



RMSKC AT THE DOOR COUNTY SEA KAYAK SYMPOSIUM

By Clark Strickland

Five members of the Rocky Mountain Sea Kayak Club made the trip to Wisconsin for Rutabaga's 12th annual *Door County Sea Kayak Symposium* on the second weekend of July.

Door County is the peninsula that encloses Green Bay. It's a prime vacation destination for Midwesterners, but the gorgeous landscape did not seem at all crowded. Nor were there many pleasure boats out on the lake. The water of Lake Michigan itself is chilly, but Rowley's Bay was warm; light neoprene clothing was enough for the significant amounts of time spent in the water on drills and recovering from pushing the envelope.



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The symposium was organized by Rutabaga Paddlesports, a full service sea kayak and canoe shop in Madison, Wisconsin, with a huge cadre of qualified instructors.

Link that resource with the big water of Lake Michigan, 170 paddlers of all levels, a comfortable rustic resort called Rowley's Bay [marked with a star on the map], decent weather and general Midwestern niceness, and you have a recipe for a fine weekend. The chow was tasty and the beer was free.

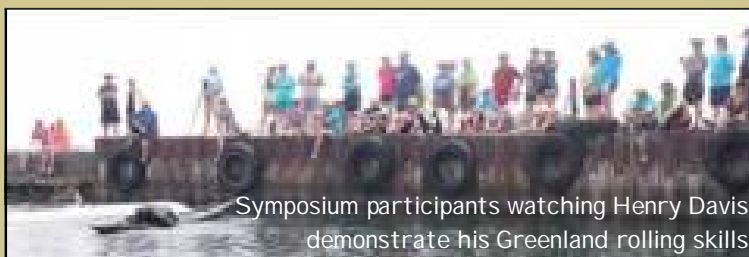
The club members at the Symposium were Brian Hunter, Clark and Marty Strickland, Ken Kloppenborg and Stacy Rezak. We all pursued instruction and expeditions suited to our own levels of expertise and saw each other only at lunch and dinner.

The focus of this Symposium was skills development in small group classes and expeditions. Brian took advantage of the opportunities to play on the open lake in several classes and trips that stretched the application of his skills in a lively chop and moderate winds. Marty took a series of women's classes that propelled her into comfort with basic skills. Her group stayed together for most of the weekend and bonded very nicely. Her paddle buddies have invited her on excursions in the upper Midwest. Clark got close to a roll and honed boat handling skills. Ken enjoyed clambering into and out of his boat and even got to enjoy a refit of his bulkhead. Stacy was off having fun.

The instructors taught us a good protocol for communication among a paddling group when one of the members suffers a capsize. The first person to see the capsize yells "OVER" loudly enough for the group members to hear. Each individual in the group repeats "OVER" loudly. When the capsized paddler is out of the boat and has signaled OK by patting his/her head, the first person in the group to see that yells "SWIMMER" loudly enough to be heard by all nearby. The other members of the group echo the call "SWIMMER". The rescue then proceeds as needed. Having all members of the group communicate in this way helps ensure that everyone knows that one of their group is in trouble. It also spreads the information beyond the voice range of the first person calling "OVER" and "SWIMMER". This is another reason to keep within easy hailing distance when a group is paddling.

Door County Sea kayak Symposium is a family-friendly, welcoming environment for paddlers through intermediate skill levels. It's a good value and a great way to introduce beginner paddlers to the fun of our wet sport. The weekend is highly organized and run very efficiently. Marty and Clark may well make the trip to Door County again.

Check this web address for the dates and details for next year: www.everyonepaddles.com



Symposium participants watching Henry Davis demonstrate his Greenland rolling skills

EDITOR'S NOTE: Rutabaga Paddlesports was super-helpful with this article—they sent speedy approval for using their site's pictures, and then emailed me a few more to illustrate Door County Sea Kayak Symposium's fun.



Maneuvering boats into a tight formation: a fun test of new-found paddling skills



Evening campfires for sharing experiences

