



West Michigan Coastal Kayaker

2010 Annual Meeting at Northern Exposure Campground

By Anne Keith

In stark contrast to the rainy, cold weather we experienced at the Platte River event, the October Annual Meeting couldn't have been more pleasant. We had sunny, warm weather both days, and wonderful paddling conditions.

This year, different groups paddled to various destinations, and we all signed up on whiteboards so that our locations were known. Kenneth Nesbitt did a great job of organizing the river paddles. Another group paddled down the dam to the bridge and back, and other, smaller groups did their own thing.

Julie and Leslie kept everyone's sweet tooth satisfied by once again having a pot of Halloween candy available for anyone who passed by their camper.

The spaghetti dinner was really wonderful. Bob Burmania, Jack Keyes, and Lori Stegmeier provided the sauces (all excellent) and everyone else brought a dish to pass.

At the meeting, the WMCKA officers were all re-elected by acclaim. Our long-time board member and former president, Bob Burmania, stepped down from his position, and Jim Mulder graciously filled it as a new Board member. Thanks, Bob, for all of your years on the board.

On Sunday morning, 10 of us convened on the water in our kayaks to celebrate 10 minutes after 10 on October 10, 2010. (10-10-10-10-10). We have photos to commemorate that event. After the photo session, everyone had a nice paddle on the pond.

A big thanks to Susie and the staff at Northern Exposure Campground for once again providing a great setting for our Annual Event, giving us discounted camping, waiving the day parking fees, and giving us exclusive rights to the entire "greenway" area at the campground.

It was great to see so many friends, both old and new, and get together for a wonderful weekend of paddling and camaraderie. We look forward to next year's events.

President's Paddle

By Steve Adsmond

Wow. Another WMCKA paddling season has come to a close with an awesome weekend of paddling the great outdoors at Mesick. Northern Exposure campground has so much to offer campers and kayakers. Our family had a great paddle together from the campground to the Hodenpyle dam on Saturday. Bill and Anne Keith told us about a fjord of sorts that was close to the dam, which we had never discovered on previous paddle outings to the dam. That made an adventure of the awesome fall day to paddle into this secluded channel in the woods. We ate lunch on the ridge of the dam, and I snuck in a rare nap in the sun. It was a wonderful day for paddling, wherever it took you. Ken Nesbitt organized trips to the Manistee River below the dam to Low Bridge which was very popular, and another group led by Shelley and Steve Misenheimer paddled the Manistee going on open water up river. After a great annual meeting and Pasta Banquet organized by Bob Burmania, with pasta sauces cooked by Lori

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Stegmeier, Jack Keyes and Kathy Burmania, the annual meeting retired Bob Burmania as a long time board member and past president of WMCKA.

Bob has done loads for our club as a board member. He hosts the Duck Lake paddle and has served up some of the best dinners on WMCKA outings and annual meetings that anyone can remember. Bob's work to make our club's annual meetings a fun dining extravaganza, as well as his volunteer efforts, along with Kathy Burmanias' leadership of volunteers to make Symposium come together and work smoothly are what makes WMCKA a great club. Thank you Bob and Kathy for everything you both have done for our club.

Our meeting also added Jim Mulder to our WMCKA board. Jim has been an active member and made kayaking his business adventure. Jim owns Gun Lake Paddle Sports in Wayland and loves to show and introduce others to our great adventure called kayaking. He is always bringing along new members to our club outings and usually is accompanied by his daughter Cassie and her friend Ashley. They are always having fun at outings, both on the water and off. We welcome Jim to our WMCKA board and appreciate his willingness to contribute to our club's successes.



Late Saturday night the rest of my family made an unplanned trip home, leaving me with a spacious tent, a kayak, and a thumb to hitchhike home on! This gave me a rare opportunity Sunday to paddle single with other WMCKA members. Ken Nesbitt organized five 10s on Sunday morning. What is this?? Ken wanted ten paddlers on the water at 10 minutes after 10:00am on 10-10-2010. I think we had close to that on the water and another WMCKA

member to take the photo as well. I guess that makes six 10s!

We had a great group of 10 WMCKA paddlers on the tenth month of the tenth year of our millennium to paddle the Pine River from Peterson Bridge to Low Bridge. This was the first time I have paddled the Pine since a torrential rain made the Pine a flood chute two years ago that moved boulders weighing more than two tons and monstrous log piles that had endured decades of spring thaws. Although the river has been changed in some places, it still ranks as one of Michigan's golden outdoor gems and on this day we had the river mostly to ourselves. We all had lunch on a relaxing sunny sandbar and took an afternoon break at the giant sand hill. For Carol, Jim and I, who climbed to the top of the sand hill, the westward vista of fall colors and view of the river valley was gorgeous. Thanks to Ken Nesbitt for transporting my boat and camping gear to the Pine and to Jim Berean for bringing me and all my gear back to Fremont, making it a wonderful day of paddling. I greatly appreciated having a fun river paddle with 10 WMCKA friends on 10-10-10.

In Memorium

Fred McConkey's wife Carol passed away last Wednesday. Fred has been a very active WMCKA member for many years and is the creator of all the last eight years' Symposium logos and shirts. A memorial open house for family and friends will be [Saturday, November 13 from 2-4 p.m.](#) at [Grace Episcopal Church, 555 Michigan Avenue in Holland.](#)

Please send condolences to:

Fred McConkey
[556 Lawndale Court](#)
[Holland, MI 49423](#)

Carol's obituary can be read at the following link:
<http://www.lifestorynet.com/memories/63033/>



Annual Meeting Collage



Quetico Provincial Park, Ontario, Canada, July 2010

By Bryan Kapteyn

One normally doesn't think of sea kayaks when you think of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area or Quetico Provincial Park. Canoes are the favored mode of transportation in those parts, and kayaks are considered too much portage work. Well, OK, they are more work in that regard, but in 30 knot head winds paddling into waves fetching on a 20 mile long lake I know what sort of boat I would rather be in and it's not a Prospector canoe.



This past July my son, Nick, and I headed out of Grand Rapids on the last week in July for the 15 hour drive to Quetico Provincial Park for a 5 day excursion into the wilderness with our strip built kayaks. They are not really



freight haulers, but we're both ultra light backpackers too, so we can go a long time with minimal gear. We both had a few trepidations about what to expect on the portages, but we like challenges. When we arrived at Dawson Trail Campground we set up camp on Saturday afternoon and made

plans for our Sunday morning launch. The weather was perfect with the sun reflecting off the calm waters of French Lake, and we headed for the Pickerel



River to begin our trip. The Loons were everywhere it seemed, along with Mergansers, bald eagles, Osprey, and a myriad of other bird life. The Pickerel River wound its way through a verdant landscape of watercress and lily pads bordered by several varieties of pine trees and hardwoods which seemed to loom larger on our horizon with every twist of the slow, tannin stained stream. Once reaching the main body of Pickerel Lake, we had a pleasant 3 mile paddle to The Pines beach, where we stopped amid a menagerie of canoes. The canoe paddlers couldn't quite figure us out, not knowing if we were on a day paddle or if we were really headed into the interior with no visible gear. I popped open my front hatch, pulled out my Jetboil, and with a couple of packets of Starbucks Via coffee we were sipping hot Italian micro-ground in about 3 minutes.

The rest of our first day was idyllic, and we made 2 easy portages into Dore' Lake to set up our first night's camp. These portages were not difficult, and we soon found the best routine for portaging our kayaks. We carried my son's 17'5" 50 pound boat without any gear, and then went back for my 30 pound 16'6" Iggy. We kept all of our gear strapped onto the decks of our respective boats, and pulled on

our backpacks for the second portage. If we were in a canoe we could have done everything in one trip with a portage pack, but we made do. Our kayaks are so much faster and more fun to paddle than a canoe it was worth it, at least to us. After talking to some boy scouts we decided to alter our route and not take the Death March portage, a 2 mile slog through 2 swamps with chest deep mud, leeches, mosquitoes, and fish flies. It sounded like too much fun, and we were already having enough of that.



We planned to go from Sturgeon Lake to Russell Lake by way of the Pickerel River, but after trying to paddle upstream for awhile we decided to make an overland portage instead. We paddled south 4 miles into a 25 knot headwind to a portage that was indicated on our official map, and eventually found it. Only later did we discover that this portage was called the Staircase Portage, and we soon found out why. Immediately after landing we were faced with an almost sheer wall of rocks and roots leading up at least 150 feet to a plateau at a ridiculous angle, even steeper than a staircase. We gingerly chose our footing and carried each kayak up the almost vertical incline, momentarily stopping in a couple of places to catch our breath before moving forward again. The portage was only about 500 yards total, but it was quite memorable!

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Once into Russell Lake, we proceeded to paddle a couple of miles and look for a good campsite. This lake is so popular that finding an empty site was not an easy task. We met a couple of guys fishing offshore from their site and asked them if they knew of any sites not taken, and they indicated that a nearby island had a decent site. We paddled around the island for a few minutes and finally found it, and it turned out to be one of the best sites we had all week. Straight out from our camp we had a view of Chatterton Falls, also known as the Grand Rapids, and we felt right at home. The fishing in this lake turned out to be spectacular, with abundant walleye and pike. I was able to catch enough walleye at the feet of Chatterton falls for us to gorge ourselves the first night, and Nick caught his first northern pike on a floating Rappala. It



was also on this lake that we met a nice couple from Bowmanville, Ontario. I was paddling and fishing on Tuesday morning, and happened to see Chris relaxing with a cup of coffee next to the water. So, me being friendly, and also noticing his kayaks up on the bank, went over to chat. We struck up a friendly conversation, and I met his girlfriend Tanya too. Since our kayaks and theirs were the only ones we saw the entire trip, we felt a kinship right away, and the 4 of us spent the next 2 days paddling, fishing, eating, and camping together. Our Thursday night on Bisk Lake was the most memorable because of the beauty and serenity. We were the only ones camping on the

lake, and our location was high on a peninsula bluff overlooking the surrounding lake. I was up early on Friday morning, and the scene was something out of a dream. The sun was slowly rising in the east to a dead calm lake, with a family of loons slowly swimming by through the mist. As I watched this silent procession the fog



rolled in temporarily and obscured the scene, creating a dream-like quality to this primeval setting. For a few moments my mind was transported to a window of history that transcended time, a panorama viewed by ancient eyes as through mine, and the immortal chill shivered through my mortal spine. The reverie evaporated a few minutes later with the morning mist, and I was transported back to modern times by the smell of coffee coming from the campfire.



Our last day was spent crossing 3 short portages, finally ending with the portage around the dam on the Pickerel River leading us back to

Pickerel Lake. We paddled confidently on a little light shop with the wind at our backs, and soaked in as much of this wonder of God's creation as we possible could. That night we stayed on a little one acre island where I created a small inushtuk facing the setting sun. Perhaps some day I will return to The Quetico, a place where dreams and reality meet, where kayaks do not rule, but where they can find their place.



Manatees Bring on a Smiley Face

By Art Plewka

There'd been manatee videos, books and educational TV specials and now at long last we're ready to actually take our grandsons to see these endangered 'water elephants! It was twelve years ago, at least, (I lose track) since Sue and I were thrilled to kayak and swim with several manatees at the Three Sisters in Crystal River, Florida. We had always hoped that some day we'd be able to share the experience with grandchildren and it just so happened that family timing coincided with a spring that saw unprecedented numbers congregating in Florida's largest natural spring.

The unusually long cold spell meant an increase of some 100 manatees seeking out these seventy-two degree waters. So it was with a great deal of anticipation that we headed to Aardvark Outfitters for our rentals and a short paddle to excitement. However, when the 'kids' car wasn't following me out of the campground, I knew something was up. Diaper change? Fingers in the car door...? Or..Oh... Happy Face sticker shoved up the nose!!! This meant that Will (age 5) and I would paddle while Sue, Lara and little brother searched for a Med-Stop, hoping to meet us as soon as possible. Cell phones proved their value, for once, as we could stay updated.

The paddle from Hunter Springs Park to the sanctuary is only about 25 minutes so you hope for some sightings pretty quickly, and we weren't disappointed as we almost immediately spotted an Osprey carrying a fish to his nest overhead, a bald Eagle did a flyover and we skirted a



hapless cottage over-run by Anhingas and Brown Pelicans.

We soon spotted our first manatees and were aided by onlookers on the bridge ahead who shouted out, "There's two on your left," or "There's a big one coming right for you!" Will was impressed. The outer pool held about 25-30 manatees lying motionless and huddled together trying to stay warm. The inner pool was as gin-clear as I

remembered it and held about a half dozen more; one, who'd been rehabbed, pulling a floating transmitter.

About that time I got the call that the rest of the crew, all sporting much happier faces, was headed for the launch site. Will and I set out to meet them, making many sightings along the way and hoping we'd have the same good fortune in the afternoon. Our prayers were answered as we saw at least as many manatees as we had in the morning, and closer observation revealed that most seemed to be headed in the direction of the sanctuary.



We discovered later that the increased numbers, in the area of 300, meant that they'd consumed most of the food in and around the Three Sisters, so they headed out to feed each morning. What we were seeing was a virtual Manatee rush hour!

The outer sanctuary was filling up fast, and we decided to check out the inner pool. As we paddled through the mangrove tunnel, we looked down at a procession of manatees returning home. In the six feet of crystal clear water a 1,300 pound bristle-nosed manatee is quite a sight! Will was impressed and by the look on his mom's face, I'd say she was too.

Once inside, there must have been 20 or 30 manatees of all sizes, some moms with calves, slowly swimming about. A dozen or so kayaks shared the space with them as we sat in amazement. The volunteer "Monitor" in one of those kayaks explained that entering the water was okay as long as you didn't harass or touch the manatees. Lara and I donned masks and snorkels and just hung out with these gentle giants., sometimes just a few feet from them as they glided past! With a little coaxing, wide-eyed, Will joined us as well.

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With Bennett asleep in mom's kayak, we reluctantly decided to wind up a very eventful day. In the midst of the constant struggle between habitat preservation and development we felt very lucky to have had this experience. Since permits have been issued for a 300 condominium development adjacent to Three Sisters it's possible that on a future trip things will be much different. Who's to say whether or not Will and Bennett will someday be able to share these wonders with their own children?



myself reminiscing about "the good old days" long before kayaks were a part of my life. It was a grand time.

I also discovered part of the WMCKA organization I didn't know about. I learned that there are many members who are deeply committed to river kayaking as much as I am committed to touring/sea kayaking. Some brave souls crossed the boundary and went out with both groups on different days. It is amazing to me that this group supports both styles of kayaking so well.

All of us came together for dinner on Saturday night. Lots of food. Lots of fun. A little business. More food and more fun. As this was my first time attending I was not sure how this compared but everyone seemed to be having a great time. For those of you who witnessed my amazing fire stick, you can get your very own Firedragon stick from Real Goods (realgoods.com, item # 63-0020).

I did hear people saying how attendance was down this year and I am sorry the others missed such a rare opportunity to get out on the water so late in the year. I am looking forward to my paddling all next year and I will be at the next Annual Meeting. Hmmm, wonder what kind of soup should I bring?

Reflections on the Water

By Steve Misenheimer

Okay. I am in trouble. I am into my third year as a member of WMCKA and this was my first time attending the Annual Meeting. I had heard a little bit about the weekend from past participants and I was a little concerned over the choices of what type of clothing will be needed. Kayaking in Michigan and in October can be pretty chancy. Will we need dry suits? Will neoprene pants and a Hydro-skin work? We should pack all the cold weather gear. Oh yeah, perhaps we will have 70 degree, bright sunshine filled days with cool evenings. Better pack the tech shirts and shorts, right? Since we had our big car we through everything in, probably every piece of kayaking clothing we owned. As I packed, I remember thinking "we will never need these summer clothes."

To my surprise (and great satisfaction), we only needed the shorts and wind jackets for paddling because the weather was outstanding. Not my mental picture of northern lower Michigan in the fall. We were treated to beautiful water on Hodenpyle Dam Pond for the entire weekend, including a glass-like start on Sunday morning. A nice paddle with a group of folks on Saturday was a time to get to know some new people and some acquaintances better. I even found



WMCKA Board Of Directors

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Vice Pres.	Bill Keith 231.779-4349 eakeith1@gmail.com
Secretary	Julie Stevens 989.828-5783 stevens49@msu.edu
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At Large #2	Jim Mulder 269.217.3029 info@gunlakepaddlesports.com
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Non-Board Positions

Symp. Chair	Lynn Dominguez 989.774-7305 domin1a@cmich.edu
Web Guy	Karl Geisel 616.452.3239 karl.geisel@wmcka.org
Newsletter	Steve & Shelley Misenheimer 734.475.3017 shelleymize@yahoo.com

Submissions

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

Send to: wmcka.news@Yahoo.com
Submissions due by 15th of the month

UPCOMING PADDLES

Paddles on the WMCKA Web site

Remember that the events marked with an asterisk (*) are non-WMCKA sponsored events.

Calendar

Please Note Winter Pool Dates:

November 6, 2010
January 8 & 22, 2011
February 12 & 26, 2011
March 12, 2011
April 2, 2011

For location, cost, and equipment requirements, please see the Events Page at www.wmcka.org

FOR SALE

For Sale: Werner Cyprus 210cm straight shaft, reg diameter. Well treated (bagged when not wet!). Great condition, super clean. Can ship. \$245 + s&h
deborahde@comcast.net

For Sale: Nexus Type 85 kayak compass - large 5" dial, movable bezel, white numerals on black, damper base (removable). Attaches with two bungees & hooks (incl) or remove base to direct mount. Compass in like new condition, not a scratch. \$65 deborahde@comcast.net

WANTED

WANTED: Articles and photos about your kayaking adventures! Send to: wmcka.news@Yahoo.com

Boats, By Jack Keyes

On the 49ers weekend only three of us chose to brave the fall wind and waves, but there was a reason for this. Actually many reasons, but I will choose to focus on one that I feel is



crucial to boat design and a problem that needs to be addressed and maybe someone is addressing it commercially and I just have not run across it yet. The problem is boat ballast. Winnie and Cathy both opted out of the paddle because they weren't comfortable with the way their boats handle in high winds and waves. There is nothing wrong with their boat designs, but they were designed to handle these conditions loaded with gear as they are touring boats. If you are a recreational paddler and paddle your touring boat on the weekends unloaded; particularly if you are a woman or a light weight individual then your boat will sit high in the water and be [as my wife calls it} a little squirrely. There I have coined a technical term for kayaks without ballast. I have seen pictures of kayakers making lead-filled devices and strapping them to them to the center of the keel inside the boat, behind the paddler, but this is labor intensive and might become dangerous. If it becomes unstrapped

and you tip in rough water the weight will stop you from righting the boat, whereas if properly placed it would help you roll the boat upright. I am going to experiment with filling a dry bag full of water until the waterline of the boat has reached the right level and the boat loses its squirrelyness. I will then place another dry bag over the first and hyper inflate it to keep the first one in place. I will keep you informed, but this just might work. I think the day hatch area would be the ideal location for the experiment. Cathy and Bob are working on a custom seat to lower the paddlers' center of gravity. I am not sure this will work as the point of balance to accomplish the same thing might be below the keel.



The second thing I would like to address is comfort. Dottie, who paddled with Bob and me across Lake Skeegamog, paddled an older European style touring kayak. I helped her lift the craft and it weighs a great deal more than a modern boat. I saw her at the fall meeting and she informed me that she had bought a new boat; lighter and more comfortable to paddle. As an older paddler I have gone to lighter weight and more comfortable gear because my shoulders and back are not as flexible as when I was in my twenties and when it hurts to paddle it is no longer fun. When Winnie bought a Wilderness Systems Typhoon 12.5 I kind of scratched my head until I paddled it. They have one of the most comfortable and easy to adjust cockpit systems I have ever seen. Plus she likes to paddle it and goes out more.

She used that boat on our paddle down the Manistee and had a great time. There is a design problem with the boat when paddling it in current. If you get the boat caught sideways, the built in skeg could cause you to tip. So if you are ready to hit something sideways in a river lean towards it. This will make you less likely to tip because you are raising the skeg up physically.



The skeg is there to make the craft track in still water. Some other

companies make

similar craft with drop dagger boards and this is a better bet.

The last item is that if you have an older boat, unless you want to just hang it on the wall you should paddle it occasionally. I have a custom touring slalom boat called a Rogue made by Cascade Kayak Company in Grand Rapids in the seventies, which I paddled on the Manistee. As glass gets old it gets brittle. I did hole it and scratch the hull, but it is repairable. Always carry duct tape it is easy to slap on a hole and you can keep on paddling. I still like to play in holes and eddy currents and ride haystacks in moving water. The Rogue was designed for this and still works well. I had a lot of fun on an absolutely ideal fall day. Patching up the old girl will be a good spring project, but after I repair the hull I will install a much needed back band in the cockpit.

Jack