

A Message from the RICKA Wilderness Chair

Wilderness Tripping During a Pandemic

As I am sure it was for many of you, my travel plans for 2020 pretty much all went up in smoke by the end of March. Planned trips to Florida, Arizona, California, and even Peru, all had to be cancelled. The one that hurt the most was the planned camping-paddling excursion with RICKA to the Adirondacks in August...the State of NY closed their borders literally 3-4 days before many of us were going to be on the road...one couple was actually within sight of the VT-NY border when the e-mail cancelling the trip went out!



Chuck Horbert
RICKA Wilderness Chair

Still, despite the climbing numbers of people infected with COVID, I was actually hopeful—at least initially that I could manage to lead a multi-day trip or two. After all, what better way to socially distance than out in the middle of nowhere with a small group of paddlers? Sure, logistics would be a little tougher. Paddlers would have to be completely self-contained food-wise. We would not have access to any hotels on the way, for safety, but finding campsites is not difficult if one knows where to look.

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Save the Date

Flatwater Planning Meeting

Saturday, April 10th (Rain date April 11th)

Join us outside at the Kent Pavilion in Chepachet RI (across the street from 1116 Putnam Pike in Chepachet) for our annual Flatwater Planning Meeting. Like our trips, this meeting will be held in a socially distanced manner. At this meeting, we will set up our calendar for the 2021-year, so please bring ideas for trips. If you would like to lead a trip but do not have experience, we will partner you up with an experienced leader. If you need a specific date due to tides or other considerations, we can reserve that date for you in advance of the meeting.

More details to follow. Contact Cheryl Thompson at stonefoxfarm@juno.com for additional information.

March Zoom Meeting

Invasive Plants in RI Waterways

March 16th at 7:00 p.m.

For our March meeting, Katie DeGoosh-DiMarzio, Environmental Analyst with DEM's Office of Water Resources will give us an update on invasive plants in RI's waterways with tips to help us stop the spread. Aquatic invasive plants are a major cause of impairment in Rhode Island's freshwater lakes and rivers. More than 100 lakes and ponds are plagued with at least one species of invasive plant, and at least one invasive plant type has been recorded in 27 river segments.

The meeting will take place on Zoom videoconference. RSVP to Pat Lardner at pslardner@gmail.com and the Zoom link will be forward to you via email.

Wilderness Selections from the RICKA Library

Northern Forest Canoe Trail - Official Guidebook (Book) - Reviewed by Susan Engelman



The newest addition to the RICKA Library is a great source of information for anyone thinking of paddling a section of the Northern Forest Canoe Trail that runs 740 miles and links waterways from New York to Maine. The book is divided into sections by state and includes information on camping, portages, gear and equipment. It describes opportunities for flatwater, quickwater and whitewater paddling on a range of rivers, streams, lakes and ponds. Details of flora and fauna are also included. Paddlers of all skill levels will appreciate the vast amounts of information this book has to offer.

The Complete Wilderness Paddler (Book) - Reviewed by Log of Ibi



The authors use a canoe trip on the Moisie River as the vehicle for teaching us everything we need to know to make a similar trip. The book includes sections on navigation, maps, portaging, camping, reading rivers and learning how to plan descents by ferrying, lining and maneuvering. It covers everything from how to find a wilderness worthy of paddling, to managing capsize and wilderness disasters. It's unfortunate that the book hasn't been revised, but the dated material is minor and easily ignored, as the most valuable information on things like safety, wind and the behavior of whitewater are timeless.

These are just two of the great books, tapes and DVD's covering the range of paddling topics that are available in our [collection](#). If you would like to check out these or any other selections, contact Bill Hahn at librarian@ricka.org. Library selections can be mailed to you with a postage paid return mailer provided at no cost to the borrower.

RICKA is an ACA



Paddle America Club

Executive Board:

The next Executive Board meeting will be held on March 3rd at 7:00 p.m. online as a ZOOM videoconference. Contact Pat (Mayhew) Lardner at pslardner@gmail.com if you would like to participate.

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The **Paddler** is published monthly except December by the Rhode Island Canoe & Kayak Association, Inc.

Your RICKA membership expired on March 31, 2021...

Please renew your RICKA membership now!

Please visit the website at:

<http://www.ricka.org/Join/JointheFun.html>

You can renew by mail, or online using PayPal.

Rhode Island Canoe & Kayak Association

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Interest Group Q&A

Paddling with RICKA Wilderness

What is the RICKA Wilderness group?

The [Wilderness](#) group is the newest of RICKA's four interest groups. The Wilderness group organizes trips that involve paddling, camping and other wilderness skills.

What types of trips do you do?

Wilderness trips run the gamut from easy overnight trips on rivers like the Pawcatuck, to weeklong excursions in the Adirondacks, the North Maine Woods or Northern Forest Canoe Trail.

How do I find out about trips?

On occasion, RICKA Wilderness trips are posted on the trip calendar on our website. <http://www.ricka-flatwater.org/wilderness1.htm>

More often, they are posted as "bootleg" trips on the Flatwater message board. <http://members.boardhost.com/FLATWATER/>

Please note that bootleg trips are not official RICKA trips. They are posted for the convenience of our paddlers. As always, you are responsible for determining if the trip is suitable for your level of experience.

How do I join a trip?

Whether it is an official RICKA Wilderness trip or a bootleg trip, you should contact the leader via email or at the phone number listed. If you are new to Wilderness Tripping start off with easy



trips, and build up to longer more ambitious trips as your skills improve.

What equipment do I need?

Every paddler will need a canoe or kayak that is appropriate for the conditions, paddles and a personal floatation device (PFD). You will also need drybags and camping equipment including a tent, sleeping bag and cooking gear. You can find a list of other equipment on our website.

<http://www.ricka-flatwater.org/news/wilderness/GearList.pdf>

What about clothing?

Wilderness paddling is a water sport, so you should plan to get wet. Cotton cloths should be avoided. Polypropylene, fleece, wool, and lycra blends insulate well when wet. In colder weather, a neoprene wetsuit is the better insulator, and splash jackets and dry wear are good investments to keep you warm.

What will I eat?

Once again, it depends on the trip. On trips where portages are few and weight is not an issue, we may bring coolers filled with fresh food and arrange group meals. On trips with long and frequent portages every ounce counts. For these trips most of the food will be freeze dried and everyone will arrange their own meals.

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Wilderness Tripping During a Pandemic

But after thinking it through, I decided that RICKA's Wilderness Chair would not be leading any trips in 2020. As a trip leader, it is my responsibility to think through contingencies. They say the devil is in the details, and that is doubly true for wilderness travel in boats. While a group could avoid supermarkets and hotels for travel, we would still require restroom breaks and stops for fuel. That increases the risk of exposure.

Once we arrived at the river, assuming state parks or forest-owner groups even let us in, we could employ the usual social-distancing and masks at access points, and stay distanced on the river. But campsite tables are necessarily communal, as are thunderboxes and outhouses. Social distancing and limiting exposures becomes more difficult in these conditions.

Finally, under the isolated conditions typical of a wilderness trip, the logistics of getting an injured or sick individual medical attention becomes even more difficult with COVID.

It is still possible to enjoy a quality wilderness experience in a pandemic, but it did not seem advisable to lead such a trip, with all of the potential liabilities and uncertainties, in an official RICKA capacity.

2021 has not gotten off to a great start, with COVID cases seemingly breaking records every day. But the existence of an effective vaccine and a hopefully more effectively coordinated national response to this virus gives me hope that a late summer or fall wilderness trip for RICKA could be in the cards. In the meantime, I hope to share some trip reports from prior adventures.

Lobster Lake to Chesuncook Lake

A RICKA Wilderness Trip Report By Chuck Horbert

Anyone who has lived in New England for any length of time knows how changeable the weather can be. This is particularly true in northern Maine in October. So, upon learning that Jim had forgotten some warmer clothes of his in Florida, we made sure one of our first stops upon reaching Greenville, ME was the Indian Hill Trading Post. They still sell actual wool clothing! While we were there, Cindy and I decided to upgrade our footwear with some waterproof, insulated mukluk style boots. That turned out to be a good decision.



Lobster Stream

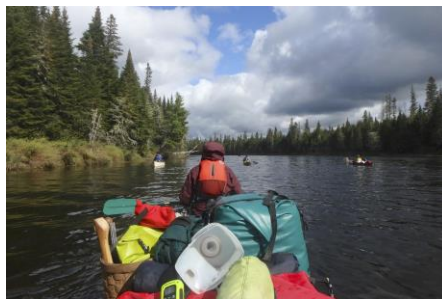
After a comfortable stay in a local motel that night, and a hearty breakfast the next morning at Auntie M's, we formed up the caravan and drove into the Maine North Woods, over miles of rough dirt logging roads to get to our put-in at a bridge over Lobster Stream. We were the only ones there! The weather was cool and raw, with a northern breeze. Copious pounds of gear were disgorged from the vehicles and arranged in our boats. Cindy and I had the largest boat, an 18-foot Wenona Sundowner, which provided enough room for all of our gear and Trixie, our constant canine companion. Jim had his Mad River Guide solo canoe, and Tammy and Dave each had a lightweight Hornbeck pack canoe.



Crossing Lobster Lake

The trip got off to an inauspicious start when Dave inadvertently tipped his canoe while boarding it, requiring a delay as he bailed some of Lobster Stream out of his boat. The clouds seemed to get heavy and the breeze a little more ominous. Soon enough, though, we were all paddling our way upstream towards a campsite on Lobster Lake.

Once we got to the lake, we could see that the wind would be a challenge for the crossing. With the wind at our backs, we were fine until we were halfway across and the longer fetch started asserting itself, which made for some tense, white-knuckle paddling. Anyone who has made challenging open water crossings in a canoe knows that it can be difficult to monitor much more than one's immediate surroundings, as we constantly scan for oncoming gusts or rogue waves. So when we finally got into the lee of Ogden Point and were able to beach the boats for a break, it was concerning to find that Jim was not with us. We all waited, scanning the small visible bit of the large bay we had crossed. After about five minutes with no sign, I started walking along the shore and through the woods to get a better view. No



West Branch Penobscot River

luck...after finally getting to a good viewpoint, I couldn't see him.

I returned to the beach, where Dave and Tammy agreed to take their boats back to see if they could spot him...which they did soon after they got back around the point! He had evidently gotten blown off course, and took a long way around the bay, taking a break at a campsite along the way...in fact he was probably sitting there just below me as I scanned the bay from my perch on top of a cliff.

Reunited, and a bit drained, we quickly claimed a nearby campsite and set up. A large tarp went up, and firewood was gathered. During the firewood hunt, Cindy found a big patch of oyster mushrooms, so they were immediately incorporated into our planned communal meal of chicken sausage, rice and green beans. It was a cold night.



Storm Clouds

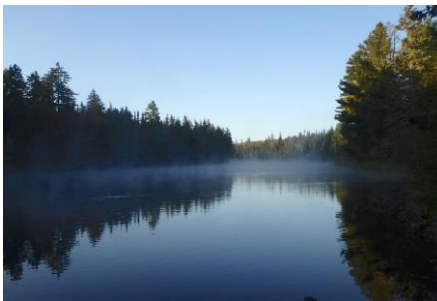
The next day dawned cold and clear. Options for the day had been discussed around the campfire the night before, and it was decided to pass on a hike up Lobster Mountain in favor of allowing us a more relaxed pace as we headed downstream. So after breakfast and coffee, we packed up and headed back across Lobster Lake and down Lobster Stream to the parking lot where we had left our cars. There we encountered another large group of paddlers. Before they headed off downstream, I engaged their trip leader to ferret out their plans and learned that they

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planned to leave from Chesuncook Village the same day as us, camping at Boom House the night before. This meant that our best campsite option would be about a mile upstream, at Pine Stream.

Jim, Dave and I then shuttled cars down to the public ramp at Graveyard Point, a round trip of 40+ more miles on the logging roads. My car and Dave's got left behind and Jim drove us back to Lobster stream where we encountered another group packing up for a trip. This group was going upriver to Lobster Lake, and then making their way downstream, with plans to leave from Graveyard Point the day after us. I therefore assumed, incorrectly as it turned out, that they would not become additional competition for a campsite.



River Mist

It was a nice day for a paddle down to Thoreau's Island. Flow levels were good, and paddling was easy as we headed down the West Branch Penobscot. Fall color is in short supply in a land of pines and firs, but we were treated with occasional maples, birches, and mountain ashes. After another hour of paddling and floating, we came in sight of the Golden Road bridge and, just downstream, stopped at Thoreau's Island, a campsite used by Henry David Thoreau during the adventures recounted in his book, "The Maine Woods".

It is a little work to horse gear and canoes up the steep slope from the river, but we managed nicely, and had plenty of afternoon daylight to set up camp and gather fire wood. Plenty of time, also, to



Rapids!

relax in chairs at the top of the bank to have drinks, watch the river flow by, and enjoy each other's company. Trixie was allowed to roam, since where was she going to go on an island? As the sun faded, dinner was prepared and eaten, and the campfire was lit for the evening's entertainment. Everything was battened down pretty well before bed, with rain expected overnight.

It rained most of the night, but had mostly ended by the time we awoke to clouds still scudding across the sky. It was another cold morning, so the fire was rekindled and the water was set to boil. Our plan for the day was to paddle another short 7.5-mile day to one of the campsites in the vicinity of Big Island.

The rain held up while we broke down camp and re-loaded the boats, but it revisited us intermittently as we proceeded downstream. We pulled off the river for a break at Smiths Halfway House campsite and had lunch, watching as the clouds seemed to darken a bit. Sure enough, shortly after we had continued



Sunset at Pine Stream

downstream, we were hit with an icy wind and a sleet squall! We were paddling right into the teeth of the wind, and it was pretty miserable. So, soon after, as we approached the campsite at Big Ragmuff, it was decided to pull over again to wait it out.

At this campsite we found a nice open area, good views of both the river and Big Ragmuff Stream and, most importantly, a ready supply of wedges and short logs to split for firewood! A quick hand-count vote elected it as our campsite for the night. No time was wasted splitting up the spruce and getting a fire started to blend some warmth in the blustery afternoon.



The good life

After camp was set up, each of us spent some time wandering the vicinity, up to Big Ragmuff Falls, and further along the bank of the West Branch Penobscot. During one of these wanders, I found another cache of unsplit spruce rounds to add to our firewood supply. We were living large at the campfire!

The frozen containers of chili in our cooler had thawed a bit, so it became dinner. As the campfire stories wound down, stars started to emerge from the clouds, a good omen for the next day. At least, I thought so. Tammy was nervous about the mild rapids we would encounter the next day at Big Island. Jim and I did our best to give her some tips and come up with a game plan.

As promised by the stars (who are nevertheless known to be somewhat

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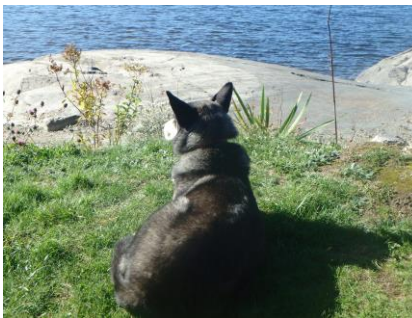
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unreliable weather forecasters), we woke up to a beautiful, clear day, with white mist rising from the river. When the sun came up, it lit up the whole campsite, so a clothesline was set up to dry out some damp gear. Breaking camp was an unhurried affair as we enjoyed the morning sunshine, but eventually we were all packed and on our way.

Water levels turned out to be very good for a clean run down the rapids at Big Island, and no one, not even Tammy, had any problems navigating them. Around noonish we pulled over for a lunch break at Little Ragmuff campsite. Soon after we left the "lunchroom", we were overtaken by a kayak. It turned out to be one of the guys from the second group we had met at Lobster Stream, the group I didn't think we had to worry about. It became clear that the group had sent him ahead, with an empty kayak (except for a saw and axe) to beat us to the Pine Stream campsite! It was an upsetting development, since I knew Boom House would be taken and the next closest campsite, Longley Stream, was at least another 4.5 miles, making close to a 12 mile day.

This was unacceptable to us, and Dave volunteered to try to overtake him. He came close, but when the guy saw him coming the race was on and an empty kayak trumps a loaded canoe.

Nevertheless, once we arrived at Pine Stream, I walked back into the woods after



Trixie at Pine Stream



Katahdin

him (he was already chopping down firewood) to reason with him. It turned out he was not the trip leader, nor did he have a camp permit on hand. He wasn't willing to concede the campsite to us until his trip leader arrived. Knowing that a couple of our party were tired, and that another 5 miles of paddling could be unhealthy, and being in a position of having our camp permit, I made the decision for him...I told everyone in our group to start setting up camp.

When a couple more guys from the other group showed up, I gave them the same story, and they agreed to move on after their own lunch. Their trip leader didn't arrive until two hours after they left, and he kept on going without stopping.

Pine Stream is a beautiful site, with a large bedrock outcrop at the foot of the camp, located at a large bend in the river, with fantastic views upstream and downstream. Tent sites are very few (I have no idea how a large group ever expected to camp there) but cozy. During our stay at this camp two moose were seen. Firewood was plentiful, but it did take some work to gather our supply. Another final cold night was expected for our last night of the trip.

And cold it was! When I got up in the morning to start the fire and heat water, some of the water had frozen. The riverside vegetation was coated in frost. Skies were mostly cloudy. But there was little to no wind, which boded well for our final open water pathway on Chesuncook Lake to get to Graveyard Point and our cars.

After packing, and a group photo down on the beach, we loaded the boats for our final leg of our Maine wilderness trip. The influence of Ripogenus Dam extends a good way up the West Branch Penobscot, so the last day felt mostly like lake paddling. We found Boom House campsite empty, so we assumed (correctly) that the group we had displaced had continued across the lake to a campsite on Gero Island. Exiting the mouth of the West Branch Penobscot and entering Chesuncook, we encountered the best view of the trip...Mount Katahdyn rising like a leviathan in the distance.



The whole crew

The final challenge for Cindy and me was to find a way to fit all of our gear, all of Jim's gear, each of us, Trixie, Jim, and two canoes in or on the Subaru to get Jim back to his car at Lobster Lake. We succeeded with no room to spare. So, after a quick stop to check on the progress of the reconstruction of the Chesuncook Lake House (which had burned down a couple winters previously) we headed back over more of logging roads to head back to Rhode Island after another memorable trip.

Chuck and Cindy are [Flatwater](#) leaders, and Chuck is the Chair of the [Wilderness](#) group. Chuck is a past RICKA President with extensive whitewater, poling and wilderness tripping experience. He has section paddled most of the [Northern Forest Canoe Trail](#), and completed the first [Paddle Across Rhode Island](#). You can read his canoe tripping blog at [Northern Forest Canoe Tales](#).

Campfire Cooking

By Erik Eckilson

When I was in second grade my father took a job up in New Hampshire. We lived in a small apartment in the city of Dover, and spent most of the summer at a seasonal campsite nearby. I remember swimming in the lake and sitting around the campfire at night, but other than marshmallows and the occasional hot dog on a stick, cooking was always done on the camp stove.

When I started canoe camping the camp stove came with me. For some trips freeze-dried food cooked on the Jet Boil stove was the order of the day. For other trips we loaded up coolers with fresh food, but when I was the chef the cooking was always done on the camp stove.



Jonathan cooking on the fire

For some of my friends, though, cooking in camp means cooking over the open fire. Jonathan is a good example. He will often look at the simple fire ring that is the staple at many campsites with a bit of disgust. If he is planning to cook on the fire, he will deconstruct old fire ring and rebuild it in a “U” shape about 8” to 10” tall and just wide enough to support the grill.

When a campfire cook has passed through a campsite you can always tell by the fire pit. The pit will be clear of ash and debris allowing ample room for wood under the grill. If it is round, it will be large with multiple cooking spots depending on the type of cooking to be done and the heat needed. Or like Jonathan’s, it will be “U” shaped.



Fried fish and Maine guide potatoes

I’ve learned that a critical part of campfire cooking is having the right wood. It is a misnomer to think that campfire cooking is about cooking on the fire. It is actually about cooking over the coals, and hardwoods produce the hottest, longest-lasting coals and the cleanest fire. When foraging for wood, softwoods such as pine are usually easy to find, but dry, seasoned hardwoods can be more of a challenge. Sometimes it is easier to bring the wood along.

Anything you can cook on the stove you can cook on the fire, but it takes the right equipment and some patience. In addition to a well constructed fire pit and the right wood, you will need a grill or fire grate to hold food or pots and pans over the fire. Often you will find one at the campsite, but it is still a good idea to bring one along just in case. I use the grill from an old gas grill, but there are lots of options available including folding grill grates and adjustable grills on spikes.

You will also need pots, pans and utensils. A good frying pan and large pot are essential for group meals. You will also need a knife, spatula, serving spoon and



Breakfast fire – the coffee is ready

tongs. Long handles make it easy to work around the fire, and fireproof gloves are a nice addition.

The type of fire that you build will depend on the type of cooking you are doing. Grilling directly over the fire requires a nice bed of hot coals, so get the fire going early or you might be eating late. Foil packs are an easy way to cook fish, potatoes and vegetables, but whether directly on the coals or up on the grill, they also require a well-developed bed of coals. Be sure to turn the food often since hot spots can develop and burn the food if you are not careful.



Dutch Oven Cooking

Cooking in pans is easier, and you can start cooking on a fire that is a little less developed and has a little more flame. Patience is still required since temperatures on the fire don’t match those generated on the stove.

The dutch oven is one of my favorite ways to cook in camp. Anything you can cook in your oven at home you can cook in a dutch oven. The trick is balancing the heat on the top and the bottom, and regulating the temperature. No doubt about it, cooking is one of the joys of camping, and cooking over the open fire takes it to the next level. Try it next time!

Erik is a [Flatwater](#) and [Blackstone Valley Paddle Cub](#) leader, and the [Paddler Editor](#). You can read his blog at [Open Boat Moving Water](#).

RICKA Classifieds

Classified ads free for RICKA members and are printed here on space-available basis. Please see the [website](#) for the complete list.

- **Mariner Express** - a very hard to find fiberglass sea kayak. 16" length 21.5" beam. It is in very good condition and has always been stored indoors. Also includes a Snap Dragon spray skirt, cockpit cover and bow and stern flotation bags for additional buoyancy and faster bailing - \$2,300 (was \$3,800 new). Email jklowan@excite.com
- **Impex Force 3 Sea Kayak** - 2019 new condition, 17' x 20.5", white with lime green stripes - it has been stored indoors. Skeg, seat, declines, hatches, cockpit all in new condition - \$2200 (was \$3,500 new). **Wilderness Tempest 165** - rotomolded sea kayak - lime green, in good condition. Working skeg, hatches with no leaks, stable, durable kayak which can handle conditions - \$ 800. Call Beklen at 646-263-9359.
- **Dagger Sitka** - fiberglass, white hull, yellow top. Close to 18 feet with smart rudder system. Very good condition with dry hatches - \$500. Contact jonathansharlin@gmail.com
- **Valley Avocet** - poly along with two paddles (one a two piece wooden) hula-port cradles, a paddle float and cockpit pump - asking \$900 for the package. Email aja151@aol.com
- **Valley Aquanaut** - 2005, 17'7" length 22" beam, yellow over white. Foam sacral block instead of back band; all hatch covers replaced within the past two years - \$1,250 OBO. Email scr1v3nr@gmail.com or text 401-569-6038
- **Yakima Even Keel Saddles** - brand new, never used; bought during quarantine, accidentally put in storage during move and now it's too late to return them. Paid \$119; will sell for half price - \$60. Email caryl@netscape.com or 401-480-7799.
- **Yakima roof rack** - Q-towers, Q70 & Q124 clips, 48" crossbars Used for 10 years, most recently fit a 2005 Toyota Prius, reasonable wear but sturdy system - \$60. Email babsona@gmail.com
- **Tiderace Xplore S** - purchased new May 2014 - 17' 5" length 20" beam, 55 lbs. - excellent condition. Includes Tiderace neoprene spray skirt and Wildwasser pump. Boat is in City Island, NY (Bronx/Westchester) - \$2,400 (was \$4,000 new). Contact Jean at 917-379-4499
- **Werner Camano** - 100% carbon bent shaft paddle 220 length. Excellent condition - used 4 times. \$300. Email aikijerry@gmail.com
- **Wanted to Buy: General recreational flat-water kayak** in the 12 to 13 foot range. I have in mind an Eddyline Skylark Kayak or similar model. Please contact me with specs, location, pictures and price at mike.rubin54@gmail.com
- **Tahe Greenland Model Kayak** - 18 x 20 white over white fiberglass. Ocean Cockpit in very good condition. No deep scratches, or damage - \$1,500. Contact aikijerry@gmail.com
- **Old Town Discovery 16.9 Canoe** - Blue rotomolded plastic, 1990s vintage, good condition, with 2 Mowhawk ABS paddles, in N. Kingstown, \$250. Contact garywhitney3@cox.net
- **Betsie Bay Recluse Kayak** - 19' long and 20 1/2" wide; weight 30 to 34 lbs.; Paddler weight 175 lbs. & greater; Excellent Condition (stored indoors/only fresh water use); \$2,400 (\$4,000 new); Includes cockpit cover, spray skirt, & Greenland paddle. Contact Charlie 518-234-9235 in Albany, NY area.
- **High Performance Paddle Board** - approximate retail value of \$2K, offered at \$900. Available for viewing on the East Side of Providence. **Valley Pintail** - excellent condition - sking \$2,300. **Necky Gliss** - \$1,240. Contact rogernc@mac.com or cell 401-339-4068

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Send your classified ads to RICKA Webmaster Cheryl Thompson, 53 Anan Wade Road, Glocester, RI 02857-2611 or webmaster@ricka.org. Include your name for membership verification. Please notify the Webmaster when your gear is sold so that the ad can be removed. Acceptance, duration and formatting of your ad are at the webmaster's and newsletter editor's discretion.