

West Michigan Coastal Kayaker



The Newsletter of the
West Michigan
Coastal Kayaker's Association

March-April 2004

Volume 9

Number 2

Exploring the Pack Ice... Spring is just around the corner

By Valerie Dillon

It was just too cool to pass up – for the curious and want to be arctic explorers. Pack ice drifted into the bay overnight. By the afternoon, the bay, a mirror of sea and crystals, beckoned us to come and visit. It was enchanting and something to be cautious about. We are glad we went then because the next day it was another world.

Cold is relative. The sea water is a little below 32F. Recent air temps ranged from -10F to 20F. If this was Lake Michigan we would not be able to kayak! Today the air temp rose to 30F and maybe a few degrees more.

According to locals, this is the first time in about twenty years that *Baie Placide Vigneau* didn't freeze solid. However, we still got the effect of "spring break up" ... read on and *enjoy the views of the spring day here in Minganie (Quebec)*. Winter returned by the weekend, depositing 25 cm of new white snow while gale winds drove waves, reconfiguring the shore.

11March2004 - This was one of the few times Douglas, Andrew and I were able to paddle as a group so I brought along my camera. From what I could see, some of the ice rafts were 3-4 feet thick (and I understand further out they were more than 6ft thick). Most of the ragged edges we passed by were less than 2 ft thick. A couple of small sections grounded on the off-shore sand bar then later refloated and circulated around the bay for a few days. This ice was not the regular shore ice or bay ice. It came from the break up of the pack ice in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. We had a warm spell and just the right conditions of wind and tide to move some of the ice into

the open bay. There were even little fresh water lenses on the ice. Hundreds of birds took advantage of the ice rafts and melting pools. I heard that the baby harp seal are now taking to the water. I watched gray seals hauled out onto the ice to bask in the sun.

It was interesting maneuvering through the maze of leads and testing the various states of freezing conditions. We noticed snow sculptures on the ice floes. Upon closer look, it was evident that pushing forces had plowed and sheared sections of ice sheets forming pressure ridges. Healed fracture lines were also present. Some snowy ice seemed to glow a pale blue, just like the

Inside this issue:

Exploring the Pack Ice.....	p. 1
Symposium Update	p. 2
View from the Bay	p. 2
ACA Dues Increase	p. 2
Help Needed.....	p. 2
Membership Info.....	p. 3
Officer/Contact Information	p. 3
Kayak for Light 2004.....	p. 3
Submission Information.....	p. 3
Event Calendar.....	p. 4
Classifieds	p. 4

ice along Lake Michigan. As the sun set, a rosy light reflected off the smooth surfaces. Sometimes it was difficult to discern the new freezing water from the solid ice. Mosaic of crystals which had melted and recrystallized into larger crystals marked leads that had closed. We passed through what the locals refer to as "maugan". That molasses like ice sludge is common when

(Continued on page 4)



Andrew Coutts scoots across the pack ice.

Photo by Valerie Dillon

15th Annual Symposium Update

This years symposium is in it's final stages of planning. Once again it's at Camp Pendaluan over Memorial Day weekend (May 28-31).

This year our symposium guest speaker will be 2003 Greenland Competition Gold Medal Winner, Mark Molina. Mark will be instructing and giving a slide presentation on his visit to Nuuk to compete in the Greenland kayaking skills and racing events.

Pricing for the event has also been adjusted to be more family-friendly.

New features to this year's event are classes for recreational kayaks and Live Entertainment from Betsy Baye and the Groove Engine.

The Recreational kayak classes will focus on safety, boat fit, seat positioning, enter-

ing & exiting, strokes, capsize and recovery. Great skills to have for those just starting out in a new boat.

The Groove Engine specializes in classic and modern rhythm and blues, with a little rock-n-roll.

As of the printing of this newsletter there was still plenty of space available for adults and kids alike. If you know of anyone who is new to the sport, please let them know about this event!!

If you would like more information on this year's event, contact any of the officers listed on the Page 3, or surf the club's web-site at:

www.wmcka.org

Help Needed

The process of compiling, printing and mailing the WMCKA newsletter has always been a large undertaking. In years past we have tried several methods of getting the newsletter from the printer's to the Postal Service. The least costly of these methods uses volunteers to collate, fold, staple, label, stamp and mail each newsletter.

We usually overrun someone's house in the Grand Rapids area for an evening and combine the task with the telling of tall tales and/or consuming really good food & beverages.

If you would like to help out in this effort please contact me, or any of the board members listed on Page 3.

The View from the Bay

By
Al
Anderson

The start of another paddling season is upon us and I was delighted to discover that, in spite of the inevitable winter weight gain, my rubber gear still fits. Betz and I celebrated her birthday with a paddle on one of the nearby inland lakes. Some of the lakes here in the Frozen North still have a scum of ice/slush to contend with, but they're clearing up rapidly. The snowy winter has actually raised the level of Lake Michigan a few inches, but it's still far below the 'norm'.



do it voluntarily, without being compelled by yet another law. This issue comes and goes every few years, but it seems to be gaining legs because it clearly would save lives at a minimum administrative cost. I still occasionally see ads or articles (even in the paddlesport magazines) illustrated with shots of kayakers and canoeists paddling sans PFD's, so I know the industry could certainly do a better job of promoting their use.

We're looking forward to the Chili Con-



fluence. Of course, Betz and I have to work with the band that weekend, but we will at least be able to day paddle with all our WMCKA friends. Speaking of the band, Groove Engine will be entertaining at the Symposium this year. We've been doing this for the Frankfort Paddling Weekend and Twinkie Conflagration for a couple years and it's been great fun. Speaking of which, the "Twinkie" is scheduled for July 30-August 1 this year.

See you at the Confluence!

A note of interest....The Coast Guard is tossing around the idea of mandatory PFD wear again. A recent study has shown that the single most important factor in drownings in small boat accidents is life jacket use. Even the dreaded jet ski has an impressively low fatality rate per incident because of 90% compliance with the mandatory PFD rules. I have mixed feelings about the mandatory PFD wearing law. I believe every paddler should be wearing one, always. I also believe that we ought to be able to convince authorities we can

ACA Dues Increase

We'd heard the rumblings last year and got the official word in January. The ACA has raised their Paddle America membership dues to offset increased costs over the past several years.

Since WMCKA actually loses money on it's memberships, it's necessary to pass this cost onto it's membership by increasing the Dual ACA/WMCKA memberships accordingly.

The new Dual ACA/WMCKA individual membership is \$30.00 and a Dual ACA/WMCKA Family membership is now \$35.00.

5th Annual Kayak for Light

From
Anne
Keith

Some of our members are already gearing up in anticipation for our 5th Annual Kayak for Light event, to be held on Saturday, July 10, 2004, from 10 am to 4 pm. For the second year in a row, this event will occur at Ramona Park in Portage, Michigan, and will be co-sponsored by WMCKA and Lee's Fun and Adventure Store, Portage, Michigan. WMCKA will provide lunch for all participants, guides and volunteers.

For those of you unfamiliar with Kayak for Light, this is an event where sighted paddlers act as guides for blind or sight-challenged folks, and give them the opportunity to experience the thrill of propelling a kayak through the water first-hand. Volunteers do not have to be expert kayakers to act as guides; they only need to be willing to spend part of a day helping others. Some jobs besides guiding include safety patrol, lunch preparation, and general shore duty. Besides volunteers, we also need kayakers,

especially large-volume and recreational boats. Lee's will be bringing some kayaks, PFDs and paddles, but we can always use more of them. If anyone has a double kayak to lend, that, too, would be appreciated.

Interested volunteers or people with questions may phone Bill or Anne Keith at 231-779-4349, or email us at:

elfman@netonecom.net



Lori Stegmier guides a participant during the 2000 Kayak for Light

Photo by Karl Geisel

SUBMISSIONS

Articles, photos, trip reports, announcements for trips or any other materials relating to kayaking or the environment are welcome for submission. Electronic media is preferred (plain text, or MS Word format please). Materials are subject to editing.

karl.geisel@wmcka.org

WMCKA Board of Directors:

Title	Name	Phone	Email
President	Bob Burmania	(616) 676-1591	rburmania@netpenny.net
Vice Pres.	Steven Adsmund	(231) 924-3719	adsmund@comcast.net
Secretary	Trish Harrington	(616) 459-5429	trish_h@comcast.net
Treasurer	Jon Klatt	(616) 956-6125	kayakklatt@worldnet.att.net
At Large 1	John Van Wyk	(616) 669-1565	jjvw@earthlink.net
At Large 2	Keith Wikle	(269) 833-2164	kjwikle@turtleneck.net
At Large 3	Fred McConkey	(616) 396-5036	fmconkey@macatawa.com

WMCKA Non Board Positions:

Symp Co-Chair	Lynn Dominguez	(517) 669-1565	dominla@cmich.edu
Symp Co-Chair	Laurie Levknecht	(616)123-1234	kayaklaurie@aol.com
Web Guy	Keith Wikle	(269) 833-2164	kjwikle@turtleneck.net
Newsletter	Karl Geisel	(616) 452-3239	karl.geisel@wmcka.org

Visit WMCKA On-line at:
www.wmcka.org

Photo Contest!
Message Board
Event Calendar

Message Boards
Club Information
Links

WMCKA Membership Form

- Address change only
- New Member
- Renewal

Select a Membership option:

- WMCKA Individual (\$10/yr)
- WMCKA & ACA Individual (\$30/yr)
- WMCKA & ACA Family (\$35/yr)
(Dual WMCKA/ACA Memberships
Include 1 year of Paddler Magazine)

Please make checks payable to WMCKA.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

I would like my name, phone # and e-mail address included in the membership directory.

Mail To: WMCKA
c/o Karl Geisel
1900 Clearbrook SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49508

A word about WMCKA events

These events are gatherings of paddlers who share an interest in kayaking and spending social time together. They are open to all interested individuals of any (or no) skill level. There are no leaders, lifeguards, or anyone else responsible the safety of those who choose to participate. Everyone is responsible for his/her own safety and is expected to use common sense and good judgement both on and off the water. Neither WMCKA nor any of its individual members can be responsible for the safety of those attending club events.

Event Calendar

April 30-May 2
Chili Confluence
Ludington State Park

May 25-28
WMCKA Symposium
Camp Pandaluan (Muskegon)

July 10th
5th Annual Kayak for Light
Ramona Park
Portage, MI

July 30-August 1
WMCKA Twinkie Conflagration
Smith/Anderson Compound (Frankfort,
MI)

September 17-19
Paddle with the Salmon
Platte River Campground
(Sleeping Bear Dunes NL)

Classified Ads

Non-commercial "For Sale" and "Wanted" ads are available for WMCKA members and other area clubs. Each ad will appear for two issues unless the individual placing the ad notifies the editor otherwise. Ads should be submitted in electronic format to the editor at:
karl.geisel@wmcka.org

NRS kayakers full wetsuit, mens medium, \$60.

Contact Roger at rogdykstral@juno.com or 616-241-6364.

Betsie Bay Valkyrie – Fiberglass. \$900. Built in 1993. 17'x22" and approximately 45 lbs. Photos can be seen at :
www.iserv.net/~geisel/boats4sale
Contact: Karl at karl.geisel@wmcka.org or 616.452.3239

**Be sure to check for additional
"For Sale" or "Wanted"
items in the
"FORUMS"
section at the
www.wmcka.org
website!!**

Exploring

(Continued from page 1)

ice crystals form on the cooled surface of the sea. You might know it as frazil (suspended crystals, often milky looking and will undulate) or the next step in solidification, grease ice (coagulation of ice crystals and strong enough for birds to stand on). When twilight fell, it was time to head back into shore or be frozen in the ice...

**Did you do anything
odd or interesting
this Winter?**

We'd like to know!!

Send a short write-up and
any pictures you have to:
Karl.geisel@wmcka.org

┌

┐

└

┘

c/o Karl Geisel
1900 Clearbrook SE
Grand Rapids MI 49508

