



# wake

whatcom association of kayak enthusiasts ▲ www.wakekayak.org ▲ June 2007 ▲ Vol. 26 Issue 6



## President's Message

by Dawn Groves



It's no secret that I love kayaks and paddling, but today I'm reflecting on something else. Racing.

I was a last-minute replacement for the kayak leg of the Ski to Sea event. My team, the Flutter-Bys (really) was group of delightful women who've done the Ski to Sea recreationally for the last nine years. They needed a female kayaker who didn't care about placement. Since nobody was answering the call, I thought, oh, what the hell. I haven't been paddling much yet; I'm untrained so I can't possibly care about finishing time.

A lot of folks don't do races. They don't like the competition and the pressure to perform. I totally get that. But an event such as the Ski to Sea is more than a race; it's a spectacle and a training opportunity. There are plenty of spots for the first-timers, good sports, also-rans, and least-likelysts. For seven days, I worked it. I refined my stroke, trained in chop, and spent quality time in the bay.

I could lie and say that I was in it for the pleasure of participation but once I put in, there was no way to take it easy in 12 to 15 knot winds. The mid-bay swells were steep and frothy. I rode up and over the crests, slapping down hard. I had to remind myself to keep my eyes open as the next wave crashed over the bow and splashed my face. Downwind my lack of skill really started to show. I heard rumbling behind me. Quartering waves and wind pushed me the wrong direction. I wallowed and wind-milled my way toward the Herald building, ending up way left of the next buoy, losing tons of time.

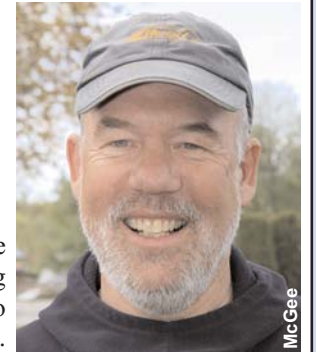
Along Boulevard Park I finally found my stride. I spotted a red Manitou and passed it Dan biked the shoreline, shouting encouragement. I zeroed in on a boat in front of me, observed their paddling condition and pounded toward them. I passed some Neckys and a few bathtubs I didn't recognize.

*continued on p. 5*

WAKE presents ...

## Chris Mitchell on Kayak Surfing at the June 19th meeting

Chris Mitchell is a trainer of trainers and longtime WAKE member. Owner of Secondwind Sports in Long Beach, Wash., Chris makes regular pilgrimages to Bellingham to train WAKEsters and paddle the area. He'll be talking about kayak surfing, a topic he specializes in coaching. Chris is a delightful speaker with fabulous skills, training, and experience. You won't want to miss this last meeting before the summer break!



McGee

**Bellingham Library ♦ Doors open at 7p.m. ♦ Meeting starts 7:30 p.m.**



Dave Harris

## Hobuck Beach Memories

by John Groves

Wednesday, June 6

If Whatcom County is beautiful, the Olympic Peninsula is divine. Got to Hobuck Beach about 4 p.m. A spacious campground. You can park and camp anywhere there's room. Weather was cloudy, a bit cold, with a brisk wind from the west. Sharon Lindsay and Mac Carter were already there. We had come to attend Chris Mitchell's famous kayak surfing class.

As we set up camp more kayak-bearing vehicles rolled in, bringing Reg Lake, Dawn Groves, Dan Barrett, Kathy McGee, Norm Nielsen, and John Calvin with his

“boys.” Chris Mitchell soon arrived in his van towing a five-surf-kayak trailer. Chris is a popular instructor and a long-time WAKE member. His classes fill up quick. Rain was starting and tarps sprang up like mushrooms. We were soon sitting around a campfire in lawn chairs, swapping lies and talking about the class. Weather reports weren't favorable, but as Chris said, nobody expects Hobuck Beach to be anything but rainy and windy. “Still plenty of opportunities for fun out there,” he said, pointing due west.

*continued on p. 2*

**Thursday,  
June 7**

The camp was up by 7:30 a.m. The weather seemed to be improving. We met about 9:30 under Chris's shelter, where he initiated us into the secrets of handling a sea kayak in surf. The lecture continued in the actual surf, where



Chris explained the behavior of waves while the real things slapped and crashed around us: "If it's green, it ain't mean. And white, it's still all right. But if it dumps on your head, you'll wish you were dead." Folks in the know variously described this day's surf as dinky, poor, terrible, lousy, or worthless. But to this beginner, the waves looked like tsunamis.

The class practiced paddling the sea boats out to the impact zone and back, riding the waves whenever possible. Controlling the boat in surf isn't easy, but it can be done. Chris told us to lean into the breaking wave and brace on it, and by George! It works! Quoth John Calvin, "Like leaning on a counter." But just as one acquires a little confidence, one suddenly unexpectedly gets dumped. We quit about 4 p.m., cold, wet, tired, hungry—and feeling great! There was a fun dinner party that evening at a restaurant in Neah Bay. We celebrated Sharon's birthday, toasting her with milk, juice, or diet Pepsi, since alcohol isn't sold on the reservation.

**Friday June 8**

Chris suggested that we paddle out of Neah Bay to explore the adjacent shorelines, with their rock gardens, caves, and surf beaches. The weather was much improved, with mild wind and occasional sunshine. We were on the water about 11 a.m. It was the first time some of us had kayaked in the open ocean. The big Pacific swells felt like riding up and down in an elevator. The group passed a Stellar sea lion colony and was menaced by a huge bull that bellowed at us, then leaped into the water to make his point. Chris quickly herded us away. "Don't look at him," he yelled. "Don't give him both eyes." That tactic worked, and soon afterward we saw

a gray whale spouting and breaking the surface as it fed. Just like in the movies.

We were led in and out of passages between rocks, using the swells to carry us over jagged obstructions. At lunchtime Chris devised a scenario to practice landing through surf at night. The most experienced paddler (Chris) landed first, then guided the others in. After lunch the procedure was reversed. Then the group headed for Seal Rock, a spectacular monolith surrounded by boulders with surf breaking on them. How close can you go? At one place the waves were crashing up a slope of rocks in a great reverse waterfall, then pouring back. Chris let a breaking wave carry him backwards up the slope, then rode elegantly down the white cataract, an example of supreme skill, long experience, and mucho cajones.

When we got back, camp was transformed. The rest of the WAKE contingent had arrived. Cars were parked everywhere. Empty spaces were filled by tents and lean-to's. The newcomers included Les and Kathy Rounds, Dave Harris and Mary Matyas, Kristi Hug, Dave and Julie Culver, Donna VanderGriend, Tom and Stacey Fawell, Norm Howard, Jon Denham, and Jim Helmich. The group was joined by several friendly camp neighbors, including kayak instructors Steven Lowe and his partner, Sarah Miller, from Seattle, and Ray Spencer and Susan Lucas, visiting from the Midwest. Sociability was king. At one point twenty people were crowded around the fire, schmoozing and dodging the smoke. One could choose from an opulent smorg of jokes, surf stories, or gossip. I laughed so much I started wheezing. A comment by Reg sticks in my mind: "If you can't spot the clown of the group, it's probably you."

**Saturday, June 9**

Occasional rain and cold southwest wind. Today was our introduction to the sit-on surf kayak. Seemed more sled than boat. Chris divided us into four teams, two paddlers to each kayak. The morning session was spent getting familiar with the boat. Some took to it right away and were riding moderate soup waves almost on the first try. Some spent a lot of time rolling and tumbling under the boat. But by afternoon everybody had learned how to paddle through surf and to avoid being wiped out by broaching waves. We were sore but sorry to stop. Another campfire fun-fest that night, a thousand more laughs as we huddled together like penguins against the biting wind. As I've observed on other WAKE trips, the worse the weather, the higher the spirits.

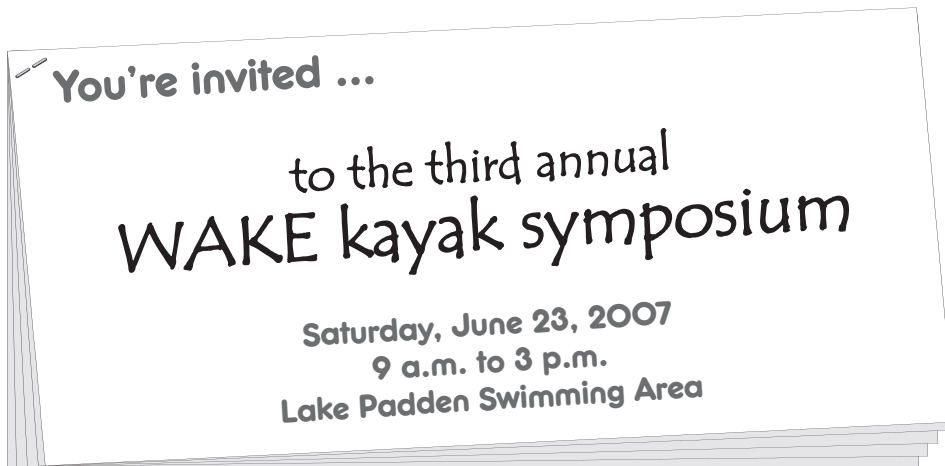


**Sunday, June 10**

Rained all night, a cold wet windy morning. Chris turned the weather into a lesson, showing how to use the direction of the wind to locate the front. He predicted that the weather would soon improve, and so it did. We divided into teams once again and met on the beach. I saw other WAKE folks not in the class, including Dave, Reg, Kristy, and Les, expertly paddling their kayaks into the waves. Chris's class took up where we left off, plowing through foam and waiting for a big one. As we gained confidence, we were able to catch bigger waves and get longer rides. What a thrill, to shoot across the water like a rocket. But as the time wore on, it became harder and harder to paddle back through the soup, and even harder to stay upright on the wave. If Chris and Mother Nature hadn't intervened, I'd be out there still.

The encampment started to break up after lunch. Chris's class stayed for several more hours of surfing. Then it was over.

That night, drifting to sleep, I still felt the rolling swells and rode once again up the cresting waves. This kayaker has left the beach, but the beach will never leave the kayaker.



## WAKE Sea Kayak Symposium

The Third Annual WAKE Lake Padden Symposium is almost here! This special event is a potluck and paddling seminar. It is free to WAKE members—non-members may join WAKE on the day of the event.

The symposium is set up as two two-hour sessions, one in the morning and the other in the afternoon. Participants may choose from a selection of classes and are asked to remain in the same class for the duration of each session.

### Schedule for the day:

- 8:30 a.m. — Arrive, get into gear, boats down to lake
- 9:00 a.m. — Instructors describe their classes; students select a class
- 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. — Morning session
- 11:30 to 1 p.m. — Potluck lunch
- 1 to 3 p.m.— Afternoon session

### Classes offered:

- Rescue and Recovery:** Pat Peacock and Dan Moos
- ACA Quickstart course, Intro to Kayaking\*\*:** Sharon Lindsay
- Forward Stroke (morning) and Advanced Strokes (afternoon):** Chris Mitchell
- Bracing and Edging:** Dave Harris

### Support instructors

Gene Davis, Reg Lake, Dave Peebles, and other advanced kayakers will be providing support. Larger classes may be divided into smaller groups with these support instructors as necessary.

### Things to bring

Please bring a wonderful potluck item to share at lunch (WAKE will supply beverages, cups, plates, and utensils). Bring your own kayak and gear. Remember to dress for the weather and for immersion!

### For more information

Contact Tara ([tara@wakekayak.org](mailto:tara@wakekayak.org)) to sign up and to receive more information.

### Intro to Kayaking\*\*

Sharon Lindsay's Intro to Kayaking class is an approximate four hour introduction to paddling based on the American Canoe Association's (ACA) "Quickstart Your Kayak" program. Basic information will include dressing to paddle safely, potential hazards, and simple rescues. An introduction to paddle strokes will be presented and practiced.

The goal is to permit the participants to maneuver their kayaks safely and comfortably. Oh yes, and have fun while doing it. You will be getting wet so dress appropriately. Participants will be invited to join Sharon's "Splash and Thrash" practice sessions that will be offered later in the season.

## In Search of the Forward Stroke by Donna VanderGriend

All aspiring paddlers soon learn of the Bellingham gurus in kayaking education. For me, Greg Dutton, is the local guru of the forward stroke. He was at the top of my list for instruction. I finally had the good fortune of meeting him at WAKE Demo Day and asked him to contact me if a class formed this summer. It happened—I had my first class in May with four other WAKERS, and we'll be scheduling our second class soon.

I have fantasies about competitive paddling, however realistically, my primary goal is to become a strong, efficient paddler with the stamina to do distance and extreme conditions. Greg is an excellent instructor and I highly recommend him. He uses a good balance of demonstration, dry land practice, on-water practice, on-water feedback, and video analysis. I found it very beneficial to break the stroke into parts and practice on land first, then on the water with feedback from him and finally view yourself on video. The group also benefited from viewing each other on video. We were able to identify what we were doing correctly and what we needed to modify.

Look for me when we next paddle, I'll be the one out front with that amazing forward stroke!



## Paddle Faster Clinics by Greg Dutton

Learn to paddle your kayak faster, get in shape, and connect with other paddlers. My Paddle Faster Clinics include individual and small group coaching, workout sessions, race strategies and video analysis that focus on enhancing the technique, power and efficiency of your forward stroke. Participants must provide their own equipment.

By participating in a Paddle Faster Clinic, you will learn how to prevent injury, increase endurance and efficiency, and become a competent paddler who uses proper technique and strategies to meet all of kayaking's challenges.

For more info on upcoming clinics, contact me at 360/714-0617.



## Ski to Sea



Gene Davis

### WAKE at Ski to Sea

by John Groves

Ski to Sea Day, Sunday, May 27, 2007, dawned cool and overcast, with a five-knot southwest wind. By 11 a.m. the knoll at Zuanich Park wore what appeared to be a solid acre of kayakers. Of the 400 competitors, 15 were WAKE members, including Brandon and Heather Nelson, Roger Lamb, Dawn Groves, John Calvin, Sid Williams, Dave Peebles, Ed Lutz, Alison Graham, Cecile Pendleton, Rob Bennett, Tom Borst, Mike Massey, John Groves, and Richard Cochinos.

The competition rules were read aloud at noon by a race official. The list of rules was long and complex, covering many eventualities. There were about 300 competitors gathered around the race information building, about a hundred others listening at remote speakers. The kayakers had almost nothing in common but numbers pinned to their PFDs. All ages, all sexes, all levels of fitness were represented, equipped with every known kind of gear, proving once again there is no such thing as an average kayaker.

Competitors settled in beside their boats. For some it would be a 3-hour wait. Paddlers lounged in camp chairs or had picnics with their crews. Some snoozed. Long lines formed at the porta-potties. There were many reunions of old paddling pals, and a popular topic was the weather. Wind was picking up, now about 10 knots. Waves were about a foot and a half but not cresting. At last the first number was announced. The park became electrified. Applause and cheers greeted the first bikers to arrive and the first kayakers to depart. The kayak leg was on.

One by one the boats on the knoll were carried off and other boats hauled up, jockeying for positions nearer to the starting line. Many paddlers were in cell-phone

contact with team members and followed their progress throughout the day. All listened intently to the numbers being announced over the loudspeakers, first a few, then ever more and more, a gathering rainstorm of numbers. Occasionally they would hear a number followed by, "Where are you? Your biker is waiting for you!"

The individual paddler's race experience began at the hand-off gate, where the racers huddled in a tense group, waiting for their mountain bikers. When the biker arrived, exuding exhaustion, the wristband had to be exchanged. Not so easy to do. The buckle made it difficult to remove.



Gene Davis

The paddlers then had to swipe the wristband over a sensor plate to record the biker's time. Assisted by their crews, paddlers hauled their kayakers to the dock. Volunteers steadied the boats as the paddlers got in and shoved off. For the next five miles they would be on their own.

The kayakers turned at the end of the jetty and headed southwest into a 10-to-15 knot headwind. This stretch was famous for taking the steam out of overeager competitors. It was a hard pull, powering past slower boats, occasionally being left in the wake of faster ones. At the outfall buoy,

about a mile and a half from the start, the kayakers made a sharp left turn and headed back. Now the paddlers had the wind and waves quartering from the stern. Surfing skill was a great advantage in this stretch, which was about a mile. The course made a right turn at Marker One and followed the shoreline past Boulevard Park, where spectators watched from the pier. Weathercocking became a challenge in this stretch, although the wind diminished a bit as the afternoon wore on. The kayakers turned once more near the dry dock, and then sprinted the final distance to the finish line. Seen from a kayak, the beach seemed to be made of solid people. Their shouting was like the roar of distant surf. At last each kayaker grounded on the beach, struggled out of the boat, and ran as best he or she could, past cheering team-mates, to finish by clanging the famous bell.

Finish times by WAKE members were: Brandon Nelson, 00:45:00.9; Heather Nelson, 00:49:34.9 (first woman kayaker to finish); Roger Lamb, 01:00:07.9; Rob Bennett, 01:07:58.2; John Calvin, 01:09:31.6; Sid Williams, 01:10:49.9; Tom Borst, 01:14:41.0; Mike Massey, 01:15:13.4; Dave Peebles, 01:17:43.6; Allison Graham, 01:18:12.0; Ed Lutz, 01:18:38.0; John Groves, 01:22:51.2; Dawn Groves, 01:33:46.7, Cecile Pendleton, 02:11:02.2.

By 7 p.m. the 2007 Ski to Sea was history, and as always, everybody was a winner!

### Community Service

by Kathy McGee

I recently bought a new boat. In case you're one of the two people on the planet who hasn't heard, I'm the ultra-happy paddler of a Necky Chatham 17. (Even people in Japan know, because I almost drifted there last weekend from Hobuck Beach. But that's another story for another time.)

I'm especially proud because I bought my boat locally. Independent retailers have a tough time surviving with intense competition from Internet stores and big box chains. Sure, you might be able to get a product a bit cheaper, but they can't offer the fabulous customer service that local stores do.

I sat in every boat that Johnson Outdoors carries, then I went back and sat in them again. I drove the sales manager, Dave Johnson, crazy with my endless questions, all of which he had to repeat at least twice. And I got to test a boat overnight before I bought it. Try doing that with an online store.

Bellingham is a fabulous community. Retailers are here to support us, so let's support them. Buy local. You'll be glad you did.

## President's Message *continued from p. 1*

The paddlers were clearly spent and I was out for blood. My team stood on the finish line, screaming. I gave it everything I had, passed a yellow boat on the right, and slid into the finish. The bell was rung. The race was over.

Being one of the last boats out (Dan said only three kayaks launched after me) is a unique position. There's nothing to lose and nowhere to go but up. Next year I'll cut ten minutes off my time easy. Watch out bathtubs. I'm gonna get you.

**Want up-to-date info?  
Go to [www.wakekayak.org](http://www.wakekayak.org) for  
the latest news and events.**

Remember, no meetings or newsletter in July and August. The September 18th meeting will feature Reg Lake—Reg will also be featured as the kayaker of the month in the September newsletter.

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## Stop The Invasion!

by Sharon Lindsay

English Ivy is threatening Chuckanut Island—and you are needed to help control this noxious weed.

On Saturday, July 14th, we will launch from Marine Park at 10:00a.m. and paddle to Chuckanut Island for English Ivy gathering and picnicking (Bring your own food and goodies to share).

Besides being great fun, this is a marvelous community service project, and we need your help. Unique prizes have been donated and will be awarded to ivy gatherers for various categories yet to be determined (open to suggestions).

Using kayaks to gather English Ivy will be a new venture for WAKE, and we look forward to your participation.

Besides food, please bring gardening gloves and a trash bag.

For more information, please contact me at [sharon@wakekayak.org](mailto:sharon@wakekayak.org)



### WAKE Decals

WAKE decals are here! The 3-inch diameter club decals are self-adhesive and perfect for displaying on your car windshield or boat.

The logo was designed by local artist, Ellen Harwick, and printed by Signs By Tomorrow. Each household will receive two decals free; additional decals are available for purchase for \$2 each.

Pick up your decals at the club meeting.

### Round 'em up!

WAKE DVDs come home  
by Sharon Lindsay

The club librarian (me) is rounding up all of the club's DVD's for the summer. This is necessary so that we can keep track of them as they tend to wander off without proper supervision and care.

If you've borrowed any DVDs, please bring them to the next meeting. I'll continue to lend them out on an individual basis.

### 2007 WAKE Board Members

Dawn Groves	President	<a href="mailto:dawn@wakekayak.org">dawn@wakekayak.org</a>
Ted Ullman	Vice President, Speakers/Training	<a href="mailto:ted@wakekayak.org">ted@wakekayak.org</a>
Roger Lamb	Vice President, Trip Coordinator	<a href="mailto:roger@wakekayak.org">roger@wakekayak.org</a>
Ed Alm	Membership	<a href="mailto:ed@wakekayak.org">ed@wakekayak.org</a>
Donna VanderGriend	New Member Liaison	<a href="mailto:donna@wakekayak.org">donna@wakekayak.org</a>
Tara McDonald	Treasurer	<a href="mailto:tara@wakekayak.org">tara@wakekayak.org</a>
Lisa Wallis	Lummi DNR Campsite Liaison	<a href="mailto:lisa@wakekayak.org">lisa@wakekayak.org</a>
Dan Barrett	Webmaster	<a href="mailto:dan@wakekayak.org">dan@wakekayak.org</a>
Kathy McGee	Newsletter Editor	<a href="mailto:kathy@wakekayak.org">kathy@wakekayak.org</a>
Sharon Lindsay	Librarian	<a href="mailto:sharon@wakekayak.org">sharon@wakekayak.org</a>

## Coming Up ...

**Saturday, June 23rd**  
WAKE's 3rd Annual Sea Kayak Symposium

**Sunday, July 1**  
Conversion Clinic with Derek Hutchinson and Wayne Horodowich (clinic full)

**Saturday, July 7**  
Scenarios Training at Marine Park with Chris Mitchell

**Sunday, July 8**  
Currents class at Deception Pass with Chris Mitchell (class full)

**Saturday, July 14**  
Stop the English Ivy invasion with Sharon Lindsay—provide a valuable community service and have fun paddling, too.

**Saturday, July 14**  
Edging Beyond the Cockpit with Wayne Horodowich (class full)

**Saturday, July 14 and Sunday, July 15**  
Lummi Island DNR—overnight camping trip with Roger Lamb, [rlamb@pacbell.net](mailto:rlamb@pacbell.net).

**Any day of the week ...** if you want to paddle, post your date/time on the listserv and see who shows up. Don't give up—it takes a bit of time and effort to develop a paddling posse—but it will happen!

For more info, go to [www.wakekayak.org](http://www.wakekayak.org)

### Whitewater Instruction

Reg Lake and Greg Dutton are offering a series of six whitewater kayak classes this summer. Cost is \$400 total—an extremely good deal for two such skilled instructors.

The dates are July 1, July 7-8, July 14-15, and August 11, plus some evenings to work on skills of choice such as rolling. Student/instructor ratio is 4:1. There are only a couple of slots still open, so if you're interested, email Reg at [reglake@hotmail.com](mailto:reglake@hotmail.com) soon!