggestions to keep your paddling gear in good condition. Feel free to email your favorite maintenance tips and tricks to dawn@dawngroves.com.

TAKE GOOD CARE OF YOUR WETSUIT

By Dawn Groves

Water draws heat from the body 25 times faster than air and these effects are amplified when the current is fast. All this translates to the need for appropriate dress when you paddle in colder waters. Last month we discussed drysuits and this month we'll discuss wetsuits.

Neoprene wetsuits need to be pretty tight in order to minimize the amount of water that slips in next to the skin. This thin film of water is quickly warmed by body heat with the neoprene helping to maintain the temperature. Up here in the cold Northwest, neoprene fabric should be at least 3 mm thick for proper insulation, although paddlers often choose a thinner neoprene and layer jackets over it.

Wetsuits typically cost between \$80 and \$150, give or take some. They're much more affordable than drysuits but they do require maintenance in order to stay sturdy and effective.

Regular Rinsing: Be sure to rinse your wetsuit in fresh water before hanging it to dry. Wash it periodically with neoprene soap. If you've spent a lot of time immersed in salt water, let the wetsuit soak in a bath of fresh water for an hour or so, then rinse it again to remove the salt.

Storage: Lay your wetsuit flat, drape it over a fat closet rod, or hang it from a fat hanger. Don't fold it flat or weigh it down with heavy items. This creates permanent creases. When neoprene goes flat, it loses its insulating quality because gas bubbles are crushed. If possible, store it in a location free from fumes and temperature extremes. Make sure the wetsuit is completely dry before storing it. You can slip it into a plastic container or bag, but just be sure it is thoroughly clean and dry first.

Wear and Tear: Look for gouges and tears along seams and abrasion along knees and elbows. Repair the neoprene with wetsuit cement, and sew the nylon with heavy polyester thread. A large gouge that can't be sewn together must be cut out and replaced with a patch of new neoprene. Consider adding abrasion resistant pads.

Zippers: Check the high-stress area where the zipper attaches to the neoprene. Also inspect the zipper for broken teeth. If a zipper is damaged, it likely needs to be replaced by a professional. To keep zippers zippy, lubricate them regularly with candle wax or beeswax.

Accessories: Don't forget to check your neoprene booties, gloves, and hoods. These items often suffer more stress than the wetsuit itself.

Wetsuit Emergencies: A torn wetsuit (completely dry) can be repaired with neoprene cement. Follow the directions on the can because the cement may have to harden for six to eight hours. In lieu of cement, sometimes duct tape will hold torn neoprene together. Try stitching the duct tape to the nylon that coats the neoprene.

With proper care, your wetsuit will offer years of critical protection against our cold climate and water.



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REIVERS DUSTIN & LARRY BUSSINGER: IS A SURFSKI A KAYAK?

MARCH FEATURE SPEAKERS

"Surfski paddling seems to be in some odd category between white-water athletics and adventure touring kayaking. Who are these people, what gear do they use, and what are they doing out there in such a thundering hurry?"

“UP THE CREEK” WITH JOHN JANNEY By John Groves



Wednesday, January 25, 2006--cold, overcast, gusting wind, threatening rain. Three paddlers rest in a sheltered back eddy as the white water hurtles past. "We're going to have to go through that current to get upstream," the teacher says. "Paddle as hard as you can and keep your bow pointed into the current." The students, now in their second class session, follow the teacher. The first student is unable to drive her boat forward against the rushing water. The second student is pushed sideways into the bank. Both try again, but no joy. The students are bummed. The teacher isn't too concerned. "Let's save this for later. We'll move downstream and practice in easier water."

John Janney, long-time WAKE member and master kayaker, is teaching an informal class in whitewater arts to WAKE members Patty Johnson and John Groves. John Janney is a professional instructor who teaches kayaking courses at the local university. The paddlers meet at 9 AM in Whatcom Falls Park, a long ravine filled with towering trees and rushing water. "We're lucky to have so much rain this year," John says as they unload in the parking lot. The water is overflow from Lake Whatcom, and lots of rain means lots of fast water in Whatcom Creek. "This creek is the best-kept secret in Whatcom County," says John. But the secret is known to whitewater enthusiasts from WAKE, who often meet on Sunday mornings to challenge the wild waters. John's current students hope some day to join that elite band of kayak cowboys.

Sunday January 22, 9AM: First class meeting. The kayakers haul their boats down the infamous tenth-of-a mile path past the Bellingham Fish Hatchery to "The Pond," a wide expanse in the creek. John has a few initial instructions. "If I say "river left" or "river right" I mean the right and left when you look downstream. The current is strongest in the middle. So we'll stay on the sides, in the back eddies. When you cross an eddy line, 'moon' the current and brace downstream. Just remember that and you'll do fine." The class gets into their boats and heave themselves, like seals, into the creek. Lesson number one: "We're going to paddle across that eddy line," says John as they pause near a small island. "When you brace downstream, turn your whole upper body. That will automatically tip your boat to the correct edge and prevent you from capsizing." John paddles across the eddy line, edging and bracing as the current sweeps him downstream in a graceful arc. The students follow, awkwardly at first, improving to John's shouts of "Moon, moon, moon!" or "Paddle, paddle, paddle!"

Lesson number two: the Scott Shipley Slalom Gates, a slalom race course named after the champion kayaker who designed it. Located where the water is faster, there are twenty-two gates. Each gate is a pair of poles which hang down about four feet apart from ropes stretched across the creek. "The gates give you a stationary object to gauge your turns," John says. "Working with the gates will make your turns sharper and more confident." The first exercise is to enter the current, ride it a short way downstream, and then return to the *eddy*.....

...When the students feel comfortable they try the second exercise: "Paddle upstream through the gates without touching the sides," John directs. "If you need to correct your course, don't use a sweep, use a quick bow rudder." John demonstrates and the students imitate, getting whacked on their helmets by the poles when they miscalculate. Practice sharpens their skills and the first meeting ends on a feeling of accomplishment.

Wednesday, January 25: Despite recent rains the creek is three inches lower, but the current seems as fierce as ever. The class moves upstream, past the gates, to a trestle bridge spanning the creek. This bridge to nowhere is a ruin of rotten timbers with the creek rushing between its skeletal posts. "Find an opening and go straight through," John says. "Don't change your direction at the last minute. If you hit a post, the current can pull you right under." John leads the way, paddling laser-straight through the nearest opening. Patty gets through handily, but Groves hits a post. He bounces off and is swept backwards through the opening. A second try is more successful. John's comment: "I always know somebody hit one when I hear "Oh shit!" The next obstacle is the creek itself. They labor upstream, staying in the back eddies, until they reach a point where the current swerves close to the bank. "Get through this and you're home free," John says and easily drives his boat through the race to a sheltered eddy. The students try to join him, but are twice turned back by the force of the current. John changes tactics and leads the disconsolate students back to the gates.

Exercise: "Paddle through a gate, make a turn with a high brace and circle back through the same gate. When you get bored, go the other way." John demonstrates, starting his turn with a sweep stroke, using a high brace as a pivot. His boat seems to twirl on his paddle. The students inelegantly imitate. Their circles are at first large and irregular. With practice the circles tighten and their paddling strokes gain efficiency. Finally exhausted by their labors, they languish in the back eddy, waiting for John to say "Coffee time." But instead he says, "Ready to go upstream again?" The class paddles upstream with more assurance. No hitting the posts this time. John leads them head-long into the turbulence that earlier brought them grief. Patty makes slow but certain headway, reaching her goal with power to spare. Groves, helped by shouts of encouragement from the others, also gains safety. But there's little resting on laurels in John's class. "Next time," he says, "we'll try 'The Jet.'" This is a treacherous stretch of wild water farther upstream, the favorite playground for WAKE's whitewater cowboys.

Tuesday January 31. Heavy skies, gusting wind, a storm on the way. Water is higher today, rushing faster. John leads the students to the Jet, a fearsome race of white-capped standing waves and deep troughs. "Cross the eddy line, turn downstream, ride the current a while, then return to the eddy. Remember to moon the eddy." John demonstrates, as always making it look easy. Patty goes first, doing everything right, and returns gracefully to the back eddy. Groves is also successful and they continue practice looping into and out of the back eddies. Groves capsizes, but wet exits and is soon back in the classroom. "You stopped paddling," says John, who misses nothing. "You lost momentum and the creek took over. Keep paddling, no matter what. If you paddle hard enough you can ram your way through most anything. Paddle or die!"

Sunday, February 5, 2006. Clearing skies, the ravine filled with a thin, cold fog. Water still high and fast. The class is joined today by WAKE members Kristi Hug, Dave Harris, Mike Baker, and Alison Graham, all but Alison experienced whitewater kayakers. The group is soon gathered at the Jet. The masters go first, riding the Jet with skill and precision. The students follow spiritedly. Patty makes some impressive runs before and after capsizing. Alison also looks good until she capsizes on a back eddy. Groves shows improvement but also goes belly-up. To their credit, the students keep coming back and don't shy away from trying the hard stuff...



...Between runs they witness some stellar whitewater kayaking. Kristi and Dave go where they want when they want to, not intimidated by the current, using it to their advantage. Mike Baker, whom John describes as a master canoeist, is master of the creek. He paddles his long kayak with great precision, powered by what John describes as perfectly-executed canoe strokes. The party is occasionally crashed by a 2-person racing canoe, speeding downstream or laboring back up. A perfect morning on Whatcom Creek.

Later at coffee John sums it up. "When you're willing to put yourself at risk to learn a skill like whitewater kayaking, you change as a person. There comes a time when you achieve some goal or maybe just survive, when you suddenly find yourself on a whole new level. You've gone up a notch. For me, that makes it all worthwhile." Before John's class departs, they make arrangements to meet him again next week. There is still much to learn and the creek won't run forever. Paddle or die!

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U P the Creek
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Brandon Nelson plans to set the Guinness World Record on April 13th, for the greatest distance paddled on flat water in 24 hours. This event is intended to raise funds for the Whatcom Hospice Foundation. I encourage everyone to check out his website and consider making a donation. A donation of \$50 gets you a navigational buoy that will help mark his course, and help make a difference in our community. To offer support and/or make a donation, call 319-0696, or visit <http://www.kayakforcare.com>.

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BELLINGHAM WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT

Many of you are probably following the Port of Bellingham's public meetings regarding waterfront development of the former Georgia-Pacific West site. The four plans championed by the Port all include four new kayak launch sites, each of which is accessible by car. An alternative plan championed by the Bellingham Bay Foundation apparently does not include kayak launch sites, but we are not certain of this because their plan is not widely distributed.

The WAKE Board takes pride in having championed these kayak launch sites as part of a larger Bellingham Bay Water Trail. Beginning in March 2004 WAKE Board members have sent letters to the Waterfront Futures Group, the Port of Bellingham, and Bellingham Parks and Recreation. We have also given testimony before the Port Advisory Board, the Bellingham City Council, the Bellingham Planning Commission (twice), and The Waterfront Futures Group. Our efforts were effective we are happy to report. To keep opening these launch sites moving forward we encourage you investigate what is proposed (www.portofbellingham.com and www.bbaf.org) and then expressing your opinion by contacting:

Port of Bellingham Commission
P.O. Box 1677
Bellingham, WA 98227-1677
e-mail: info@portofbellingham.com

Bellingham City Council
210 Lottie Street
Bellingham, WA 98225-4009
e-mail: citycouncil@cob.org

APRIL FOOL'S DAY EASY PADDLE

Join Dawn Groves and Dan Barrett as they lead the April Easy Paddle on Saturday, April 1st. Meet at the beach behind Semiahmoo Resort and be ready to paddle at 9 AM. We'll paddle through the marina, head down the bay and maybe get a strong whiff of sea lion. Please dress for conditions (pfd, proper attire, etc) and bring a signed waiver (<http://www.wakekayak.org>). Note that the put-in has changed from Blaine Harbor to behind Semiahmoo. Email Dawn if you have questions: dg@dawngroves.com.

BELLINGHAM MASTERS SWIM CLUB is hosting its annual open water swim at Padden (2.5k and 5k swim) on Saturday July 22; race start around 9 am and duration about 1.5 hours max. We need some kayakers there for safety and to aid navigation. In the past WAKE has provided some very helpful volunteers, and we would like to invite you to participate again. Contact: Tjalling Ypma (734-2616) ianlt@comcast.net

KAYAK REPAIR CLASS

Saturday, April 8th WAKE is invited to attend a kayak repair class at Sterling's Kayaks and Fiberglass. Sterling Donaldson will show us how to spiff up & repair fiberglass, gel coat, deck rigging, rudders, etc. Bring your kayak for demonstrations. WAKE will provide donuts & pastries. Contact Norm: 647-2531 or nordicnorm@comcast.net



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WAKE CALENDAR OF EVENTS *& other items of interest.*

WAKE VOYAGES REQUIRE A SIGNED TRIP RELEASE FORM AT LAUNCH.

TRIP RELEASE FORMS CAN BE DOWNLOADED FROM www.wakekayak.org

WE REQUEST YOU TO BE A CURRENT WAKE MEMBER TO JOIN IN WAKE PADDLING EVENTS.

EVERY SATURDAY: Short paddles in the Bellingham area, beginners are always welcome. Destinations are determined by the skill level and interest of whomever shows up, and of course - by our weather.

THIS IS NOT A WAKE SPONSORED EVENT - Meets at Sehome Village Starbucks @ 9:00AM.

APRIL 1—WAKE EASY PADDLE: DRAYTON HARBOR—BEHIND SEMIAHMOO 9:AM

APRIL 8—KAYAK REPAIR CLASS: STERLING'S FIBERGLASS & KAYAKS—647-2531 or nordicnorm@comcast.net to sign up.

APRIL 15 — WHATCOM OUTDOOR EXPO: BLOEDEL-DONOVAN PARK—Details at www.whatcomoutdoorexpo.com

APRIL 22 - 2006 FLARE SHOOT-OFF: BLAINE - Start time is TBA. Details at (360) 332-1918 and www.westmarine.com

APRIL 30 DIRTY DAN CHALLENGE REGATTA: FAIRHAVEN...fairhaven.com/annual/dirtydandays/2006.html#rowing.

MAY 6 — WAKE SWAP MEET/DEMO DAY: BLOEDEL-DONOVAN PARK— Equipment for sale & trade—new & used.

MAY 7— WAKE EASY PADDLE: Information forthcoming.

MAY 13 & 14 - BODY BOAT & BLADE TRAINING: LAKE PADDEN 9:AM TO 4:PM

MAY 20-21 30—PUGET SOUND SEA KAYAK SYMPOSIUM: TACOMA—Details at: www.metroparkstacoma.org/kayaksymposium

MAY 26—29 WAKE SECHELT INLET TRIP: Trip Rating:---Skill level 2. Details contact: patschke@dowco.com.

JUNE 24 — WAKE MINI SYMPOSIUM: Information forthcoming.

JULY 1 — EVERGREEN AIDS FOUNDATION 2006 BENEFIT PADDLE: ANNACORTES—Details: wendy@evergreenaids.org



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WAKE

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