

How to choose a good paddling partner

Lisa Kummer talks about characteristics that made for a memorable trip.

YOU should be somewhat selective about whom you ask to go on a trip to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area. You're going into the wilderness, so it's a good idea to bring someone who has some previous camping experience. They should be physically fit and have the ability to carry gear on long portages and be a good paddler to cover the distance you need to cover each day. Look for someone who is comfortable, self-reliant, and has a good sense of humor. I've taken about a dozen trips to the BWCA, starting when I was five, so I'm familiar with what it takes to make the trip and who would be a good candidate.

Last spring my parents and I decided to return to the BWCA after 3 years of being away from the Northwoods. The wilderness and loons were calling. We needed to find a fourth person to make the trip. The summer was slipping away, as it often does, and with the trip only 6 weeks away, I racked my brain trying to think of friends that would not only have some camping and paddling experience, but who would also be able to go on short notice. That alone ruled out a few friends!

Working at Rutabaga, I know quite a few good paddlers. After some thought I ruled out that option. After a long, busy summer, I decided it would be good to see a new face other than those I had worked hard with all summer.

Camping and paddling experience are a given, but it's also a good idea to make sure the new personality will be compatible with others in the group. Some people crave peace and quiet, others companionship. It's nice to have someone that will be useful around camp. It's a plus to find someone who already has some gear, too. And, let's be honest, you want to be compatible enough that you're still friends at the end of the trip.

After a few weeks of coming up blank, a name popped into my head. It was so obvious I scolded myself for not having thought of



her sooner. We had met stand up paddling in Madison, we'd done a few SUP races together, and we had even paddled on Lake Mendota together. I checked the box off for strong paddler. I knew that she had camping experience but didn't know how much. It turned out she had quite a bit of equipment—lightweight to boot! Liese made it easier and easier. (Mom and Dad didn't have to remember another name, just a slightly different pronunciation to that of my own.) All of the important boxes were checked off, now I just needed her to have some flexibility in her schedule for an impromptu trip. Luckily when I asked, her immediate response was "YES!"

Liese turned out to be a great companion on the trip. I know there's always an element of uncertainty in a trip, especially with a new member. You won't know for sure who will make a good wilderness companion until you get out there and mother nature challenges you. Liese and I complemented each others' shortcomings. I'm a good navigator, while Liese was more directionally-challenged. Had we both been directionally-challenged, we might have had a slight problem out there. Liese was good at tying knots, carrying the canoe on portages, helping around camp, and thought of bringing things on the trip that might otherwise have been left off the menu, like chocolate! Everyone has their strengths and finds ways they can contribute to the trip. There are those that love collecting firewood, want to filter the water each day,

brew the coffee, cook the food or clean up afterwards. You get into a routine out in the wilderness; everyone does their part. After a few days hopefully you're like a well-oiled machine out there, or close to it.

Ultimately that's the most important part, finding folks that want to contribute to a successful trip so everyone goes home feeling relaxed and rejuvenated from their time in the wilderness. In case you're wondering, Liese and I are still friends, and stronger for our wilderness experience together. We reminisce about our trip often and we look forward to planning our next paddling adventure together!



Lisa Kummer

Years at Rutabaga: 4

What got you paddling: My parents introduced me to paddling as a kid but I wasn't hooked until I started racing 6-man outrigger canoes in Hawaii and started stand up paddling.

Favorite place to paddle: Anywhere with beautiful scenery.

Longest Trip: 7 days.

Favorite part of Rutabaga: I get to do a little bit of everything working here.

Favorite boat: Minnesota II, it's fast and it tracks straight allowing you to get into a rhythm.

Sand strategies: Don't even try. It's part of the fun of playing in the water. Just take a long, thorough shower afterwards.



Choosing a boat: Canoe? Kayak? or SUP?

A quick primer on the various types of boats you'll find at Rutabaga and Canoecopia

THE canoe is the Lake Wobegon farmer: solid, sturdy, and generally not too flashy. The kayak is the modern Californian fusion restaurateur: willing to look forward as well as back, and mindful of current trends. The SUP is the transplant from Hawaii: wondering why everyone is stressing out rather than catching a wave and hanging ten.

Canoes are often easier to get in and out of. They haul more gear more easily. Tandem (2+ person) canoes benefit from some instruction. You can make them work without training, but learning a few tricks make for much more enjoyable cruising. Jim thinks they're less "fussy." Grab paddles, PFDs, and go. Also, he and Cat just have to move and tie down one boat, rather than two. It matters, sometimes. Shouldn't, but does.

Solo canoes are a fun, special case. Not as fast as tandems, but have a Zen calm about them. They're also easy to get in and out of. Once you pick up the control strokes (which are often used in a tandem), the grace of them almost overwhelms. Jim finds

himself slipping between paddle strokes without having any conscious thought about anything other than "go there."

Kayaks, especially the small "recreational" ones have the huge advantage of stability that beats the band —plus a double-bladed paddle. Most all are solo boats, and that makes for less-complicated input-outputs (translation: easier to just get in and go). Advanced boats (sea kayaks) can handle conditions that would be trying for canoes, and have efficiency bonuses as well. Whitewater and crossover kayaks give yourself the freedom go anywhere and/or bump into rocks. It's darned fun.

Stand-up Paddleboards (SUP) are the newcomer to the paddling scene. They're an incredible workout. They give nature-lovers a different view of the world. Kids love 'em. (I mean, they LOVE them, and will come up with all sorts of daredevil games if allowed to. We normally do.) If you've got even small surf or waves, they're a joy to play with. Downsides: they don't carry much gear, unless you're paddling a big board.

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Why I use a Greenland Paddle

An appreciation of the subtle joys of the traditional paddle by **Christopher Crowhurst**

LIKE religion, people newly converted to traditional paddling can be a little over zealous. Proclamations of the Greenland paddle's superiority over other styles are rampant on the Internet, and are generally fraught with bias and subjective conjecture. My own preference is built upon an obsession. I have been obsessed with Greenland Paddles since the very first time I saw a Greenland roll performed (which was performed by the president of the local paddle club at the time, Jeff Forseth, in the middle of Cedar Lake, an urban lake in the Twin Cities).

There is a simple elegance to Greenland Rolling and traditional paddling in general that builds upon the characteristics of the Greenland paddle, its

symmetry, its simplicity, its buoyancy. There is also a deep sense of connection that one can derive from paddling with a tool that you have made yourself. Simply fashioned from a 2x4 with basic tools like saws, planes, or my favorite, the spoke shave. A Greenland paddle is within the reach of anyone and everyone.

I have a collection of roughly fifty Greenland paddles, each with its own unique properties and characteristics. Slight changes in a Greenland paddle's shape, length, and width can profoundly affect the paddle's performance in specific conditions, or its effectiveness to perform specific tasks. My favorite Greenland paddle for surfing is not the same as the one I like to use on long trips, which is not the same as the one I use when practicing rolling, which is not the same as the one I use in a sprint race. It is not unusual to see me paddling with three Greenland paddles on board, not because I am indecisive, but because I like to use the right tool for the job.

The simplistic appearance of the Greenland paddle belies the complex nuances that this elegant tool possesses.

Just as there is a dichotomy in the simplicity and complexity of the paddle shape, the paddling strokes used to propel and turn the kayak are also nuanced in history and purpose. Whether learning to paddle silently to hunt sea mammals (or Styrofoam targets) or swiftly to



retrieve fallen prey (or chase down your fellow paddlers), the ancient strokes of the Inuit paddlers of Greenland provide a stroke for every scenario. Yet due to the friendly, non-threatening simplicity of the paddle, anyone can pick one up and propel a kayak forward with ease and control.

Rather than forming a dogmatic opinion of any paddle type or style, my recommendation is to experiment, try them all, and see what fits you, your body, your kayak, and your situation. Maybe the Greenland paddle will capture your heart too.

Christopher Crowhurst was runner up in 2016 for the "All-Around Good Guy Award" as decided by an unverified list of Greenland paddlers. He is also this year's president of Qajaq USA.

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Friends we don't know yet

Crafting a hand-made paddle makes more friends than **Darren Bush** could've imagined

IN September of 2015, I received this email.

I am trying to reach Darren based upon a recommendation from Michelle at Werner Paddles. I am trying to find an appropriate paddle for my daughter and Michelle thought Darren might be of help.

My daughter is 3.5, loves "bumpy" water, and has small kayak for the lake (until she gets older); but she needs a paddle. She is tiny and has congenital abnormalities of many of her fingers (missing tip of six of her fingers to the first joint).

Currently, I am assuming I will have to have something made for her to comfortably grip it. Do you have any suggestions on who I might contact about a custom paddle?

*Thanks,
Wendy*

Honestly, I have no idea why Michelle would tell Wendy to contact me, but it started off a chain of events that impacted many people for the better, myself included.

Mei is a little gem. Born in China and internationally adopted when she was two, she had a tumultuous start. Her mother, a paddler from North Carolina, could not have been more fortunate that Mei became her daughter, especially since Mei clearly loves adventures. Specifically, she loves to kayak.

Mei means "beautiful" in Chinese, and it fits. She paddles with her mom in a tandem inflatable, but hasn't been able to contribute much due to her hands, so I set out to solve the problem. None of the



paddle makers I know had a shaft that was small enough so her tiny fingers could wrap around them.

"Mei means beautiful in Chinese, and it fits."

Dear Wendy,

Where do you live? If I can't find a small diameter paddle, I could get a wood one and try to modify it in my shop. No charge because I love kids who love to paddle, and it sounds like a really fun project.

—Darren

The problem was the diameter. No wood paddle could be taken down to that size, and composite tubing from a paddle company doesn't come small enough. I had an idea.

Dear Darren,

I finally took Mei to the hardware store. I never did find the wooden dowels, which would have been a better measure, but I did find the PVC piping. She can easily grip a 1/2 inch (inner diameter) PVC pipe and it takes a some force for me to pull it out of her hands. Again, thank you for

tackling this project! I was thinking we'd never find the right paddle for her.

*Cheers,
Wendy*

We had our target diameter. After some thought, I wrote to Greg, the Vice President of Leki, a company that makes ski poles, just the right diameter for a young lady's paddle. His enthusiasm and generosity was instantaneous.

Dear Darren,

Awesome project! And we would love to help. A 180cm shaft would give you a good, long run of straight cylindrical before the taper. Let me know if you think this will work. Thanks for the effort and love you are putting into this!

I can already imagine the look on Mei's face when she gets your paddle. I know that sales and bottom lines are important... but I think it is stuff like this that really makes it all worthwhile.

—Greg

One email and half the problem was solved. Now for blades.

I had some old wooden canoe paddles laying around, and it was simple enough to cut out kayak paddle blades and plane them down to a light blade that wouldn't be hard for a four year-old to handle but still take a beating. A few hours later I had rough cut paddles, bored out to receive the shaft. A little epoxy and we had something resembling a paddle.

Dear Wendy,

The paddle is rough shaped and glued. It'll be much easier to sand the blades to their final shape with them glued to the shaft.

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It looks really cool. I need to get some more weight out of the blades so Mei won't get tired.

Is there something special she might like burned into the blade? A favorite animal or something?

—Darren

Darren,

Mei will be so excited! I cannot thank you enough for taking this project on. As for a design on the blade...she'd like just about anything. Maybe a river or waves or an otter or whatever pops in your head?

I got out the woodburner and wrote Mei on one blade, and the Chinese character for Mei on the other blade, did final sanding and varnishing, and sent it off UPS.

A few days later I got this..

The paddle came! We got home late on

Friday night and found it on the porch. I brought it in and left it in my office. Early Saturday morning Mei slipped into my office and opened it all on her own! She very excitedly brought it into my bed.

After I showed her how to hold it, she hasn't looked back. She's never been able to hold a paddle correctly —I'm excited to get her on the water.

*Thanks again,
Wendy*

I decided to let Greg know what a couple of ski pole shafts had done to change a young life.

Hey Darren,

I just pulled in off the road from the past couple of weeks. Catching up on things and I saw the video of Mei earlier... and now this email. That is one sweet paddle!! And

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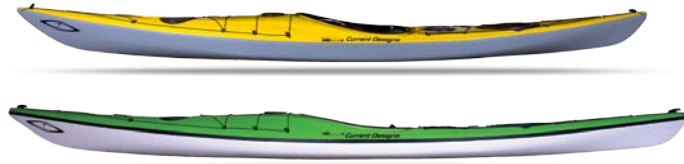
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Designed by Jesper Kromann-Andersen

Jesper Kromann-Andersen

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the look on Mei's face was pure magic. Pretty incredible. You do good work, my friend! On many levels...

Greg

I received links to You Tube videos of a petite young girl opening a box and pulling out a paddle that's just her size, then sitting on a picnic bench and demonstrating her strokes. It's enough to make a guy get a little misty. Then to see Mei using on the water in her own little boat, well, that opened up the waterworks. Greg's description of Mei's expression as pure magic was spot on.

Dear Wendy,

I am blessed to be able to be part of this project. While Mei gets a paddle, I get to see a young girl enjoy what I love so much, and it is truly a privilege to be part of that process. That's how the world works for



me...people come into my life when things are supposed to be a certain way, which is how you found me. It was destined to happen.

Last year Wendy and Mei were getting ready for a paddling trip. Mei asked her mom "Are we paddling with friends, or are we paddling with friends we haven't met yet?" Out of the mouth of a child came a truth that many of us have

forgotten. While the world seems chaotic, and mean-spirited vitriol spews from the television, the radio, and worst of all, our mouths, we need to remember what Mei says: There are no strangers, only friends we haven't met yet.

This is especially true with paddlers. I have friends all across the political spectrum, and I love them all. We may have disagreements about the direction our world is headed, but we can all agree that the best direction we can go is downstream.

Together, with friends we haven't met yet.

Darren Bush is the Executive Editor of the Canoeopia Show Guide and the owner of Rutabaga Paddlesports. He has a perfectly natural explanation for his fondness of redheads and red-hot pizza ovens.

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What happens to your first kayak (or boat?)

Kirk Wall suggests you start your own armada

YOUR first kayak was probably your gateway watercraft. It's where you decided you preferred rivers to lakes or maybe the opposite. You learned some basic paddling skills in that boat. Then maybe you decided you wanted a more specialized kayak or canoe and you purchased something that suited the river or the lake. Maybe you tell yourself that you've moved on from your first boat. "Why am I still holding on to that recreational kayak? I have enough collections of other things in the house. Why do I still need that first kayak? Do I sell it? You know it's

had a co-worker that really enjoyed the outdoors but never experienced kayaking. I thought it would be great to paddle the Baraboo River. "A-ha! My beginner kayak has a purpose again!" We determined the shuttle route ourselves. We put in at Haskins Park and he took to it immediately. He intuitively grasped how to brace, draw, and pry with very little input from me. I could tell he was enjoying his Friday afternoon being on a river, finding passages around small islands and dodging rocks that frequently appear. It's great to see through the eyes of a first-

timer: experiencing the dynamic of the water, and viewing all the creatures that inhabit it. Bringing a friend along and watching them paddle your first kayak reminds you of that first experience.

When we got to the Highway 113 bridge takeout, we discussed our next river trip. After that outing I never doubted keeping that boat. I began

wondering whether I needed to add more boats to the Wall Family Armada, and how I could explain that need to my wife. In time I realized that no explanations were necessary. She saw it coming all along.

Kirk Wall hails from Green Bay and has been a salesperson at Rutabaga for over five years. He plays guitar in a rock band and cringes whenever anyone asks them to play something by request as he fears it may be Billy Joel's "Piano Man." No one ever has, but the terror is still real.



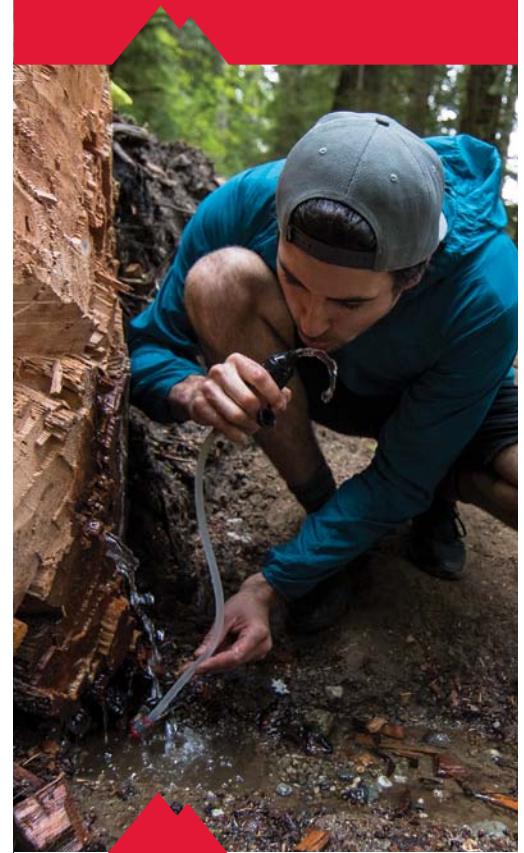
getting kind of dusty. I just don't see myself paddling that kayak ever again." Maybe you found yourself asking that question after purchasing a new kayak or canoe.

There's more life left in that first boat. It's important to think about how to get that first kayak on the water again. Maybe there's a friend or co-worker that's always thought about kayaking and just needs that extra nudge. That beginner kayak is your connection to creating a bigger pool of paddling friends.

Speaking from my own experience, I

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One canoe's story

Wrangling swans and listening for bats. By **Lisa Gaumnitz**

*"I'VE been everywhere, man.
I've been everywhere, man.
Crossed the deserts bare, man.
I've breathed the mountain air, man.
Of travel I've had my share, man.
I've been everywhere."*

Johnny Cash may have sung it, but I've lived it. Sugar River, Sand River, Black River, Rock River, St. Croix... Yes, I've been everywhere, man... Every cattail marsh where young trumpeter swans hide, countless stretches of river where bats dive bomb for nighttime snacks, wood turtles lay their eggs along the banks, or rare mussels dig their feet ever deeper into the riverbed.



Yes, I've been everywhere since Rutabaga donated me to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to help track down rare plants and animals and aid in species' recovery. My stern has been slung on top of more vehicles and slid into sparkling waters on more hot, humid Wisconsin summer days than any of my bowed brethren.

I've been up at the crack of dawn to listen to marsh birds in New Munster State Wildlife Area, nosing my bow into the marsh while my crew for the day uses a broadcast caller to fill the air with bird calls to flush out Yellow Rails, the American Bittern, and the Least Bittern so they can identify the birds and count them. A Virginia Rail takes the bait and erupts with a forceful *kid-dik, kid-dik, dik, dik*. It walks right up to me and checks me out.



"The critters don't mind canoes and kayaks because they are so quiet," says my crewman for the day, Conservation Biologist Rich Staffen. "You can sneak up on them."

I am stealthy. In late summer I'd sneak up on young trumpeter swans in Crex Meadows or Sandhill Wildlife Area or Turtle Flambeau Flowage to see how their population is recovering from near extinction in the 1980s. Back then, eggs brought from Alaska were hatched in Wisconsin at the Milwaukee Zoo and the resulting young were raised in captivity and then released in wetlands where, over time, they had their own families. My job was to chase down

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new generations so we could count them and outfit them with identification collars and leg bands to help us track them in the future.

The young swans, or cygnets, would see dozens of us bearing down on them and head for the cattails. Pilots in DNR planes would radio down the birds' location and I'd glide over, my crew would grab the cygnet from

bats lived, what kinds, and how many there were in specific locations – before the anticipated arrival of white-nose syndrome. That deadly bat disease was sweeping the eastern U.S. and would kill upwards of 7 million bats in the eastern U.S. and Canada by 2014, when the disease was first detected in Wisconsin.

I was loaded down with plant guides, GPS units, notebooks and a long-handled rake. Sometimes my crew would drag the rake through the water, twist it and pull it up, and describe the plants they'd pull up in their notebooks. Mostly they'd pop in and out over my sides in shallow water, moving in close to examine the plants.

Every now and again they'd find something that set them twittering like a flock of songbirds. They'd spend the next 10 minutes getting excited at what they were seeing and why it was there. One day, it was a big, gelatinous blob that looked like a brain. Fresh water bryozoans, water animals that have been around for 500 million years, and that eat and digest plankton. These creatures live in colonies that can get as big as a basketball.

One day I glided into Frog Bay, the first tribal national park in the United States. The Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa bought this area and have protected it. Members of the tribe came out to greet us, and showed us around. It was clear they treasure this area.

"I felt very lucky working up there," said my crew member for that day, Amy Staffen. "Just the beautiful setting and connecting with some really nice people. I love Lake Superior. It's wild and free."

I can't argue with her on that one.

I'm already looking forward to my next adventure...my next chance to help conserve some of Wisconsin's unique plants and animals...the next line in my song.

*"Of travel I've had my share, man.
I've been everywhere."*

Interested in paddling to help protect, monitor, and restore Wisconsin's unique plants and animals? Visit DNR's Natural Heritage Conservation booth at Canoecopia to learn more about volunteer opportunities, pick up a free paddling guide, and buy a new eagle license plate to support these and other endangered resources conservation efforts. Or contact DNR's Citizen-based Monitoring Coordinator Eva Lewandowski at Eva.Lewandowski@wisconsin.gov or (608)264-6057.

Lisa Gaumnitz writes for DNR's Natural Heritage Conservation Program.



behind, and we'd head to shore to weigh, measure, and give the bird a health checkup before putting on the ID tags.

That was exciting! But as they say, that was not my first rodeo. I did that for nearly 20 years until trumpeter swans flew off the endangered species list in 2009 and DNR started relying on aerial surveys.

Not everything I did was so rough and tumble.

I've spent dozens of peaceful nights gliding under starry skies while my crew held a bat detector and recorded the calls of the bats flying along river corridors and snatching up mosquitoes and other insects.

The tranquility belied the urgent nature of our mission: understanding where Wisconsin

Now my nights along those routes will likely be much quieter as I help document the terrible toll this disease is already taking on Wisconsin bats — and listen hopefully, in future years, for a comeback.

I'll never forget the summers I spent gliding into picturesque Lake Superior waters to document the kinds of plants in these special places. Places where towering white pines, balsam fir, spruce and paper birch lined the shore and bald eagles flew overhead or perched in trees. We were doing "meandering surveys" at the mouths of 21 rivers on Lake Superior's south shore, special mixing zones where lake water flows into the rivers and the rivers empty into the lakes. We were looking to catalog and describe the plants in the shallow water and on shore.

Rutabaga's boat categories, explained.

In the *kayak* world we'll start with **Recreational** (10-12') These are the lake/cabin/little river boats. Quite wide for stability. They'll take most everyone, though not always with the best efficiency. (Often chosen for kids, but the extreme width can make paddling harder.)

Day Touring (13-15') Longer, narrower, and more efficient than recreational. They are the "do everything" of the kayak world. Most are still very, very stable, and hit a sweet spot between tracking (going straight) and turning. They often have bulkheads (walls) and hatches in the front and/or back to make for easier packing & rescues.

Touring (16+') Also known as sea kayaks. At least two hatches and bulkheads. They're generally on the narrow side (under 24 inches wide). Depending on the design they can be straight-tracking for tripping, or pretty maneuverable for playing in surf conditions, or somewhere in between. They're really efficient paddling craft, and reward the knowledgeable paddler.

Whitewater/Crossover (7-14') If moving water, and varying levels of derring-do is your cup of tea, check these out. They're the SUV of the paddling world. Lots of rocker for maneuverability, and sometimes a drop down skeg (think a fin) for tracking on slower, flatter water.

Fishing A new specialty type. Typically much wider, maximizing stability. Often outfitted at the factory with all sorts of tracks, attachment points, and storage options.

Canoes are trickier to put into little boxes, as they're arguably more versatile (it's easier to make a canoe work as a solo or tandem, for one thing). Depending on paddler weight and equipment needs, there are lots of solutions here. Lengths are for tandem, or 2-person, canoes.

Fishing/Recreational (14-16') Generally taller sides, blunter entry lines, and tending to wider, maximally-stable designs. Often with more primary stability.

All-purpose (15-17') Good for everything. Some favor tracking, some optimized for turning. Some (often shorter and smaller) do decently as solo-tandem hybrids.

Touring (16.5-19' +) These are often better suited for those who want to get out there and/or carry a decent load. Often a good choice for those with multiple dogs or kids. Large canoes catch small breezes, so being able to control your boat is especially important. Can be done —with style!— but is not intuitive. We'd like to suggest you take a class. Or maybe two? ;)

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That time we took our dog & choir paddling by **Jim Pippitt**



conductor skillfully guiding a baton, but instead was a kind (if crazy) man waving “a stick.” Rosie loves playing Stick. She made playful attempts at grabbing the baton. The choir attempted to keep time with the now wildly darting marker, though not terribly well. We completely crashed when she finally lunged at it and plopped it in front of me, panting heavily. We laughed and laughed. We paddled on, still singing and whooping it up.

I still get people recalling what a terrific time we had, and it has become one of our choir’s prized activities. I guess the lesson I really should have learned was, say “Yes” more often. Next time I’ll need to demonstrate how they can organize an outing themselves. It starts by saying “Yes.”

STEVE asked me, “Jim, you work for Rutabaga, right?” Yes. “Good. Since you’re in the outdoor industry, we’ve decided to make you the chair of the choir’s canoeing entertainment committee.”

Not many people know that Jim Pippitt used to do a pretty mean Madonna-inspired dance until he was politely “requested” to cease and desist by various county authorities. He is the editor of the Canoeecopia Show Guide.

Lesson learned: say “Yes” at your peril. I had never done anything like this. I mean, I’m a programmer who can sing and sell boats as needed. No mind. It was done. Next rehearsal I had a frog in my throat and a sign-up sheet in my hand as I said, “I hold in my hand your ticket for the best day of your summer.”

It turned out to be the best summer day ever. The weather gods were upon us. Very light wind, warm but not too warm, lots of sun, and the blue sky dotted with beautiful puffy clouds. The River was flowing normally.

We rented our canoes and took off. The valley was filled with the sounds of songs, stories, and laughter. And barking. We’d stop to run the children and/or our dog Rosie. We’d play in the river or on the sandbar. Eventually we decided to have “a rehearsal.” Our conductor grabbed a stick, plopped down in the water, gave us a starting pitch and we were off.

Given that the choir was glowing with the magical combo of sun, song, and camaraderie, we knew this wasn’t going to be our most productive rehearsal. The quality of our singing plummeted when Rosie decided that the man in the river wasn’t a tenured

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Driving to the fishing hole

Learning about the fishing kayaks other propulsion system from **Dan Bowers**

IF you asked me six years ago what is going to be the “biggest trend” in 2017, the first thought wouldn’t have been kayaks powered by your legs. I knew kayak fishing was on the rise right along with SUP, but 2017 brings us the biggest influx to the sport since hulls that support standing and casting. Seven brands will be debuting models featuring pedal power this year, competing with the two major brands that have ruled the market prior. With all this attention to pedal-yaks, here are a few things to consider.

These are not your Grandpa’s pedal boats. The big, boxy tubs we all grew up with can’t compare to what is now available. These pedal-yaks can move while maintaining rock solid stability, in some cases allowing folks to stand



easily depending on the model. The sleekness of a kayak hull matched with the well-designed drives makes them much speedier than the pedal wheels of old. For those of you concerned about the weight of these sit-on-top pedal kayaks, you may be surprised to hear that lighter

weight ABS plastic versions are also available this year from some of the brands.

Depending on how you fish, pedal kayaks can help immensely. Whether you are trolling for brown trout in Lake Michigan, holding your ground in current while casting into an eddy, or battling a muskie as it pulls you around a lake, a pedal drive is hard to beat. It keeps your hands truly free to deal with the fish on your line or casting on the fly. The majority of the pedal drives that are available seamlessly move forward or in reverse, allowing you to adjust accordingly without interruption from the task at hand.

Continued on pg. 77

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FEATURES



Dan **Bowers**

Years at Rutabaga: 1st Year

How did you get started paddling: I got hooked on paddling while visiting Ronnie and Marsha at Sea Kayak Georgia and gaining a L1-L2 Coastal Kayak Instructor Certification.

Longest trip: On the water, it was a 5-day journey paddling the whole coast of Pictured Rocks National Lake Shore.

Favorite place to paddle: Toughest question ever. If I had to pick one, it would be paddling the Upper Youghiogheny in Maryland, beautiful Class IV-V Creeking.

Favorite Part of Rutabaga: Both a blessing and a curse is getting to work with all the latest and greatest boats and gear everyday while at the same time realizing you can't have it all for yourself. Helping folks enjoy time out on the water as much as I do is the best part of this job, hands down. The staff here at Rutabaga is world class.

Little Known Fact

About You: I was adopted at 11 months old from the Mountains of North Carolina by a fantastic family. I love them to the moon and back.



Continued from pg. 75

I often hear the question, “What about weeds or shallow depths?” A lot of the designs out there allow you to raise the drive out partially or completely to glide over weed beds, clean out debris, and clear the shallows. Remember to bring a paddle and use accordingly. Some of the manufacturers also allow motors to replace the pedal drive if the pilot wants a little more get up and go.

Pedal kayaks are not just for folks casting lines. For those looking for a full-body workout or those who like to lean back and cruise while snapping photos, you may want to look into the option. While kayaking is a great core work out, many have to jump on a bike to work the lower half. Not any more! You can switch (in most cases) effortlessly from paddling to pedaling and back again (or both) without having to beach. Lining up the perfect snapshot of a turtle perched on a log can be tough when having to drop your paddle, grab the camera, focus and shoot all while wind, waves, and the momentum of your last stroke affect your aim.

Welcome to a world of continuing innovation. While the above may not include every talking point when considering the pedal-yak route, hopefully it is a good base from which to climb. From casting lines, snapping photos, bird watching, or your morning workout, these pedal-yaks have a lot to offer. Who doesn't enjoy saying, “Look, Ma! No hands!”



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On the value of experience and hubris

New friends make old mistakes and good rescues by **Kate Westphal**

THIS past year I took a couple of paddling trips with people I had never paddled with before. I was excited. My little black book of paddling friends is not very big, and most of them work with me at Rutabaga. Finding the time to paddle with them is not easy, as we have to keep the store open so we can sell things to you all. This year our friends Brian and Hannah showed interest in going down a river with my boyfriend, Nate, and me and we said, “Yes! Let’s!” We knew we wanted to take them on the Kickapoo. Nate and I love the ease of this river along with all of its scenery and exciting twists and turns.

Brian and Hannah live in Milwaukee, so we decided that we would meet up at Wildcat Mountain, where we would camp for the weekend. We decided to do a day paddle, instead of an overnight. They got an earlier start and arrived before we did. By the time

we got up there it was dark, but not too dark to see the huge yellow aluminum canoe that was strapped on Hannah’s CRV. They opted to bring up a friend’s canoe instead of renting one from one of the outfitters in town, which forced them into one of the very important parts of becoming a paddler: traveling with your boat. I gaped at their first tie-down attempt. Their canoe rested atop a nest of outdoor furniture cushions on a naked roof held down only with bow and stern lines. As the reality of what was happening atop the CRV sank in, Hannah said, “I wondered when you’d notice that.” I slowly said, “I have extra straps I can give you for the drive home.” They told us their story of driving from Milwaukee in fear that this thing would fly off their car. They stopped along the way to get better carabiners, and watched the tip of the canoe the whole way here. Yup,

just like my first time transporting a canoe. Looking up every minute or so, your heart skipping a beat if the tip moved at all to the left or right! But they made it, and without even knowing it they skipped to second level paddlers: transporters.

On Saturday morning, our adventure really began. First with the shuttle, a new concept to our friends, but another real part of being a paddler, or at least a river paddler. The Kickapoo is a great place to do your first shuttle, since the twisty river doesn’t make for a long drive from put-in to take-out. And there are a lot of options; your paddle can be as long or as short as you want. I had planned for about 3 - 4 hours on the river.

Before we actually put in, Nate and I decided to give Brian and Hannah as many dry bags as we could, to make sure all of their things

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stayed dry. It was another good lesson: this is a drybag, this is how you use it; it is your friend. Hannah and Brian were newly engaged, and totally perfect for each other, but I couldn't help but think that this might be a test of sorts. I've found that paddling with your partner is a probably more beneficial than any counseling you will receive.

It was a beautiful October day to be on the river, sunny and in the high 50s. The colors were not quite at peak, but seemed to be changing even as the day went by. The river was quiet, which was a pleasant surprise, since there were more than a few boats on the cars at Wildcat Mountain. Almost instantly, I could see the smile on their faces. As we went down the river the smiles stayed and a few "This is so great!" were exclaimed. They were naturals! It was clear that this was looking like a success.

Nate and I have not been paddling together for too long, but we are both strong and comfortable in a canoe, so we have never really had any serious problems. About an hour into the paddle, as we were floating along and had decided things were going great, our day took an interesting turn.

Brian and Hannah decided they were hooked and that this would indeed happen again. Yes! Success! Nate looks over and says "Maybe one day you guys will be great paddlers too!" I love his confidence, but in an ironic and cruel twist, not 2 minutes after he says this, we are in the the water! IN THE RIVER! I have never dumped a canoe before and it was shocking! The turn we went in on was moving quickly, and by the time I realized what had happened, I saw Nate floating down the river trying to grab everything he could along his way.

We managed to dump right along a sandy embankment, which made a convenient beachhead. Our friends were ahead of us, but looked back and saw us capsize. They paddled back to us and helped us collect our wet, soggy things. When we decided to give them dry bags, we kind of forgot about the fact that *we* may actually need to use them. I was so completely impressed with their swiftness and quick thinking. Without them we probably would have lost more than just a beer! We had another lesson on the river that day, one that we didn't expect: This is what to do when you dump a canoe on a quick-moving river.

I was totally impressed with Hannah and Brian, but I was also amazed at our teamwork. Nate and I could have spent the rest of our day yelling and arguing about how we ended up in the river, but



Kate and Nate

we didn't! It was done, everything was recovered, and we still had paddling to do!

Even with our little hiccup, our friends still really enjoyed their time on the river that day. They have strong communication skills, and it showed in their paddling.

The rest of our weekend was lovely, perfect, crisp fall weather. Beautiful colors complemented the rolling hills of the Kickapoo River Valley. Nate and I showed our friends how to use the cam straps we gave them for the ride home. They both felt much better knowing that the canoe atop their car was attached more securely.

I absolutely cannot wait for the next trip we take with these two. And who knows, maybe one day they'll be great paddlers too.

Kate Westphal is our sign-making, customer-wrangling, banana-throwing goddess. She sports a tattoo with a state name that is not Wisconsin, but we love her just the same.

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This river of rocks is an unnamed creek on Frank Wolf's 44-day Meskwon Noronok Expedition. At least half of this 75-kilometer section involved some sort of dragging a fully-loaded T-Formex Esquif Canyon through the bush or up empty river beds. "We beat the hell out of this boat. I would say definitely tougher than Royalex."

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American Canoe Association.....Lby	Gales Storm Gathering.....Lby	NPS - St Croix Nat'l Scenic R...Lby	Sunset Canoe Outfitting.....C6
Adirondack Guide Boat.....B18	Geckobrandts.....R4	NRS.....K7	Superior Portage Pads.....G5
Adventure Technology Paddles...T1	Girl Scouts WI - BadgerlandLby	NuCanoe.....N8	Surf Wing Kayaks.....B7
Agawa Canyon.....Q15	Goal Zero.....M2	Ocean Kayak.....Q13	Sweet Protection.....D8
Alabama Mtn Lks Tourist Assn..N6	Gränsfors Bruk.....Q16	Old Scout Outdoor Products.....G4	Swift Canoe & Kayak.....B19
Aluu Paddles.....B1	Great Rivers Chapter Wooden Canoe Heritage Assn.....A13	Old Town Canoe.....Q13	Sylvan Sport.....T3
Aqua-Bound.....Q10	Harken.....K12	Olive Lake Eco Lodge.....P5	Tahe Kayaks.....H3
Astral.....D9	Harmony Gear.....R2	Ontario Parks.....Q2	TC Teardrops.....F2
Badger Paddles.....R5	Hayward Lakes Vis & Conv Ctr..D6	Original Bug Shirt Company.....N17	TEAMSurvivor Madison.....Lby
Badger Tenkara.....Q5	Hurricane Aquasports.....S1	Outdoor Research.....Q11	Therm-a-Rest.....K8
Baga Booth.....M1	Ice Age Trail Alliance.....Lby	Packtowl.....K8	Thule.....J8
Bargain Baga Booth.....P14	Inland Sea Kayakers.....Lby	Paddlesports North America.....Lby	Trailtopia.....K4
Bearskin Lodge & Wldns Outf'r..B3	Innova Kayaks.....J4	Paddling.com (paddling.net).....A8	TRAK Outdoors.....N12
Beaver Dam Lake Assn.....L9	Ironman WI Swim Safety.....Lby	Perception.....T2	Triton Trailers.....C1
Bending Branches.....Q10	Isle Royale National Park.....Lby	Peter Grimm.....M6	US Coast Guard Auxiliary.....Lby
Best Friends Neenah-Menasha..Lby	Jackson Kayak.....F5	Piragis Northwoods Company...C10	ugo wear.....N4
BIC Sport.....S4	Jefferson County Parks Dept....Lby	Platypus.....K8	Unexplored Florida.....P2
Big Agnes.....B17	Kanooler Products.....P1	Prairie State Canoeists.....Lby	United City Yorkville.....Lby
Boardworks.....R1	Katadyn North America.....Q20	Prosser RV.....T3	Upper Sugar R Watershed Assn Lby
Book Area.....K6	Kayak Chicago.....B14	Pygmy Boats.....R3	Ursa Major Charters.....L3
Boundary Waters Journal.....A2	Keen Footwear.....N18	Pyranha Kayaks.....G2	Utopia Gear.....B4
Bureau of Land Management....Lby	KIALOA.....Q22	Quantum Engineerig.....Q21	Vilas County Chamber.....N5
C4 Waterman.....A9	Klean Kanteen.....A7	Rapid Media.....A1	Visit Cook County.....B5
Cache Lake Camping Foods.....K3	Kokatat.....J5	Red Lake Outfitters.....Q4	Voyageur North Outfitters.....C14
Callie Rohr Memorial Canoe & Kayak Race.....Lby	Kokopelli Raft.....Q18	Richland Ctr WI Tourism.....P8	Voyageur Outward Bound.....N3
Camp Manito-wish YMCA.....N10	Ladies Lake Sea Kayak Symp....Lby	River Action.....Lby	Voyageur Wilderness Prgm.....Q8
Canoeing.com.....B8	Lake Geneva Canopy Tours.....L8	River Alliance of Wisconsin....Lby	Wabakimi Canoe & Fish Outf'r..P10
Cedar Falls Tourism & Vis Bur...D4	Leatherman.....N19	RiverSport Adventures.....K2	Washington Island Commerce...C9
Chesapeake Light Craft.....J3	Level Six.....P12	Rock Art in Watercolors.....L5	WaterSide Ties.....C8
Chicago Adventure Therapy.....Lby	Lightweights.....G3	ROW Sea Kayak Adventures.....C13	Waupaca Area Conv & Vis Bur...P4
Chosen Valley.....K11	Liquid Logic Kayaks.....T5	Rutabaga Outdoor Programs.....E1	Wausau Kayak/Canoe Corp.....Lby
Chota.....M5	Living Adventure.....B15	RV Butler.....D2	Wenonah Canoe.....B16
Cooke Custom Sewing.....E4	Loon Paddleboards.....Q19	Sanborn Canoe.....R6	Werner Paddles.....R7
Current Designs Kayaks.....C15	Mad City Paddlers.....Lby	Savage River Works.....N15	Whitecap Kayak.....J2
Dagger.....R2	Malone Auto Racks.....K9	Sea To Summit.....N13	WI Canoe Heritage Museum.....A10
Delta Kayaks.....C16	McNett Corp.....M7	SEA-LECT Designs.....K13	WI Dept Natural Resources.....N2
Don Miller Subaru.....H2	Minocqua Area Commerce.....P11	Seal Skinz US.....N18	WI DNR Fisheries Mgt.....Lby
Door County Adventure Ctr.....C2	MSR.....K8	SealLine.....K8	WI DNR Nat Heritage Cons....Lby
Door County North.....B11	MTI Adventurewear.....J6	Seals Sprayskirts & Acc's.....M4	WI's Northern State Forests.....P9
Door County Sea Kayak Symp....E1	Native Watercraft.....T5	Seattle Sports.....N16	Wild Rivers Interpretive Ctr.....L7
Eagle's Nest Outfitters.....Q11	Navarro Canoe.....D1	Seven Treasures.....J1	Wilderness Ironworks.....L4
Eco Migrations.....F1	Necky Kayak.....Q13	Shore Boards.....D7	Wilderness Systems.....R2
Esquif International.....L6	NOLS.....B10	Sierra Club.....Q7	Willamette Riverkeeper.....Lby
Everglades Area Tours.....P7	North Country Trail Assn.....Lby	Sigurd Canoe Company.....B12	Williams and Hall Outfitters.....Q9
Exped.....Q11	North Water.....M3	Silverwaves Jewelry.....L1	WindPaddle.....Q1
Explore La Crosse.....D5	Northeast Iowa Whitewater.....P3	Simply Native Foods.....Q12	WindPouch.....B2
EZ Dock of the Midwest.....H4	Northeastern Minnesotans for Wilderness.....N1	Snapdragon Designs.....Q3	Wisconsin State Park System.....K1
Filson.....N14	Northern Forest Canoe Trail....Lby	Snikwah.....S5	Woolpower.....Q16
FITS.....Q14	N Lakes Canoe Base Alumni.....P6	Snowtrekker Tents.....A12	YakAttack.....Q6
Friends Apostle Is Nat'l Lkshr..Lby	Northern Tier High Adv, BSA....B9	Sol Paddle Boards.....Q17	Yakima.....J7
Friends of Boundary Waters.....Lby	Northland College.....N9	Southern Utah Wldns Alliance..Lby	Yumbutter.....C7
Friends of Lower WI Riverway..Lby	NorthPoint Paddles.....L2	Spinning Wheels Publishing.....A11	
Friends of Lake Wingra.....Lby	Northstar Canoes.....E3	Spirit of the Wilderness.....N11	
Friends of Wabakimi.....Lby	Northwest IN Paddling Assn....Lby	Stellar Kayaks USA.....T6	
Fritz Orr Canoe.....C11	Northwoods Wildlife Center....Lby	Stohlquist WaterWare.....H5	
Frost River.....C17	Nova Craft Canoe.....G1	Sunday Afternoons.....S4	
		Sunsect.....A5	

PARTING WORDS

Thank you for another year together

Ethan Scheiwe reflects on Rutabaga's (and Canoeopia's) mission

FROM the bottom of our hearts —thank you for another great year. Your business is, and always will be appreciated here at Rutabaga. We have many familiar and friendly faces come into the store, and we're always happy to add more.

We're all boaters ourselves and know how important it is to get you the products that fit into the activities you describe to us. That might be one of the best things around here. Believe it or not, we aren't a crowd of sales people trying to upsell you. We're also not in the business of selling you inferior products that aren't adequate

"We just want you to be happy with your new or continued passion for paddling.."

and safe to your goals and aspirations. Our goal is to provide a quality product that fits directly into your lifestyle. No more, no less. We don't really care whether you paddle a recreational kayak, a used canoe, or a sea kayak. We just want

you to be happy with your new or continued passion for paddling. Our motto always has been, "We don't sell boats. We sell time on the water." And that mission will ring true for years to come.

I came from the hardware industry to the outdoor industry six years ago. When I moved into outdoor recreation, the customer base proved to be an extreme shift. Originally, I had noticed that hardware customers needed that flange or screw for their project. What I noticed here at Rutabaga was that our customers didn't necessarily need these things, but more or less wanted these things. It was the classic need-versus-want list we've all made in our heads. Now I understand that while boating equipment might still fall into the "want" category, it's walking on the line of becoming a "need." I feel as if we're moving into the trend of understanding and knowing that it is a necessary human need to go out and explore our land. In our case, this is through paddling.

A customer once said to me, "Let the stress of the day flow off your paddle blade." That's what it's all about. We'll see you out there.



Ethan is Rutabaga's Sales and Warehouse Manager. When not wrangling people into boats he can be found indulging in photography, canoeing, chainsaw smuggling, or some combination thereof.

FIVE THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT SUP AND PFDs

1. The US Coast Guard considers a paddleboard a vessel, just like a canoe or kayak. If you are outside of the surf or swim zone, you must have a "wearable PFD for each person aboard." And a signal device, like a whistle.
2. Additional regional or state PFD regulations may apply, but do not supersede the national USCG ruling. That means all 50 states. Even Hawaii.
3. Most SUP paddlers wear their inflatable belt pack PFD backwards. It is designed to be worn with the pouch in front of the body so that the pull tab is accessible.
4. Inflatable PFDs have an age limit: not for use by children younger than 16, or by persons weighing less than 80 pounds.
5. The American Canoe Association recommends that people use a leash in addition to a PFD. It's not a law, but it's great common sense!

Thanks to Gordon Colby of MTI for these great pointers.



Ethan helps a customer



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Rutabaga's 2017 Core Staff: Back Row, L-R Dan Bowers, Richard Retzlaff, Mary Bonk, Ethan Scheiwe, Kate Westphal, Amelia Musser, Jim Pippitt, Lisa Kummer, Kirk Wall, Tadhg Barrett. Front Row: Sasha Stone, Nancy Saulsbury, Darren Bush, Marit Haug, Connie Lane. Not pictured: Joel O'Neill



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