NEWSLETTER

of the

Advanced Sea Kayak Club

AN INTERNATIONAL SEA CANOEING CLUB

OPEN TO ALL INTERESTED IN THIS ASPECT OF CANOEING

AIMS

1. PROMOTION
2. COMMUNICATION
3. INFORMATION

Editor & Secretary:

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ADVANCED SEA KAYAK CLUB

NEWSLETTER NO.5~~6~~7

AUGUST 1986

John J. Ramwell
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EDITORIAL

The last newsletter was rushed out without editorial and without number, apologies for this.

A few items of note for you.

(1) NOTICE OF SEA TOURING COMMITTEE AGM

DATE - 11th October 1986. TIME - 1930 hrs.

VENUE - School of Sea Canoeing, Trearddur Bay, Anglesey. We make this a weekend event and if you arrive Friday evening of 10th October and leave tea time on Sunday the 12th, it will cost you from £20 depending on accommodation preferred. Jenny will be cooking for us and Nigel is keeping his costs down - so value for money is the order.

Send your application to me before 24th September 1986 with £10 deposit.

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(2) ANNOUNCEMENT OF 6TH INTERNATIONAL SEA KAYAKING SYMPOSIUM 1987

DATE - 6-8th November. VENUE - YMCA National Centre, Lakeside.

DETAILS for deliberation and publication as soon as possible.

This event is being staged by the Sea Touring Committee and NOT the ASKC. The co-ordinators are myself, Mick O'Connell, Barry Howell and Neil Shave. Make a note for your diary and do let any members of this sub-committee have any ideas for the content of the symposium.

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(3) NOTE that Pains-Wessex Schurmuly are calling in MINIFLARE 3 packs from Lot No.001 through to No.080. I'm not sure of the problem with these, but return to manufacturuers for replacement.

(4) Fred Fearnley, until recently a senior member of the staff of SURVIVAL AIDS and leader/instructor on their survival courses, has branched out to form ARENA - an outdoor holiday concern embracing all activities in the outdoor scene. More information from Fred at:-

Sleagill Head Farm, Sleagill, Penrith, Cumbria, CA10 3HD

(5) John Brand is selling his excellent collection of notes on the history of sea kayaks. They are available from John at

Bramble Tye, Stanway Green, Colchester, Essex, CO3 5RA

at £5 50 inclusive of postage and packing.

(6) Doug van Etten, organiser of the recent vary successful Sea Kayaking Symposium in Alaska wrote to me as follows.

"Do you think that your club members might be interested in a paddlers 'exchange'? My thought is that the local kayak club here in Anchorage will sponsor this and we host as many as six overseas paddlers in Alaska next June. The guests would pay air fare, the hosts would provide room and board, we would arrange for kayaks, the admission to the Symposium would be free to the guests and we would follow the Symposium up with a joint paddle of 1 or 2 weeks.

Then in 1988 six Alaskans would come to Britain for a sea canoeing holiday on your shores."

If interested in this idea, please write to me and register. Doug and I will then press ahead and set the whole deal up.

(7) Finally, just to say that our recent ASKC gathering at Ballachulish, near Fort William in Scotland, was a great success - we attracted over 20 paddlers and made excellent use of this wonderful area.

(8) Finally, finally, to remind you that the contents of this newsletter depend on you if it's less than scintillating - then send us an article on any aspect of sea kayaking.

ASKC SHOP

Woollen ski hats - yellow with ASKC motif - £3.50
Ties - £2.50 each
Stickers - 30 pence each
Letterheaded notepaper - 50 pence per 10 sheets
4th National Sea Canoeing Symposium Report - 75 pence each
5th International Sea Kayaking Symposium Report -
T-shirts, small/medium/large/X-large (yellow or black) - £3.50 each
Sweat shirts, small/medium/large/X-large (yellow or black) - £6 50 each
Information Sheet on Tides and Buoyage - 75 pence each
H.M. Coastguards Paper on Safety - 75 pence each
Expedition Report on circumnavigation of Nunivak, Alaska - 75 pence each

PRICES INCLUDE POSTAGE AND PACKING

From: Duncan R. Winning, 22 Brisbane Glen Road, Largs, Ayrshire, KA30 8QX - 30th July 1986

Dear John,

Thanks for Newsletter 55? and a belated thanks for number 54. It was very interesting to read of the Greenlander II and the different rudder designs. Although I had seen the sketches of the Greenlander and the side rudder before it was good to get more details. It is always of great interest to me to read of what is happening, design wise, outside my own area.

Nick Padwicks letters in Newsletter 55 raise one or two points I would like to comment on!

As someone who started sea canoeing 37 years ago and joined a well established sea canoeing club some six years later, I have wondered about the "purists" Nick refers to and their decrying of rudders, etc. Where I do most of my canoeing (on the west coast of Scotland) rudders were the norm, not the exception, for sea canoeing over the last 100 years up to the advent of the novo-sea canoeist expansion which coincided with the availability of glassfibre sea canoes, the explosion of canoeing numbers in the U.K. and the associated river access problems. Also, in North America, the home of the kayak and baidarka rudders seem to be common on modern sea canoes.

Nick's comment that "no self respecting small craft designer would use a rudder as the main element of directional control", etc., certainly does not stand up to inspection when one examines a representative selection of designs for the range of craft indicated, albeit that the control of most wind powered vessels relies on the co-ordinated use of both sails and rudder to achieve any directional control no matter how good the design. Nick does no good for his argument for a basically sound principle with this comment.

That a well designed small vessel can be controlled in the manner Nick advocates should not really be the subject of debate, it does work, it is a historic fact! The debate really is whether the method will have a popular appeal!

When the Spaniard, Pizarro, sailed down the Pacific coast of South America in 1526 he found large sea going sailing rafts or balsas which could carry as much cargo as his own craft (30-40 tons), could match them on speed and all points of sailing and could land through surf. These balsas had no rudders or steering oars but used a system of centre boards which were raised or lowered between the logs to alter the underwater profile of the raft Archaeological evidence suggests that these centre boards or "GUARAS" had been in use for at least 1,000 years before Pizarro saw them.

In 1748 two Spanish naval officers Juan and Ulloa wrote a detailed description of the guara steering system and advocated its use in Europe - to no avail!

It appears that the first use of centre boards in Europe and North America was in the second half of the 19th century and sailing canoes may have been in the forefront of this.

However, the use seems to have been confined to restricting leeway as all these craft also used rudders even although some of these early sailing canoes used two centre boards in tandem which would have permitted good control in the manner described by Nick, e.g., the American Class A canoe "Lassie" of about 1890. Also some early R.N.L.I. sailing lifeboats like the "Norfolk and Suffolk" class and the "Watson" had tandem centre boards and rudders.

In 1911 one Frederic Ferger cruised for some 800 miles in the West Indies in the sailing canoe "Yakaboo" which had no rudder but was steered by a centreboard that could be moved for'd and aft (I presume it also moved up and down). This 17' vessel also had a self-draining cockpit, watertight compartments and a fair bit of rocker! (I think we are re-inventing the wheel yet again!)

The safety aspect of Alan Bydes "Pod" is obvious and no doubt in time variations will appear that make it more "liveable in" for old fashioned canoeists like me that like to have their bits and pieces handy in the cockpit area.

I have paddled the "Sea Tiger" briefly in strong tidal conditions, to briefly to comment on its handling as I was also trying an unfeathered Eskimo style paddle at the same time! However, the access to the stowage area did not impress me, but then the deck hatches that have become the norm in the U.K. do not impress me either! I prefer a decent sized hatch in a rear bulkhead at least and that should not be too difficult to arrange commercially in either conventional bulkheads or pods!

Any hatch on deck is trying desperately to act as a pump valve alternatively sucking in and blowing out every time the kayak flexes and the internal volume changes. At least if a hatch is in the cockpit/pod area it only has to demonstrate its watertight properties after a swamping not with every small wave.

Now bulkheads! It is certainly true that bulkheads as currently fitted cause rigid areas more subject to cracking, but I cannot believe that with properly designed tapering reinforcing in many of the bulkheads the problem cannot be largely overcome without excessive cost. I certainly prefer to think in terms of more subdivision rather than less as a safety feature and that is not incompatible with the basic pod concept.

Personally, I think the adjustable skeg and the pod are good ideas but, as with many things, what suits one paddler may not suit another and there is no one perfect kayak and there never will be.

Could I have two final quips please. I keep reading references to Eskimo kayaks (N.L.55 !!?) as if they were all the same type and shape with similar characteristics which is, of course, rubbish. As far as I can see they are even more varied than modern recreational kayaks, in the U.K. at least.

Adjustable skegs! When I first heard of their use on modern GRP canoes the term used was "variable geometry skeg". Now my contact with other types of boat and ships has left a definite concept of a skeg and that is definitely not adjustable! So what to call it? Centreboard and Dagger-board are both well recognised modern terms for the device but both are already associated with leeway restricting uses not steering.

Why not give due respect to those who, as far as we can tell, invented it to control direction as well as leeway, i.e., the pre-Inca natives of what is now Peru. Why not call it a "GUARA"?

Interesting, isn't it!

Yours Duncan R. Winning

P.S. It is 2 a.m. and long past my bedtime but it seems the only chance to write!!

From: TASK - 1st August 1986

For Immediate Release!

THIRD ANNUAL WEST COAST SEA KAYAKING SYMPOSIUM

Sea kayaking, a recreation and sport that is available locally, and around the world, is the star of the show! This year's symposium in Port Townsend at Fort Worden State Park on September 5, 6 and 7 offers a "Bay to Buoy to Bag" competition and a "Self Rescue Race", on the beach activities are planned to entertain and instruct. Saturday and Sunday paddling instruction and demonstration are scheduled all day!

SEMAINE INTERNATIONALE DU KAYAK DE MER
ILE DE RÉ - 14-22 JUNE 1986
CONTRIBUTED BY ERIC TOTTY, CUMBRIA

Off the coast of France, halfway down the Bay of Biscay, lies the Ile de Ré, an area rather less than the Isle of Man. It is low-lying with a patchwork of vineyards, sweet scented pine trees and salt flats with off-shore oyster beds uncovered at low tide. It looks and feels completely different from the France of the mainland.

Three of us from the U.K., Brian, William and Eric, arrived at the private camp site L'Aile de Peux at the furthest extremity of the Island where the coast curves round like the tail of a lobster. This was to be our base camp for the week during which time it was planned to circumnavigate the Island in easy stages, in groups of seven or eight. The weather was fine and the sun was brilliant and hot for most of the week whilst distant thunder storms missed the Island except for a brief thunder shower on our last day.

An inspection of boats and equipment to see that these conformed to the stringent conditions for sea-kayaking laid down by the French authorities was followed by an evening briefing which enabled us to get to know each other and assess capabilities, It was to be a tour rather than an expedition and certainly not a competition. Participants came from France (the host country), Germany, Holland, Spain, U.S.A. and U.K. - 31 in all.

During the next few days the circuit of the Island took us to the out-lying lighthouses, into harbours where fishing boats unloaded their catches, sandy beaches where we stopped for lunch and on one occasion encountered surf where some failed to keep dry on making a landing.

Christian Gabard had organised the tour in precise detail and in such a way that at the end of each day's kayaking we were able to leave our boats in a safe place overnight and return to camp in the transport provided - after attending a civic reception where we were welcomed by the local dignitary and regaled with a fortified wine - Pineau des Charentes - a local speciality consisting of cognac and wine. It earned my full approbation! During one lunch break we left our kayaks on the beach whilst we visited the Wine Co-operative Distillery where the cognac was produced and where we were received with great hospitality, before returning to our kayaks to steer an erratic course to our destination for that day. Christian also organised an evening of films around the theme of sea-kayaking and bird observation.

Sessions of rescue work, eskimo rolling, swimming, hunting for shell fish with the ebbing tide and fishing from kayaks occupied other periods during or after the day's paddling.

A farewell dinner and presentation of trophies and prizes took place on the last evening to celebrate the successful circumnavigation of the Island. We had been fortunate with the weather which had allowed us to carry out the programme as planned although at times the sea was a little "agitee" with breaking waves - according to the meteorological briefing which we received each morning.

We were grateful to Christian for all his careful planning and to his wife and other untiring and willing helpers for making this a memorable occasion.

E.B.T.

BRITTANY COAST - 23-29 JUNE 1986

The three of us returned from the Ile of Ré via the Gulf of Morbihan and the North Coast of Brittany near Paimpol and the Ile of Brehat where we experienced more testing conditions. It is a beautiful coastline with islets and skerries which provide a measure of shelter although the crossing to the Ile de Bréhat was more exposed and a strong headwind against the set of the tide made us concentrate wonderfully. We ate our lunch on this island and wandered around taking photographs. I remembered it from a former visit during a cycle-camping tour of nearly 60 years ago.

In the evenings we sampled gastronomic delights in the shape of oysters, prawns, crabs, lobster, strawberries and cream and an abundance of delicious cheeses of great variety - not to mention the wine, and above all, the great hospitality of Paul and Noela Le Bouété who had invited us to their home and given us the use of their four berth cruiser moored in the marina at Paimpol as sleeping quarters. Paul had canoed with us during the previous week around the Ile de Ré and was only too ready to lead us round this unique coastline which he knew so well.

ALASKA SEA KAYAKING SYMPOSIUM
P.O. Box 10-1387
ANCHORAGE, AK 99510
(907) 243-1550

For Release: June 16, 1986

For Information: Doug Van Etten

Subject: ALASKA SEA KAYAKING SYMPOSIUM, IN SEWARD: A GREAT SUCCESS

The first Alaska Sea Kayaking Symposium, held in Seward, June 6, 7 and 8, drew 451 participants, staff and industry representatives.

A Friday night square dance set the mood for a weekend of learning and fun with folks from across Alaska, five other States and Great Britain.

Saturday and Sunday brought almost constant rain but that did not prevent participants from taking basic paddling instruction as well as two levels of rescue training sessions. Guide services, local dealers and manufacturers had boats for interested paddlers to use and many of the kayaks were for sale.

Off the water, classrooms were filled beyond capacity as the Symposium drew more than twice the number of participants that organizers had expected. Classes were offered in kayak selection, in-field kayak repair, navigation, edible plants, weather, coastal geology, low impact camping, cooking, equipment selection and packing, photography and more.

Derek Hutchinson and John Ramwell, two prominent English paddlers and authors were present at the ASKS to share their skills with on and off water instruction and Saturday evening slide shows.

Most of the top kayak manufacturers in North America were present, including: Aquaterra, Easy Rider, Klepper, Necky Kayaks, Northwest Design Works, Pacific Water Sports and Seaworthy Designs. Numerous Alaska guide and charter boat services were also present. Many business participants added to the ASKS by donating door prizes which were given away during the Friday and Saturday evening socials.

This year's major sponsors were Alaska Treks 'n Voyages, Blue Water Paddler, Knik Kanoers and Kayakers, National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) and REI.

Symposium coordinator Doug Van Etten reports that the second ASKS will be held the same time next year: two weeks after Memorial Day, June 5-7 1987. Plans for that event are already in the making. If you would like to help or have ideas, now is not too early to contact Doug at 243-1550 or Box 10-1387, Anchorage, AK 99510.

Special notes for those who attended this year's symposium: please mail in your evaluation form and T-shirt order. There will be a written proceedings of the symposium produced. It should be available this Fall and will be for sale by order or through kayak retailers.

A CROSSING OF THE IRISH SEA (ST. GEORGE'S CHANNEL) BY KAYAK - 14TH JUNE 1986

Based on the log of the
"Kayaks Round Britain and Ireland Expedition"
By Bill Taylor

At twenty to eight in the morning on Saturday, 14th June, no one would have notices the departure of one "Vyneck" and three "Nordkapp" sea expedition kayaks from the beach at Whitesands, St. David's, on the rugged coast of Pembrokeshire. Not only was it too early for the usual contingent of the alibu surf-board brotherhood to be about, the visibility was only one hundred and fifty metres in the thick fog and light drizzle that condensed in the breathlessly calm air. We could not even see the end of The Ram - the low, rocky headland that demarks the nothern end of the beach.

For the paddlers in the sea canoes this was a committing moment in more than one sense. Most serious canoeists would feel some trepidation at setting out in fog to make an unsupported 52 mile crossing of the Irish Sea, but a great deal of time, money and effort had already been invested to make sure this particular attempt came off. Three of the canoeists had been "on the road" since late April, in their attempt to carry out the first complete circumnavigation of Britain and Ireland by kayak. Mick Wibrew, Richard Elliott and myself had been under great pressure throughout the Spring of 1986 in forcing our passage from the River Medway in Kent to St. David's on the south-west tip of Wales. Having paddled along the south coast, around the south-west peninsula of Devon and Cornwall and across the Bristol Channel from Watermouth (near Ilfracombe) to Port Eynon on the Gower Peninsula, we had reached Whitesands on the previous Sunday. We had not been trying to beat the clock so much as to survive the awful Spring weather. Nearly half our days had been 'blown-out' by high winds, and for a continuous spell of five weeks we had not had a wind strength of less than Force 4.

The urgency was very real, however, and was created by having to make sure we had reached Whitesands for the neap tides that would occur over the weekend of 14th-15th June, in conjunction with the long hours of daylight associated with the summer solstice. This unique combination, given a short spell of settled weather, would in theory give us the best possible chance of carrying out our all-important passage to Ireland. A time schedule of circumnavigate Britain and Ireland in a small craft is of necessity a tight one, squeezed between the onset of Spring and the beginning of Winter, so the whole future of the expedition hung on carrying out the crossing to Ireland by mid-June. Now that moment had come.

Three days earlier, as an anticyclone began to establish itself over the British Isles and promie the first real summer weather of the year, we had been joined by Geoff Hunter, our old friend and Club mate from Gillingham Canoe Club, who was joining us to make the crossing. Every few hours we telephoned the Cardiff Weather Centre for the latest developments and on Thursday 12th June we had wangled our way past the picket post and guards at R.A.F. Brawdy to see a most unco-operative civilian meteorological forecaster. He spent over ten minutes explaining how he was too busy to tell me the weather prospects. I was disappointed but it had not been a wasted visit. Whilst he had been moaning on at me I had been looking over his shoulder, studying the projected weather charts for 48, 72 and 96 hours on. This was enough to encourage us and we duly drove off in Geoff's car to see the Coastguards at Dale, near Milford Haven.

Sea canoeists and Coastguards do not always see things the same way, but throughout our trip they had given us excellent support and encouragement. Dale were no exception and seemed as enthusiastic about our plans as we did. More important, they gave me a direct land-line contact with the Irish rescue services in the form of Rosslare Harbour Authority. Buddy Miller, the Rosslare Harbour Master and Hon. Secretary of the local lifeboat was outstandingly friendly and helpful. We would now be sure of some sort of reception and accommodation at the other end of the crossing. With telephone and radio schedules arranged, all we now needed was the right combination of weather pattern and tidal sequence.

For those who have never stopped to consider the technical problems of crossing the southern end of the St. George's Channel which separates Wales from Ireland, it should be understood that the departure point and land-fall are notorious for their tidal problems. Tide races and over-falls abound as the main tidal flood from the Atlantic is constricted into the gap between West Pembrokeshire and Carnsore Point (on the south-east tip of Ireland) to fill the Irish Sea. To reduce the problems of negotiating these potentially hazardous tidal conditions around Ramsey Island and the Bishops and Clerks Islands on the Welsh side, and around Tuskar Rock on the Irish side, it is best to move through them when the tidal movements are at their least - near slack water on neap tides. The timing of our crossing would therefore need to be built around the times of slack water at our point of departure and our land-fall. Paddling at a speed of 4 knots, we would therefore encounter another period of tidal slack in mid-channel, half way in time through the journey. Clearly, we wanted as little wind and sea as possible, for this would throw our water speed calculations into the factor of the unknown as well as making the trip uncomfortably wet, more tiring and consequently more dangerous. Speed is a great safety factor in a sea area famous for its fickle weather. The weather forecast we wanted was therefore a period of predictably little wind, regardless of the increased likelihood of sea fog. This would introduce an element of danger in crossing the major shipping lanes but was not a serious navigational factor in our view, for we would be out of sight of land for most of the crossing anyway.

The last factor to be decided was whether we should build a night-crossing into the trip. The advantage of this would be that any serious problems causing a delay would then be sorted out in daylight, rather than in darkness, as would be the case of things went wrong in a daylight crossing. In the event, we were prepared to paddle it either way, as long as the weather pattern was right for there would only be about four hours of proper darkness at this time of year anyway.

Throughout Friday 13th June we regularly phoned for meteorological forecasts. Looking at the weather from our campsite at Whitesands beach it was hardly a promising prospect in the usual sense. Fog thickened and thinned throughout the day. Sometimes we could make out the dark cliffs of the north end of Ramsey Island about two miles away. Occasionally we could see the outline of the South Bishop and its lighthouse which is much further. At other times we could see neither. If we were going to leave that evening we would have to set out about seven o'clock, so when the visibility closed right in around five o'clock it forced a decision from us. We would wait until morning.

Later that evening we all went off the Geoff to drop his car at the newly opened Tŵr-y-Felin Outdoor Centre, above the main town of St. David's. Looking out from the lighthouse-like top of the old mill tower of the centre, we could see that the visibility had improved to give outstandingly clear views to far off Grassholme and Skomer Islands. Such is life. Philosophically we downed our ale to ensure a good night's sleep, then walked back to Whitesands, taking some comfort in the fact that perhaps we had done the right thing after all, for the fog was down again.

My alarm was set for 0430, but as is so often the case in such circumstances, I woke with a start just before it was due to go off. Outside the tent the fog was the thickest it had been so far and a very fine drizzle did little to cheer us as we hastily breakfasted and broke camp. All the equipment for an unsupported and extended sea expedition would be in our boats for the crossing, but in an atmosphere of nervous apprehension, little was said and a lot got done more quickly than usual. By ten past seven the loaded boats had been carried down to the beach and I had phoned the Coastguard at Dale to say we would be away in half an hour. Without stops, our navigational sums said we would do the trip in twelve hours. We would need between one and two hours for breaks, so to be safe and not cause undue alarm, we gave our Rosslare E.T.A. as 2230, allowing up to fifteen hours for the crossing.

Only a slight surf was running as we launched, so we hoped to get off fairly dry. In thick fog, however, this was easier said that done, for the bigger sets would only slow when they were on top of us. The result was that both Richard and myself started with wet heads, but beyond the surf line, the sea was oily calm.

We then paddled north to pick up the south facing cliffs at St David's Head in an eerie atmosphere. Only the splash of our paddles and the sinister honk of the South Bishop horn broke the silence. It was a grey atmosphere and a grey morning and our brightly coloured boats and accessories also became grey and drab if we paddled as much as twenty metres apart Even the sea birds were strangely silent.

Once on the tip of the headland we stopped paddling and sat to observe the effect of the tide on our boats Because it was approaching slack water at the end of the tides southerly set, we were being pushed slowly south to our left We no doubt made a strange sight to the two fishermen who looked at us in some dismay as their boat slowly emerged out of the mist and chugged by. For canoeists to be out at all on such a morning would have been bad enough, but to be sitting still, drifting on the tide was bloody ridiculous.

"When do you expect slack water?" I called out, as much as to pass the time of day as to get a serious answer.

"About a couple of hours before the main tide is slack" was the vague answer.

This made sense for the tides beyond the Bishops and Clerks but was certainly suspect information for our position, so we stuck to our own plans, angled our boats in a ferry glide to compensate for the south going tide and struck out to pick up a small rock known as Careg Trai, about one mile off to the west. In the two hundred metre visibility we could hear the breaking sea long before we could see the rock and took comfort in it appearing in the right place at the right time. Similarly the North Bishop Rock came up on schedule at eight thirty, confirming our calculations for the tide were right.

This was very important of course, not just because we wanted to be right but because a confidence booster was psychologically right at this very moment, when we were about to lose sight of land for possibly twelve hours.

Personally, I was feeling more than my usual sense of responsibility that morning Mick and Richard had put absolute and unquestioning faith in my calculations on which their very lives could depend I took great comfort in having such a seasoned and experienced paddler as Geoff with us, knowing he had double checked everything.

For the next three hours we paddled through the fog over gentle oily swells which ran in from the south west. The horn on the South Bishop slowly receded on our left and we eventually most to our hearing. Occasionally, the sun made a valiant effort to break through the foggy canopy shrouding us. Every hour, on the hour, we made adjustments to our compass heading, angling the boat to compensate for the differing rates of tidal flow and thus staying on an imaginary line of about 37 sea miles connecting North Bishop w with Tuskar Rock. Every second hour we stopped for a few minutes to eat, drink and sometimes carry out that most awkward sea canoeing manoeuvre - the "rafted pee". This latter task was a constant source of amusement and lewd banter. Whilst Richard persisted in making intimate and personal girations within the dark confines of his cockpit, occasionally producing an old condensed milk can full of wee, Geoff preferred a more aggressively extrovert approach involving a "bum-shuffle" onto his rear deck and an arched cascade "a la Brussels Cherup" onto Mick's rear deck! It is situations like this that make or break canoeing friendships.

Around noon the fog dispersed, revealing a strange world of bright sun, blue sky and limitless horizons of oily swells. A gannet might wheel above us and cast a fierce eye over our intrusion into his domain. The odd puffin would attempt to ignore our presence completely, suddenly slapping off with a staccato of wing beats in comic and ridiculous panic at the very last moment. We saw more storm petrels than I have ever seen in British waters. At one stage a female porpoise with her youngster executed a few graceful arches about our boats before disappearing.

Now that the fog had gone it was very hot. We removed our cags and drank plenty The direction of movement of the ships now visible in the shipping separation lanes confirmed our estimated position. Only once did we have to alter course and eventually stop to avoid a possible collision.

By four in the afternoon when our morale was very high the conversation suddenly took a turn for the worst as the fog banks began to close in again. It was not the thick grey fog of the morning but thin, white and very bright. We were paddling as in a dream world of blinding light. The sea was a burnished and polished bronze, merging undiscernably into the brightness of the fog and sky. The sun continued to beat through to create stifling heat. Had we entered some "other world" for sinner canoeists, condemned forever to paddle in an eternity of glaring light? Suddenly there was a partial clearance and behind us appeared a strange vision. A perfect arch of white light - a fog bow - dogged our progress for endless miles.

Just before the visibility had closed in we had witnessed another strange sight. In the distance, on our position line ahead, we could see a stationary tall object on the horizon that we assumed was the lighthouse on Tuskar Rock. As we stared hard, across our line of vision passed a perfectly rectangular object, possibly two miles off. We presumed afterwards that it must have been the conning tower of a submarine.

From five o'clock onwards we were straining our ears, hoping to hear the horn of the Tuskar. For a long time, however, the only sirens were those of shipping. It was nerve-racking to hear the Fishguard ferry bear down on us in the fog, getting closer and closer. First the blast of her horn, growing louder and louder, then the throb of her engines. Please let the sound diminish and pass away!

Then, very, very faint, we could hear a distant horn where Tuskar Rock should be. It grew more distinct and was getting closer. Like a magnet, the sound kept pulling us off our compass heading and towards itself.

We had to resist this temptation, for to give in to it would cause our boats to be swept south of the light on the strong race that sets off the rock and so require us to fight straight into the tide to gain the rock.

As we focussed our senses on the horn we could almost feel the air vibrate. We were so close. Then, quite dramatically, we burst out of the fog bank into an island of blue sky and bright colour. Dominating the scene was a tall tower, less than half a mile away. Decked in bright paintwork of red and white, there stood the Tuskar light with the tiny silhouettes of the two keepers coming down to greet us.

A short ferry glide across the tide race, still breaking and boiling in spite of the generally calm conditions and we were into the sheltered water of a great tidal eddy that led us to the rock itself. It was exactly quarter past seven, just fifteen minutes later than our arm-chair navigational sums had predicted.

All feelings of relief were dwarfed by our satisfaction and elation at things going so well. It was difficult to decline the warm hospitality and cups and tea offered by the lighthouse keepers who had been alerted to watch out for us by Rosslare Harbour. But decline we did, for we had to press on; the fog, having been kind enough to clear and allow us our photographs, was closing in again fast.

About a mile out from the rock I called up Rosslare on our ICM 12 radio to confirm our position and warn them to expect us. The last few miles to Rosslare were the longest two hours of the trip. An easterly wind sprang up making the fog suddenly become cold Until then it had not seemed threatening But now we wanted to be out of it We were also becoming aware that the tide was running much harder than we had anticipated between Tuskar and the Irish mainland, pushing us south more than we would have liked and eventually causing us to aim-off left to get a more certain landfall When it came up, it was quite unexpected. The coastline on this south eastern tip of Ireland is flat and featureless with long sandy beaches backed by low cliffs. I thought I was looking at a change in density of the fog bank when the sea suddenly changed colour from grey to turquoise-green and I could see small wave breaks. The beach was less than a hundred metres away!

After a short slog along the coast we rounded Greenore Point and could soon see the breakwater of Rosslare harbour. As we turned into its shelter below the ferry terminal it was twenty minutes to ten, exactly fourteen hours since leaving Whitesands.

With big grins and a great feeling of satisfaction we paddled over to the Lifeboat Station. Figures were waiting to meet us and included Buddy Miller, who greeted us like old friends. As Lifeboat Hon. Secretary he had set aside their old shed to accommodate us and he patiently waited for us to get changed before taking us off in his van to buy our first pint of real Irish Guinness.

To put our trip into its true perspective it must be said that I know of at least one group of canoeists who had made a similar crossing of the Irish Sea. That was back around 1972 when it took them eighteen hours in similarly calm conditions involving a night crossing. I do not know any details of their navigations, but I doubt if it went any smoother than ours. I do not say this to sing our own praises but to make the point that canoeists carrying out a navigational exercise on this scale would not normally expect to be so accurate. We almost certainly had a great advantage in technical back-up in so far as we had fitted our specialist sea

kayaks with retractable sea-rudders immediately prior to our expedition. These had already proved their worth many times when battling high winds and big cross-seas. This crossing also proved to us their additional worth in making it much easier to steer an accurate compass course.

The key-stone leg of our expedition had run like clockwork. That which we had anticipated with apprehension and as being the most difficult had proved to be most enjoyable.

Any queries resulting from this article should be addressed to:-

Kayaks Round Britain and Ireland Expedition
c/o Mrs Beverley Taylor
58 Higham Road
Wainscott
ROCHESTER
Kent
ME3 8BB

Telephone: Home - Medway 727168
Work - Gravesend 66552

A selection of colour and black and white photographs taken during the crossing are available to support this report

TASK

June 21, 1986

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The 1986 Third Annual Sea Kayaking Symposium will be held at beautiful Fort Worden State Park on September 5, 6 and 7th in Port Townsend, Washington.

All interested newcomers and veterans of the sport are invited to participate. International leaders in the sport will be presenting information for attendees to come away knowledgeable in such varied areas as: kayak style and design, marine environment, cooking and foraging, weather and navigation, and finishing and first aid.

A "Swap Meet" is available for selling/bartering individually owned, used boats and gear. "Recipe Information" is available with the registration packet. Registration is $60.00 and is limited to the first 400 participants. Forms and schedules of events are available in your local kayaking shops and from Judy Moyer (206) 246-9385.

Sponsor is The Trade Association of Sea Kayaking.

For more information, a Symposium Sheet is attached.

From: Peter J. Carter, 28 Rowells Road Lockleys, South Australia 5032
(09) 43 4298 - 31st March 1986

Dear John,

Many thanks for Newsletter 77 53, which has just arrived. Only one copy though, so I don't know whether to wait for more or to copy this one and distribute. I see from the editorial that youre after a word processor at last. You soon won't know how you ever managed without one. (This one is a Macintosh, running MacWrite.)

We've had a quiet summer here. We had planned to make a journey along the north coast of Kangaroo Island, but only two of us were finally available so we called it off and did various day trips instead. We also made ourselves useful by escorting swimmers in long distance races at sea. Last weekend several of us escorted a paraplegic marathon paddler across Lake Alexandrina near the mouth of the Murray River as he set off on his 2250 km paddle upstream He has little use of his legs, but is very powerful in the arms and shoulders. Sea boats and open waters are not his forte, but he enjoyed the inevitable wind and chop. We were glad of the wind to sail to save energy, but even so it was a long day.

A few weeks back we had a big 'do' at a sort of convention centre on the south coast, with seminars and workshops on various aspects of canoeing. We had half a dozen or so try sea canoeing for the first time, nothing too strenuous, just a paddle along some cliffs, a look at some small caves, a rock landing for lunch and that sort of thing, and they thoroughly enjoyed it. Had my first paddle of a North American design, the Nimbus Seafarer, now built here under licence. Seems to be a good boat, although not my style, certainly not the way I design rudders.

Two 'expeditions' recently set out, independently, from here, to circumnavigate Australia. The first was a group of marathon paddlers with little or no experience at sea. The leader did not impress me with his leadership skills and I saw another of them fall in on flat water. They launched with some publicity, but apparently went no farther than about 100 km. The other was to have been a solo expedition. He also set off with some publicity, but the day after he was supposed to have left a place not far south of Adelaide he rang me asking for setails of electric pumps. I think it's probably fortunate that they've all given up because they clearly were quite naive about going to sea, but I don't think the publicity was really beneficial to sea caneoing.

Recently received a copy of George Hartwig's new German sea canoeing magazine. My German's virtually non-existent, but it was interesting to see part of one of my own letters translated. Pity about the pun I had in it though

It's South Australia's 150th anniversary this year, and to help you celebrate, a Jubilee 150 badge.

Sincerely,

Peter

From: Steve Bowles, Puistolammintie SB3, Tornio 95420, Finland - 6. 5.1986

Dear John,

After finally paying my long forgotten subs at the exhibition I thought I should send you some brief info on our last jolly jaunt. It goes like this:-

Not many films have been made using the Sea Kayak so we thought we could make one. Few people have paddled in the Lafoten Islands in winter time so we thought we would do it there. Jules Verne and Edgar Allen Poe made famous the Maelstrom of Masken so we would try that as well. The Saltstrommen is reputedly the world's fastest tidal race and as it was just across the road we may even get time to give it a go.

Not many canoeists can provide wild water spray decks, cags, buoyancy aids, paddles and poggies as well as sell videos so we thought Chris Hawkesworth should be our film director in the field. We armed him with six film professionals from Helsinki and some expensive equipment that most of us could never use. Plus a stills photographer.

As nobody else wanted to pay the bills I was voted group leader by silent vote. I needed paddlers. For some years I had known Ray Rowe - he could paddle a bit, he understood my ignorance of Sea Maps and Compasses and the Irish lilt would help sell the film to women - if only I could find a way to give him three large meals a day and satisfy his unnatural desires for unnecessary details like footrests and Waterproof Charts and ..... Ray came along. Steve Macfarlane had already seen in Lapland my cheese-burger expeditions and he seemed to return for more. He could paddle a bit too. Steve came along. So we were three paddlers. Ray in charge of the paddling things, Steve in charge of Steve and myself making the rest look good.

We paddled North Shore kayaks called Shorelines and P and H kyaks called Icefloe and Fjord. That makes four. The extra one was for our intrepid interviewer cum director Mr Wild Water himself. We used fjallraven tents when we needed to and suunto compasses if need be. Hawkesworth will sell the video.

We paddled south from Stamsund which is a little bit up from Steine and took a long time over it finding need to take a sauna, pub and 16 hour filming days en route to the Maelstrom. Ray had already done a good recce for me of the Maelstrom before the film team arrived. In fact he paddled it solo. We couldn't fail.

To cut a long story short we surfed, paddled, seal launched, rock hopped, landed, rest stopped and eventually paddled (all three of us) the Maelstrom. Also the Saltstrommen.

I miss Lafoten already and I have only just left. As somebody once said - Lafoten is the meeting of dreams and reality.

Best regards to all. Steve Bowles

1986 WEST COAST SEA KAYAKING SYMPOSIUM

September 5, 6 and 7 -
Fort Worden State Park, Port Townsend, Wa

This year's symposium is designed to expand your enjoyment and knowledge of see kayaking. We will again focus on the styles, techniques and knowledge that can make your sea kayaking experience a safe, practical and pleasurable means to explore our marine world. Lectures will be combined with question and answer sessions and applied experiences. You will have the opportunity to participate!

Topics covered at this symposium will include:-

(1) Different styles of kayaking. Which is most appropriate for your interest and skill level?

(2) Organization and planning for expeditions and trips.

(3) Navigation and weather patterns.

(4) Safety and rescue methods.

(5) The biology and dynamics of the marine world.

(6) First-aid, fishing, foraging, cooking, recipe swap, wind power (sail, papafoils) and more.

(7) Used equipment and kayak swap.

The symposium will again be held at Fort Worden State Park in Port Townsend, Washington. Located along the Strait of Juan De Fuca on the Olympic Penninsula, the site is a one hour drive and ferry ride from downtown Seattle.

The Fort Worden Conference Center has a 400 seat meeting room, a 285 seat theater, a number of smaller classrooms, two dormitories and 50 camp sites, along with full food service. The setting also offers beach, wooded areas and open meadows and is a perfect outdoor laboratory for learning about sea kayaking.

Registration

The registration fee is $60.00 per person for admission to all symposium events. A free T-shirt is included with your registration.

Attendance is limited to the first 400 persons. Even with limited advertising, we reached capacity the last two years. Please register early, using the registration form provided. We will be unable to accommodate walk-in-registrations.

Dorm rooms and campsites will be reserved on a first come, first served basis. If you are registering for others, or want to share a dorm room or campsite with friends, please list their names on the registration form to help us in allocating space. Accommodations and meals are additional (see registration form for prices).

Camping: Campsites include fire pit, picnic table and access to public restrooms and showers. Each campsite is limited to two vehicles,

only one of which may be a camper, van, bus or trailer. Each campsite is limited to six people and two tents. CAMPSITES MUST BE VACATED BY 3 P.M. SUNDAY. NOTE: Campsites are limited. Those registering late may not be able to reserve a site. If you would be willing to share a site, please mention it on the registration form and note how many and what kind of vehicles you plan to bring. We will put late campers in touch with anyone volunteering to share.

Dorm: Dormitory beds are available in private rooms (1, 2 and 4 persons) and open dorm with bunk beds. Fort Worden is an old army base. There are only 29 rooms that can accommodate more than one person and they went fast the last two years. Linen service is available for a one time per person fee and includes bedding, towels, soap, etc. See the registration form for prices. Bring your own sleeping bag, towels, etc., if you are not buying linen service. CHECK OUT TIME IS 11 A.M. SUNDAY.

Participants are encouraged to reserve dorm space or campsites at the time of registration. Other accommodations are available nearby in Port Townsend (one mile away) but you must reserve it on your own. Port Townsend is an active town, so don't delay. The wooden boat show is scheduled for the same weekend, so Port Townsend will be busy.

Meals: Buffet style meals will be served Friday (dinner), Saturday and Sunday. At Fort Worden's request, people staying in the dorms will be required to buy meals. Others may purchase meals at their option. All meals must be purchased in advance using the registration form. Meals are varied and prepared by Fort Worden's kitchen staff. See the registration form for prices.

Additional information: You are welcome to bring your own kayak, but you are responsible for its safe-keeping. Many kayaks will be available from the exhibitors for your "test paddle". A map, directions and confirmation of registration will be returned upon receipt of your registration form and appropriate fees. A registration packet will be available upon arrival at Fort Worden.

REGISTRATION WILL START AT NOON ON FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 5TH and will close at 11 p.m. that evening. Registration will again be open at 8 a.m. on Saturday. Exhibitors and boats will be available for demonstrations on the beach in the afternoon on Friday. The symposium will officially start with the opening presentations at 7 p.m. on Friday evening.

This year we are making provisions for a "Swap Meet", so plan to bring any used kayak equipment you want to sell. The porch and lawn in front of the registration building will be set aside for the "Swap Meet". A "for sale" form will be available at the registration desk. The "Swap Meet" is available ONLY TO INDIVIDUALLY OWNED, USED KAYAKING EQUIPMENT. The individual will be responsible for the safe-keeping of this equipment. Additional information on the recipe exchange will be mailed with your registration confirmation.

See you at the Third West Coast Sea Kayaking Symposium, September 5, 6 and 7 at Fort Worden State Park.

EXCERPT FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES
BOOK REVIEW DATED FEBRUARY 16, 1986

From the Land Where Polar Bears Fly

ARCTIC DREAMS
Imagination and Desire in a Northern Landscape.
By Barry Lopez
Maps 464pp. New York
Charles Scribner's Sons $22 95

By Edward Hoagland

If you lowered a microphone into Lancaster Sound off Baffin Island in the Canadian Arctic on a summer day, you might hear all at once the tremolo moans of bearded seals, the baritone boom of a walrus, the high-pitched bark and yelp of ringed seals, the electric crackling of shrimp, the birdlike trills and clicks and other harmonics of white beluga whales and horned narwhals, and the elephantine trumpeting of hugo bowhead whales. And it is this synchronous wealth of life - of all life - that Barry Lopez is celebrating in his jubilant new book. Among contemporary nature writers Mr Lopez is especially a rhapsodist, and what he has done in this passionate paean to the Arctic and its cycles of light and darkness, its species of ice, its creatures and waters, is to present a whole series of raptures and riffs on the subject of musk oxen, ivory gulls, white foxes, polar bears, icebergs and sea currents. Speaking of the effect of the Arctic upon an explorer, he describes how "the land becomes large, alive like an animal; it humbles him .... It is not that the land is simply beautiful but that it is powerful ..... Darkness and light are bound together within it, and the feeling that this is the floor of creation."

"The High Arctic," we sometimes call the region, meaning that it is mythic, incalculable and pristine, as well as located high on the Mercator map. No writer has ever quite mastered the Arctic in the way that so many temperate and even a number of equatorial settings have been brought alive to the page. Its geography is as ample as China's, but with the population of Seattle. The wildlife is sparse and transient (and often underwater); the climate is searing, the darkness crushing. This is a land "where airplanes track icebergs the size of Cleveland and polar bears fly down out of the stars," where the winter sun rises and sets at the same spot "like a whale rolling over" as Mr Lopez puts it, though in summer the ice and water throw the sky's light back upward, blindingly redoubled, and tiny dwarf willow trees underfoot are murmuring to one another (at least to his ears), where the world sheds its usual categories and "is suspended solely in the lilt of its desire."

He is an author who can't wait to get up in the morning. What is prodigious about him is not so much his travels, which are impressive, but how happy he is in the course of them. Somewhat as the Australian journalist Alan Moorehead grandly tackled the topic of the Nile three decades ago, Mr Lopez - of Port Chester, N.Y., the San Fernando Valley, Calif., and now Finn Rock, Ore. - brought his talent for close observation, empathy, freshness and wonder to a major effort north of treeline. He was a greener hand than Moorehead, with only one sizeable book behind him, "Of Wolves and Men" (1978), plus several slim, rather fragmentary and uneven volumes of an often "poetic" prose and gossamer mysticism. At their best these were admirable enough, but he had seemed to me to need an editor or friend to challenge him on what he meant in what he said, to catch him up when he turned ingenuous and sentimental.

Apparently the Arctic itself in its severity has seized and edited him and brought him to full voice and confidence. In this affectionate book, he stares at the "whiffle and spin of birds over the water," at exuberant murres, black-legged kittiwakes, northern fulmarsm black guillemots "wheeling and hovering in weightless acrobatics," at brasher, rougher-tempered glaucous and Thayer's gulls, at terns that have flown from Antarctica and wheatears from Saudi Arabia, at golden plovers and Lapland longspurs, until he has possessed himself of a given scene and its creatures. He sees the magical pas de deux that two male narwhals may enact with their 10-foot unicorn horns at the edge of the pack ice in the spring; the intricate monthslong love duet of a mother polar bear ("sea bear," "ice bear") and her cubs, and the inexhaustibly diverse behaviour of bears grown up; the glee of musk ox calves playing king-of-the-mountain on a tussock, and the swing and sweep of the whole herd's skirts of glossy long hair as they turn and run; and then he lavishes his discoveries into a portfolio of delights for us.

A few other current writers might write as well about animals at a burst, but none, I think, could go on and on with such indefatigable pleasure and authentic religiosity. Animals too, and not just man, Mr Lopez is saying, are made in the image of God; and he is celebrating the glory of God. There is no evidence that he writes as well about people, however, or even that he aspires to. We are not dealing with a master nature writer on the order of Turgenev or Thoreau, for whom nature encompassed human nature. His account of the exploration of the Arctic by Europeans in the last fourth of "Arctic Dreams" is tidy and competent but uninspired, for instance, and none of his companions on his many trips, Eskimo or white, is ever delineated - this not only from a misplaced tact, but from what I take to be a simple lack of interest. Still, the gift of sight (and second sight) focused here upon the ocean, ice, skyscapes, landscapes and wildlife is extraordinary.

He speaks of agape, a Greek and New Testament word for "love feast," or selfless love for others for the sake of God, or for the intenses joy of sharing life with other forms of life. As he finally defines it, in other words, it becomes a synonym for Edward O. Wilson's recent term biophilia, a love that transcends the boundaries of species and could make our capabilities on earth as different from other animals' capacities as our intelligence does. Conveying this biophilia, this allegiance to life as also manifested in other species, is at the heart of nature writing, whether by scientists like Loren Eiseley and Aldo Leopold or rhapsodists like Mr Lopez and John Muir. It infuses the fine angry essays of Edward Abbey and the lilting meditations of Annie Dillard, the rage of Farley Mowat and the elegance of E. B. White.

The barren distances of the Arctic are interrupted by small zones of fecund abundance such as Lancaster Sound, Bering Strait, Queen Maud Gulf, the Thomsen River on Banks Island, and the Yukon, Colville and Mackenzie River deltas, which seethe with swans, seals, geese and ducks. And, "Few things provoke like the presence of wild animals. They pull at us like tidal currents with questions of volition, of ethical involvement, of ancestry," says Mr Lopez. He bows deeply to nesting birds as he walks about, and later to the Bering Strait itself, alive with whales and walrusses, phalaropes and crested auklets, cormorants and oldsquaw ducks. He shoots for epiphanies, our obligation to the land being "to approach with an uncalculating mind .... To intend from the beginning to preserve some of the mystery within it ... to be alert for its openings, for that moment when something sacred reveals itself within the mundane, and you know the land knows you are there."

But he's good at summarizing scientific information too, and makes estimable reference to past travellers, like the fantastic Irish monk St Brendan, who with 17 compatriots devotedly explored the north Atlantic for

seven years in the sixth century, and the Briton Wilfred Thesiger, a more austerely fabulous nomad of our own time, and Rockwell Kent, the artist and adventurer, who is one of America's notably neglected personages. Although we do have in the United States a substantial tradition of nature writing - which includes not just Thoreau but Teddy Roosevent, not only John Muir and Jack London in Alaska but John Burroughs in the Catskills - we have, effectively, none in travel writing (Washington Irving and Lafcadio Hearn are isolated figures in our literature), except when we explore our own continent or when we go, like Mark Trwain, as "innocents abroad". A Graham Greene, Jan Morris, Lawrence Durrell, Evelyn Waugh based in New York or Oregon would seem an anomaly, and when American writers do travel to exotic places nowadays, whether to Africa, the Arctic, the Himalayas or the Amazon, they are often pigeonholed as nature writers, where they can be somewhat condescended to but are not in limbo in American terms.

Yet the world is changing so fast that already perhaps 10,000 different species of living things are being destroyed each year, a rate that will increase in explosive proportions and arouse a lot of alarmed, astonished travelling by even "mainstream" writers on behalf of mainstream publications, and by writers from the intellectual community, which has so far remained aloof from or indifferent to the environmentalist fray. Mr Lopez appears to have travelled extravagantly, though for literary purposes (his title, after all, is "Arctic Dreams") he seldom specifies how much or with whose help. The Arctic is ferociously expensive and difficult to travel in, and even if a freelance writer were able to hire an airplane to go beyond where the mail planes reach, many landing sites are controlled by oil and mining companies or government agencies, so that he is likely to find himself wheedling rides above the Arctic Circle with oilmen or research scientists, after having been vetted wittily for his political opinions beforehand by clever public-relations officials (Texans from Arco, Englishmen from Sohio) in rooftop bars in Anchorage or Toronto. More important, once he has cleared these hurdles and is afield, he frequently must trust his life to his companions, whether white or Eskimo, and so he returns to the temperate United States indebted to many people he may never see again.

The Arctic is full of stress-chewed, haunted-looking, self-dramatizing white men and furious, sometimes suicidal or homicidal Eskimos. It is a place where, one New Year's morning in an Eskimo village, I found a dog lying in front of its owner's cabin with its front legs chopped off, a casualty of the binge the night before, and where two champion sport sled-dog racers of my acquaintance - white men - feed their dog teams through the winter mainly on the meat of other dogs. This is to take only doggy examples of the rancorous malaise afflicting many people in the Arctic; and Mr Lopez, having travelled more, would know much more. So it was a mistake, I think, for him to leave out so much that he must have seen. He does better with the Dorset peoples who inhabited the Arctic one to three thousand years ago and whose dolorously hallucinatory carvings, "grotesque and bizarre," "tortured and psychotic," show that the endless nights and viselike cold have worked malignantly on the human psyche before.

Part-rhapsody, part-history, it is a bifurcated book, and displays a magnificently nonchalant assurance at times (as when he says at one point that Eskimos are not "errorless in the eyes of God"). As in a labour of love, he couldn't really let go of it; he has added a separate author's note, preface and prologue, and filled it with footnotes that swing among his memories and afterthoughts, defining the three kinds of twilight ("civilian", "nautical" and "astronomical") or explaining that a narwhal can break through only six inches of ice with its head, working from the water underneath, whereas a bowhead whale can ram through 18 inches to reach the

air to breathe. He makes the sensible suggestion that anthropomorphism be one of our tools of inquiry into how animals behave, although through most of this century visualizing the world i human terms has been ridiculed by scientists of every stripe, as has the idea, now suddenly back in vogue, that our nearer relatives among the mammals have an operative intelligence.

Apart from intelligence, this is how he speaks of a cold-climate mouselike rodent: "Whenever I met a collared lemming on a summer day and took its stare I would think: Here is a tough animal. Here is a valuable life. In a heedless moment, years from now, will I remember more machinery here than mind? If it could tell me of its will to survive, would I think of bio-chemistry, or would I think of the analogous human desire? If it could speak of the time since the retreat of the ice, would I have the patience to listen?"

In certain straits and bays of the Arctic Ocean are polynyas, ice-free areas that stay open i all weather because of currents and other factors and provide a resting place for sea birds and a refuge where pelagic mammals can breathe. Indeed, the congestion may be such that occasionally creatures will bump against each other good-humoredly in order to share the outlet to the air. But Mr Lopez also describes another phenomenon - the terrible savs-sat, which occurs when sea ice begins to close relentlessly around a patch of free water inside a channel or a fiord, so that before the animals that have been feeding and relaxing there have realised it, they are no longer able to swim out from under the ice to safety on a single breath. Then the beluga whales and narwhals - maybe hundreds struggling to surface in a single shrinking pool less than 50 feet square - begin to hoist and shoulder and flip each other into the air with the impact of the submerged and suffocating animals' efforts to breathe.

For travelling writers, a place like Alaska has itself already become a kind of polynya, where I've talked to people who have been interviewed by Mr Lopez, John McPhee, Joe McGinniss, Peter Matthiessen and other authors who have published Alaska books. Because the individual writers are different (Mr McPhee sterner in person than on paper, some Alaskans say; Mr McGinniss sterner on paper than in person), it's still fun - to draw on the metaphor, a good-natured polynya, not yet a savssat. But I believe that Alaska, like the game parks of East Africa and similar remnant wildernesses around the world, will soon become a savssat, not just for nature writers but for everybody whose spirits are uplifted out-of-doors. And I wish that anger had pricked Mr Lopez more often (as it did in his book "Of Wolves and Men"). He never quite acknowledges that the mouths of the Rhine, the Nile, the Hudson and the Mississippi's banks once swarmed with a riot of bird and land or sea life, as do these last places on earth he has had to fly thousands of miles to reach.

But Mr Lopez is a rhapsodist by temperament, and a unique one. The problem of course is with the larger American intellectual community, which - as if to prove the point - was host to the annual International Congress of PEN, the writers' organisation, in New York City through an entire week in January without ever raising the urgent question of the worldwide destruction of nature and how to address it


NEWSLETTER
OF
THE
Advanced Sea
Kayak Club
The 1985 West Coast
Sea Kayaking
Symposium
Sept 13, 14 & 15
CK/mer
Connaissance du Kayak de Mer
JOURNÉES INTERNATIONALES
KAYAK DE MER
$2.00 U.S.
$2.50 Canada
BLUE WATER
PADDLER
The Alaska Ocean Kayaking Digest
EXPEDITION TO SPITSBERGEN
THE FAROES 84
ITALY — MALTA 1982
INTERNATIONAL
LONG RIVER CANOEIST CLUB 75
ALASKA SEA KAYAKING SYMPOSIUM
to be held at Seward, on Resurrection Bay
June 6, 7, 8, 1986
The Fourth Annual
1985
Atlantic Coast
Sea Kayaking
Symposium
August 9,
Eskimo Origins
David Mann-
Explorer Extraordinaire
ICF-Congress Report
from Bulgaria
SEA·KAYAKER
FALL 1985
Vol.2 No 2
ANORAK
ASSOCIATION OF NORTH ATLANTIC KAYAKERS
REPORT
BRITISH KAYAK EXPEDITION
TO NORDKAPP 1975