



Whatcom Association of Kayak Enthusiasts • [www.wakekayak.org](http://www.wakekayak.org) • volume 28 • issue 2



**President's Message**  
by Donna VanderGriend

I don't remember who said, "Spring always comes.", but I am thankful that it does. The days are lighter longer, temperatures are rising, and it's the season of rebirth and new beginnings. One can't help but feel excited about what's ahead and looking forward to being outdoors and active.

These days I find myself being thankful for the abundance in my life, health and wellness, family and friends, my job and home. In this spirit of gratitude I've been reflecting on how much WAKE has given to me over the last three years. I've made good friends, received a wealth of education, and shared many memorable experiences that have helped me grow as a kayaker. I hope as a club we continue to provide this to our members and continue to enjoy our passion for kayaking with a spirit of generosity.

At the risk of being nostalgic and boring, I'd like to share some of my experiences and the support I've received from members of WAKE. Most recently is learning to roll with Reg. He has patiently and steadfastly been teaching Tara, Kathy, and I to roll at the pool. I honestly believe we'll be rolling very soon, and I appreciate the time and energy he is giving us.

I vividly remember my first trip with Roger, John G., John J., and Kathleen to the DNR campsite on Lummi Island. The conditions were more difficult than my skill level, and I was terrified. John J. stayed beside me and coached me across the channel. I'd never met him prior to that day, and I was so grateful for his presence and help with the strokes I needed to cross Hales Passage.

Many of us have encountered challenging conditions on Lake Whatcom. My first day of high winds, Dan rescued me twice, stayed with me, and eventually we beached our boats and walked back to our cars, retrieving our boats later.

I have to smile when I remember a trip to the Gulf Islands with Ted, Dave, and Joy. We had good and bad weather and learned a lot about each other camping in the rain. On our return, we couldn't quite remember the location of our put in. Thankfully, Ted had looked back when we put in, fixing our position with landmarks. Of course, he wouldn't tell us right away, but let us sort through the options for awhile.

This past summer, Ed led a trip to Cypress, which was delightful. Chris, Kathy, and I returned a day early. The conditions in the channel were challenging for Kathy and I. Chris herded us across to Guemes safely and the rest of the paddle back to Anacortes was uneventful.

These aren't remarkable experiences, but I'm sure all of us can remember day paddles and trips when we learned and depended on each other and were thankful we were together.

The club offers trainings by professionals and refers members to professional trip guides. However, as we venture out together, we benefit in so many ways. We learn from each other, and often times our safety depends on our ability to give support when it is necessary. We will have many coaches and supporters throughout our paddling experiences. I believe this is why we join a club and how we grow in the sport. My hope for our club is that we can continue to learn together, support and mentor each other, build friendships and socialize. This is what WAKE has done for me—and I am thankful.

**WAKE presents...Tuesday, February 17th, 2009**

**"Exploring the Northern Cascadia Marine Trail - Without a Trace" Sarah Krueger**

See details on page 3

Bellingham Library

Doors open at 7:00 p.m.

Meeting starts 7:30 p.m.

# Calendar

## **March 17th Meeting - 7:30 PM - Bellingham Library.**

“Exploring the Northern Cascadia Marine Trail - Without a Trace” **Sarah Krueger** Description on page 3

## **March 20th - Eastern Horizons, Exploring the Atlantic Coast by Kayak by Bryan Smith.**

See a trailer and photos here: <http://reelwaterproductions.com/eastern-horizons/> More info on page

## **April 11th and 12th - Paddle Strokes and Rescue Techniques with George Gronseth.**

Two full days of on-the-water instruction with George Gronseth, assisted by Barb Sherrill.

**Venue:** Lake Padden **Requirements:** Drysuits are required. See website for full description.

**Limit:** 10 students, minimum age, 18. **Fee:** \$210 for both days

## **April 21st Meeting - 7:30 PM - Bellingham Library.**

“Ecology of the Salish Sea Nearshore” **Chris Fairbanks** Description on page 3

## **April 25th - Morning workshop - Strokes and Maneuvers with Chris Mitchell**

### **- Afternoon workshop - Rescues and Recoveries with Chris Mitchell**

**Venue:** Lake Padden **Requirements:** Dress for immersion, bring boat and gear, water bottle, and lunch

**Limit:** 10 students per class **Fee:** \$40/each session, \$75 for both sessions See website for full description.

## **April 26th - A Lazy Person's Guide to Efficient Paddling with Chris Mitchell**

**Venue:** Lake Padden **Requirements:** Dress for immersion, bring boat and gear, water bottle, lunch, and pillow in case you want to take a nap. See website for full description.

**Limit:** 10 students **Fee:** \$60

## **May 2nd - Deception Pass Currents Workshop with Chris Mitchell**

**Venue:** Bowman Bay/Deception Pass **Requirements:** Students must have good boat handling and bracing skills and dress for immersion (wetsuit or dry suit). Bring a helmet, change of clothes, lunch, and water bottle.

**Limit:** 5 students **Fee:** \$95 See website for full description.

## **May 3rd - Deception Pass Currents Workshop with Chris Mitchell**

**Venue:** Bowman Bay/Deception Pass **Requirements:** Students must have good boat handling and bracing skills and dress for immersion (wetsuit or dry suit). Bring a helmet, change of clothes, lunch, and water bottle.

**Limit:** 5 students **Fee:** \$95 See website for full description.

## **May 9th - Annual WAKE Demo Day - Buy, sell, swap, and test kayaks and gear.**

**Venue:** Bloedel Donovan Park More info to come

To register for classes, contact WAKE Registrar, [Kathleen@wakekayak.org](mailto:Kathleen@wakekayak.org)

## ***2009 CLASS REGISTRATIONS, RESERVATIONS, REFUNDS & WAITING LISTS***

In the November, 2008 meeting, the WAKE Board approved a revised policy for 2009 Class Registration. Our aim is to cut down on last minute ‘churning’ and ensure that classes pay for themselves.

- \* The one and only way to reserve a place in class is to complete your registration with payment
- \* When a class is filled, no waiting list will be maintained
- \* If you must cancel, it will be your responsibility to find someone to take your place
- \* You may use the WAKE listserv to find a purchaser for your class position
- \* The money exchange is between you, the seller, and your replacement, the buyer
- \* The WAKE Registrar will need to hear from both of you in order to update the class roster
- \* If you are unable to find a buyer, we will thank you for your donation to pay the instructor!

Why? Unless the instructor cancels, we are obliged to make full payment of his/her fee even if ALL the students drop out! The instructors with whom we contract offer the club a special rate. In turn, WAKE makes training available to members either at cost or with a minimal mark up.

Last season, going into the final weeks before classes, we experienced a significant number of cancellations. With the exception of ‘no shows,’ we issued full refunds and started calling people on waiting lists and sending additional notices out on the listserv.

With one exception, people on the waiting lists had made other plans. We invited registrants from other clubs to fill the classes. We hope this change in policy will simplify the registration process, keep the club treasury solvent and make it possible for us to continue to offer our members a truly great deal on professional kayak training services.

## **March 17th Meeting with Sarah Krueger**

### **“Exploring the Northern Cascadia Marine Trail - Without a Trace”**

Puget Sound’s Cascadia Marine Trail is a growing network of 55 campsites designated for people who arrive in human powered water craft. Sarah’s presentation will introduce you to the many Cascadia Marine Trail destinations in Northern Puget Sound and the San Juan Islands. You will learn where to go, what to expect, and how to get involved with the effort to preserve and expand this recreational water trail. Sarah will also share ideas, techniques, and simple tools to lessen your “paddle print” on these sensitive shoreline campsites. Topics will include how to prepare for your camping trip, best practices for managing waste, low-impact campfires and campfire alternatives, strategies for avoiding creature-conflicts, and more.

Sarah Krueger is the Outreach Director at the Washington Water Trails Association. She handles publications, events, and dabbles in water trail planning, stewardship, and advocacy. A Leave No Trace Master Educator, Sarah co-facilitates WWTAs annual Trainer Course and helps coordinate the Sound Education and Action (SEA) Kayaker Program.

## **April 21st Meeting with Chris Fairbanks**

### **“Ecology of the Salish Sea Nearshore”**

Chris’ presentation will describe the physical and biological characteristics of our region’s marine nearshore and the natural processes that maintain the nearshore habitat.

Chris Fairbanks of Fairbanks Environmental Services in Bellingham is a consultant in fisheries, marine, and estuarine sciences. Chris is vice chair of the Whatcom County Marine Resources Committee and is involved in nearshore habitat protection and restoration group that has identified and prioritized sites for restoration projects in Bellingham Bay and Whatcom County. He represents the Marine Resources Committee on the Cherry Point Aquatic Reserve Work Group that is developing a management strategy for the Cherry Point Reach in Whatcom County. Chris has written several Biological Assessments to determine project impacts on fish, wildlife and plants listed under the Endangered Species Act.

### **Help Wanted – Vendor Liaison**

WAKE needs a Vendor Liaison to coordinate and communicate with vendors on an ongoing basis, especially with annual sponsorship and WAKE Demo Day. The position is fun, effortless, and very important. The Vendor Liaison will interact with local vendors and report to the WAKE board. To volunteer contact, please Donna VanderGriend, WAKE President, [donna@wakekayak.org](mailto:donna@wakekayak.org)

### **Another reminder; It is time to Renew Your WAKE Membership for 2009**

To renew your WAKE membership for 2009, please pay your yearly dues (which cover the calendar year) and print out the Membership Application/Liability Release found on our website at [www.wakekayak.com/docs/membership\\_form.pdf](http://www.wakekayak.com/docs/membership_form.pdf). We need everyone to fill out this form (again!) **each year** for liability purposes.

Be sure to select your preferred newsletter delivery option. If you choose email, membership is \$25 per household. If you choose to have your newsletter delivered by surface mail, membership is \$30 per household. This covers our mailing and printing costs. Also, please have **both** people sign the form if you’re renewing as a household.

Membership forms will be available and can be filled out at WAKE’s monthly meeting, where both cash and checks can be accepted. Or, if you’d like to renew by mail, please send your check (made out to WAKE) **and the form** to: WAKE, P.O. Box 1952, Bellingham, WA 98227.

In **April** of each year, we purge last year’s membership roster and only retain those who have signed up for the current year. Don’t risk being dropped! Please renew today.



From the award winning filmmakers that brought you Pacific Horizons comes another inspirational and entertaining adventure sea kayaking film.



“Over the course of 2008, Bryan Smith and Lise-Anne Beyries produced the first ever adventure sea kayaking film comprehensively exploring North America’s eastern sea board. Documenting the entire length of the East Coast from Florida to Newfoundland, Eastern Horizons aims to blend the rich history and culture of the Atlantic with world class sea kayakers, idyllic destinations, incredible wildlife and compelling stories of people whose lives are deeply connected to the Atlantic Ocean. From paddling the wildlife rich swamps and mangroves of the Carolinas to the icebergs of Newfoundland; from surfing the “zipper” at Tybee Island, Georgia to playing in the tidal flows around Nova Scotia’s Bay of Fundy; and from capturing the iconic urban landscapes of New York City to the remote fishing villages of Quebec’s north shore, Eastern Horizons will inspire paddlers and non-paddlers alike to get out and explore the ocean!”

Join WAKE for the Bellingham premier of Eastern Horizons

March 20 at 7:00 PM. Doors open at 6:00PM

Melody Hall


4071 Home Rd., Bellingham, WA, 98226

contact Dawn Groves email: dawn@wakekayak.org

\$5 per ticket

# Lost in the Delta


by John Groves



Long-time WAKE members Dan Moos and Pat Peacock found conditions right on Saturday, Feb. 7, for a paddlearound Ika Island, and invited a few friends. Their plan called for a late morning launch, riding the flood tide to Goat Island, a brief exploration of the old gun emplacements, then rounding Ika Island over areas that are usually mud flats, into the delta, then back to the Swinomish Channel through the famous “Hole in the Wall.” The friends invited friends and other friends invited themselves, until Dan and Pat were wrangling a herd of 18 paddlers, including Dean and Calista Scott, Dave Harris and Mary Matyas, Les Rounds, John Janney, Merv Davies, Rich Hubbard, Alison Graham, Rem Smith, John Calvin, Dave Huss, Sonya Bailey, John Groves, Kathleen Murphy, and Lisa Gould. Riding herd on these folks was no hard chore, since all are experienced paddlers, mostly WAKE or Hole in the Wall members, and many, like Kathleen, Rem, John Groves, and the Scotts, are switch-hitters.

The group assembled about 11 AM at Shelter Bay Marina, guests of Dean and Calista Scott. The weather was sunny, cool, with very light wind, and no waves. All the boats were plowing the brine by 11:30, and after succinct instructions by Dan, moved in a tight formation down the Swinomish Channel. The distance to Goat Island, the first stop on the adventure, was two and a half miles away, on flat water. The paddlers hauled out on a narrow strip of beach at 12:15 and took a 45-minute lunch break. Timing was important since the tide waits for no sandwich. Most folks collected their comestibles and climbed a steep trail to the fortifications at Fort Whitman. Here they found a ghostly collection of concrete blockhouses, massive walls, and empty bunkers that once housed huge guns, now all silent, mossy, and overgrown, like Mayan temple ruins. The fort provides a good place for a quick bite and a great view of the islands.

Still on schedule, the group rounded Goat Island by 1:15, and then crossed the mile-and-a-half to Ika Island. The south side of Ika is seldom seen close-up due to extensive shallow mud flats and duck hunters. But hunting season was over, and Dan and Pat had the group crossing the shallows at the time of deepest water. Ika Island is a spectacular and forbidding place, with massive 100-foot-high sheer rock walls rising abruptly out of the sea. Eagles were plentiful, and a big coyote was seen near the shore, ambling unhurriedly up a slope. On the western side of the island, usually high and dry, the kayaks turned into the Skagit River Delta. The leadership concluded that the water was still deep enough to cross the delta and reach the entry to the Swinomish Channel.



The Skagit Delta is a mile-wide expanse of mud flats, with scattered clumps of sea grass and head-high cattails, now under about a foot of water. Many in the group had paddled in the delta before, and were knowledgeable enough to ignore Gene Davis’s warning: “Never get caught in the Delta when the tide is going out.” Several scouts, including Dean and Pat, went ahead of the group searching for a passage through the labyrinth of rushes and grass. The water began to seem alarmingly low. Time and again Pat and Dean would find a passage, only to run aground or see the pathway abruptly end. Meanwhile the rest of the group were finding themselves doing a lot of pelvic thrusting and knuckle walking, with no promise of a happy outcome. Pat was at last forced to climb out and trudge along through ankle-deep water, pulling her boat by the towline. She tried to locate a channel to the river, but instead found deep water when she sunk to her neck in a hole. Pat was heard to utter, “Always be careful who you follow.” It was decided to go back the way we came. Narrowly beating the ebb tide, the group escaped from the delta and headed back around Ika Island. It was here that several paddlers spotted a large fish leaping from the water. There was no certainty what kind of fish it was, only that it was really big.

The group swiftly crossed the mile-wide inlet to the breakwater that guards the Swinomish Channel. From a kayak the breakwater looks like a mile-long rock wall. They were headed for the legendary “Hole in the Wall,” an opening a few yards wide, also called the fish hole, and only accessible at high water. It is notoriously hard to find, but many had been there before and guided the others. The group reassembled in Swinomish Channel and moved smartly back to the marina, hauling out at 3:45. Kayaks were quickly loaded and most of the group met for a traditional debriefing at the La Conner Brewery. The adventures of the day were dissected and the mysterious fish went from salmon to sturgeon to orca. Then, after spending four hours together in kayaks and an hour and a half in the bar, the group continued talking for fifteen minutes on the sidewalk. As a bonding agent, only Solarez beats kayaking.