

# Hudson River Watertrail News

The Newsletter of the **Hudson River Watertrail Association, Inc.**  
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[www.hrwa.org/](http://www.hrwa.org/)



## John Krevey 1949 – 2011

*Robert Huszar*

How do you measure the size of a heart or the magnitude of an idea?

I didn't know if that was a question that had an appropriate answer, but it's what I found myself wrestling with as I sat, mute and depressed, at John Krevey's funeral/memorial service. For those who didn't know him, Krevey was a visionary who opened the Hudson River to legions of boaters, a full generation before the suits in Albany realized the importance of community access. A good portion of the paddling community started and grew up on Krevey's Pier 63 Maritime. And as I scanned the crowd at Perazzo Funeral Home on Bleeker Street, I saw most of the paddling community represented.

First up from the boating community was Roger Myers. Roger was the friend who opened the door and introduced us to John Krevey and his mythical barge undertaking, so it was appropriate that Roger spoke first. Roger is the founder of the New York Outriggers, a group that started as a small, home-spun collection of people who enjoyed paddling outrigger canoes and quickly morphed into a giant international race that is nationally televised. In Roger's words, none of that would have happened without John's support, patronage, and love.

Next came Eric Stiller, my ex-partner and still good friend. Eric (and I, along with a host of various coming-and-going partners) started Manhattan's first paddling school and instilled in a whole generation of paddlers the techniques

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*Porpoise surfacing in the Harbor.*

*Photo by Vladimir Brezina*

## Where the Wild Things Are: Kayaking with Marine Mammals in New York City

*By Vladimir Brezina and Johna Till Johnson*

Kayaking in the waterways of New York City is a distinctly urban experience. Instead of quiet nature, New York City kayakers are treated to the sights and sounds of the city and close-up views of a man-made marine ecosystem of seawalls, docks, piers, ferries, tugs, barges, tankers, cruise ships, huge bulkers and container ships, and a myriad of marine-industrial activities. The energy of the city is ever present.

Yet, nature is present too. Sandwiched between petrochemical plants, there's remnants of beaches and salt-water marshes. Gulls watch from pilings. Rafts of ducks and geese float in the

backwaters between piers and nest in odd corners. And every now and again we receive a reminder that the waters of New York City are really those of the Atlantic Ocean, where the wild things are.

It is late March 2011. We—a couple of hardy, or some would say foolhardy, distance kayakers—are paddling from Manhattan south through the harbor. We're now in the Narrows between Brooklyn and Staten Island, about a mile north of the Verrazano-Narrows

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r-huszar@panix.com

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## Cold water dangers

*Bonnie K. Aldinger*

*ww.frogma.blogspot.com*

As I write this article, the story is just breaking about a lone paddler who capsized on Jamaica Bay, near the Rockaway Peninsula, and who's rescue necessitated two helicopters, as well as marine and shore units from both the NYPD and NYFD. Sadly, this is too common in the late winter and early spring.

We're now in the time of year that can be the worst for boating accidents. When there's snow on the ground, only the most hard-core boaters think of going out, but when the weather turns warm in the late winter or early spring, everyone's tempted to get an early start on the season. Unfortunately, too many people launch on one of these balmy days without realizing the water is still winter-cold, with very little margin for error. This continues to be true through April and on into May, even if its shorts-and-t-shirt weather on land, and a mishap can turn very serious very fast.

There's a wealth of information available on cold-water boating safety, but a person has to be aware that the risk is there, and it sometimes just isn't that obvious. I grew up in warmer climes and had some learning to do when I started kayaking in NYC. I was lucky, though, and learned my lesson my first year by watching a wetsuit-clad friend capsize in a lake that had turned cold by early October. She came up gasping, confused, and almost stunned. She recovered and kept paddling, but she was still shaken at the end of the day. As we'd been moving into the fall, our instructors had been telling us repeatedly about the dangers of cold water, but that was the first time I really understood just how dangerous an unexpected immersion could be.

What I watched my friend experience was one of the most dangerous of the physiological effects of a sudden off-season ducking – cold shock. People think of hypothermia as the primary hazard of falling in cold water, and it's a real danger, but to die of hypothermia,

first you have to survive the initial impact. Cold shock can cause involuntary gasping (possibly fatal if the victim's head is underwater), hyperventilation, and severe disorientation (the victim may not know which way is up or even be quite sure where they are for the first moments). In the worst cases, cold shock can cause cardiac arrest. Hypothermia only comes into play if the boater is able to recover from these uncontrollable responses to that first moment in the water.

It sounds awful, and it can be for an unprepared boater—but for all that, I'm now part of a group of experienced Sebago Canoe Club paddlers who paddle out of the Paerdegat Basin in Canarsie twelve months of the year. Off-season is a wonderful time on the bay. You can be out for hours and only see the NYPD launch or one of the Coast Guard's RIBS the whole time. The bay teems with over-wintering ducks and geese, and curious harbor seals may pop up anywhere. We love it – but we also have a lot of respect for the hazards and do everything we can to minimize the risk and maximize the fun. Here are some of the safe-boating practices commonly followed by the Sebago off-season paddling crew:

1) Always wear a properly fitted lifejacket. NYS boating law requires that all boaters in recreational craft that are less than 21 feet in length wear lifejackets from November 1 through May 1. If you happen to fall in, it will mitigate or maybe even eliminate the cold-shock effect by keeping you from going as far under; you'll have a better chance of having your gasp reflex in the air instead of underwater, it'll bring you up if you've momentarily lost your sense of direction, and then it will keep you afloat without having to swim (which just speeds up the hypothermia process).

2) Dress for the water, not the air. Different people have different levels of tolerance, but the rule of thumb among most of the trained paddlers in the area is drysuits and neoprene hoods if the water's under 50, wetsuits for the 50's and 60's.

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*Learning a balance brace*

*Photo by Jack Gilman*

## Hudson River Greenland Festival

*Dave Sides*

The Hudson River Greenland Festival was founded in 2004 at Norrie State Park on the Hudson River in Staatsburg, NY. Organized by Wayne Gilchrist and Hudson Valley Pack & Paddle, the one-day event featured Greenland kayak technique demonstrations, races, and rolling competitions. Some of the most recognized and highly skilled kayak mentors in the country were there, including Cheri Perry, Turner Wilson, and Dubside. After two successful years, sadly the organizers left the area and the park closed the Norrie facilities for major renovations.

Seeking a new home in 2005, Jack Gilman and I tried but were unsuccessful in keeping the event alive. However, in 2006, modeling HRGF after other well-attended and multi-day Greenland events like the Delmarva Paddler's Retreat in Delaware we found a new venue at Croton Point State Park, a few miles downriver on the Hudson

and HRGF was reborn! With further aid from Maggie Atkins, Wes Ostertag, and Heather Lamon, we have grown and evolved into a major, yearly Qajaq USA event.

Based at Croton Point, HRGF is a three-day event including organized instruction in paddling, rolling and Greenland ropes, kayak and paddle building demos, races, and various cultural presentations on Greenlandic life. There are kayak activities for all ages, cabins, camping, a lodge with full dining facilities and of course the Hudson River, where we use Mother's Lap private beach for safe, controlled instruction. Our passionate mentors are top ranked in Greenland style paddling and rolling techniques, and use multiple approaches that accommodate everyone from first-timers to experienced paddlers.

Come join us for this year's Hudson River Greenland Festival at Croton Point from June 24-26, 2011. For information, contact Jack Gilman at [hudsonsb@yahoo.com](mailto:hudsonsb@yahoo.com).

## Intrepid Challenge Kayak Race

*Joe Traum*

Make way for the Intrepid Challenge! On September 24th, 2011, the kayaking chapter of Achilles International, the NYC based organization enabling disabled athletes to compete in sports, is hosting the "Intrepid Challenge," a kayak race on the West Side of Manhattan.

This is New York City's biggest kayak competition, with an estimated 150 paddlers competing on either the 14 Mile Elite course or the more beginner-friendly 7 Mile distance. "Our goal is to bring a world class kayak race to New York. We wanted to create an event that is both all inclusive and exclusive, by providing a race environment where both recreational paddlers and world champions can compete side by side!"

The start and finish will be Pier 84 at 44th Street on the West Side of Manhattan, just south of the aircraft carrier, Intrepid. It will continue the tradition of the annual Mayor's Cup New York City Kayak Championships, an event which had seen participation from world class paddlers such as two-time Olympic gold medalist, Greg Barton, and World Ocean Kayak Champions, Oscar and Herman Chalupsky, as well as an array of talented Achilles athletes. The competition is open to sea kayaks, surf skis, outriggers, stand-up paddle boards (SUPs) and traditional rowers. The registration fee is \$50, which includes a T-shirt and a post race party, with food and drink.

**For more information and registration see [www.achillesinternational.org](http://www.achillesinternational.org) or e-mail me at [jtraum@achillesinternational.org](mailto:jtraum@achillesinternational.org).**





*Off Swinburne Island*

*Photo by Vladimir Brezina*

Bridge. Sunlight is all around us, dancing off the waves.

What's that? Vlad notices something in the water, something dark, shiny, and clearly alive. A turtle? A whale?

It's a harbor porpoise, arcing out of the water in slow, sinuous loops. When we first catch sight of it, it takes our breath away, it's so graceful. And it seems to be entirely aware of us, almost flirtatiously flitting from one side of our kayaks to the other. Sometimes it seems to be peeking at us.

At one point it almost bumps Vlad's boat. He can clearly see its tail and white underbelly, but is so surprised that he fails to get a photo. During another pass, Johna swears it chirps at her—a squeaky sound like a rusty hinge. When it surfaces close by, we can hear the sound of hard breathing through the blowhole, like a racer gasping for air.

The porpoise stays with us all the way down to the bridge, surfacing first on one side of us, then the other. Its movements are predictable: It surfaces once, does three quick arcs, then disappears for a while, reappearing somewhere else. Presumably, it is feeding in the tide rip there, where its prey fish wait for their prey to be swept toward them by the current.

Just under the bridge, we take a pit stop at a little beach on the Brooklyn side. Amazingly, when we resume paddling after fifteen or twenty minutes, we find that the porpoise has stayed with us. It frolics around our boats until we are about a mile south of the bridge. Then it takes a last dive and disappears to parts unknown. We hope to see it again!

After the porpoise departs, we veer west toward Swinburne Island, one of two small islands a couple of miles south of the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge, on the Staten Island side. Our goal is to see marine mammals of another kind: Seals.

Amazingly, seals are now quite common in New York City waters. Since at least 2001 a colony of harbor seals has made its home on Swinburne Island during the winter months, returning north to Maine or Canada in summer.

We paddle to Swinburne and cruise around slowly, hoping to catch sight of some seals. We aren't disappointed—about 20 heads pop up, round gray basketballs with black shiny eyes. They swim close, sometimes cocking their heads quizzically, then disappearing in a flurry under the water.

Vlad describes them as “shy but curious”—and that's apt. They often

appear flustered by eye contact, but they love watching humans. Johna is often frustrated when scanning the water for gray heads to turn and discover that two or three have been watching her from behind.

The best part of this story? It's hardly unique. This winter, we've visited Swinburne Island four or five times, and seen seals each time. They are so reliable that a run to “seal island” is a favorite trip for winter kayakers, and a ferry company has started seal-watching trips to the island. The Swinburne Island seals are becoming famous—they've recently been written up in the *New Yorker*.

There are plenty of signs that the marine habitat is gradually becoming more welcoming overall. Seals have been spotted frequently in Jamaica Bay and more sporadically elsewhere in the harbor. And perhaps because the water is becoming cleaner, other marine mammals, too, are making a comeback. We see porpoises, usually in pods of five or more, every couple of years. A few years ago, kayakers encountered a pod feeding leisurely in the Hudson River right off the West Side of Manhattan. To our knowledge, no kayaker has yet encountered a large whale in the harbor. But given that they appear every few years—typically escorted by the Coast Guard and stop-

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ping marine traffic—we expect to get lucky one of these days!

For more photos of the porpoise and seals:

<https://picasaweb.google.com/vladimir.brezina>

For more information on marine mammals in New York City waters:

[http://www.newyorkology.com/archives/2011/03/porpoise\\_pictur.php](http://www.newyorkology.com/archives/2011/03/porpoise_pictur.php)

<http://naturecalendar.wordpress.com/2011/04/04/paddle-with-a-pigfish>

<http://frogma.blogspot.com/search/label/Urban%20Wildlife>

## Big changes for the 11th annual Great Hudson River Paddle

*Scott Keller*

After ten successful seasons of conducting our Great Hudson River Paddle (GHRP), we—the folks at the Hudson River Valley Greenway—thought it was time to shift our course a bit. To paddle that substantial length of river required a time commitment that was often difficult for the average person to schedule. Consequently, the ‘new’ GHRP will be modeled on the celebrated Hudson River Valley Ramble and will include short overnight paddles, day paddles, free paddles, paddle races, and any other events our partners dream up.



*Getting ready to leave the Flats GHRP 2009*

The goals of the change is to get more people out on the Hudson in a safe and fun environment and to bolster local economic development through increased ecotourism. The Great Hudson River Paddle will continue as an annual series of events that celebrate, promote, and document the recreational use of the Hudson River in the early twenty-first century.

The core idea of GHRP remains to promote the Hudson River Greenway Water Trail and to celebrate and promote the shore towns, villages and cities of the Hudson River Valley. As the umbrella organization for the GHRP, the Hudson River Valley Greenway will remain committed to keep the event focused on the continuity of the Hudson from Albany to New York City, to remind participants that the Hudson was, and is, an historical transportation venue that linked river towns, that shaped local commerce, fostered the population growth of the Empire State and played an important part in the revolutionary war.

The events are scheduled for July 2011 and will take place throughout the Hudson River Valley. Sponsorship opportunities will be available.

We are currently in the process of building a website with a design similar to the Hudson River Valley Ramble’s site that will allow partners to directly upload events. Look for more information on our website, when it’s completed, sometime in May:  
<http://www.greatHRpaddle.org/>



## Matt Kane

is excited to join the HRWA as director-at-large. Matt fell in love with paddling growing up on the south shore of Long Island and was drawn to the scenery, hiking and history of the Hudson Valley six years ago. In his third season working as a guide and instructor, he enjoys paddling the lower and mid-Hudson River and challenging himself in sea kayaking and whitewater paddling. During the week, Matt is a hospitality professional in Manhattan. He lives in Cold Spring with his wife, Anne.



## Carl Steiniger

first caught the paddling bug on a camping trip to Taughannock Falls in the Finger Lakes Region, when he stopped at a Mom and Pop General Store that were renting 10 footers from the back of a pickup truck. That 10 footer turned into a 14 footer and a 17 foot sea kayak shortly thereafter.

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John Krevey

that were necessary to safely paddle and negotiate the tricky and busy waters of the Hudson River and lower harbor. I don't think I have ever been more impressed with Eric's humor and warmth as that night he conjured images of John Krevey and their first encounter, concluding how—after that encounter—he knew that his fledgling Manhattan Kayak Company would succeed, for surely, John Krevey auspiciously resembled Hans Solo and that wonderful, ongoing, zany creation that was the barge was as close as you could get to a Battlestar, at least in this lifetime.

Sitting quietly in a corner, I spoke with John's longtime friend, Reid Stowe. Reid recently broke the long standing record by sailing unsupported and without touching land for over 1,000 days. Reid is now a part of history. Reid made the voyage of a lifetime, but it only happened because John Krevey gave him a place to recondition his boat and prepare for his epic. John Krevey is part of that epic and deserves his own line in the record books.

Much later, talking privately with Ray Fusco—the creator, organizer and director of the acclaimed Mayor's Cup New York City Kayak Championships, a grueling 28 mile race around Manhattan—Ray, too, confirmed

Krevey's status as one of the Godfathers of the boating community. Ray said he first conceived the idea of the Mayor's Cup when he was working on Krevey's barge, and, in fact, his first meeting with the think tank who helped to make it a reality, took place on Krevey's Pier 66 Maritime. John Krevey was again a catalyst for history.

And so the night went, with scores of friends coming forward, professing love, talking of friendship, making jokes, sharing the joys and the sorrows of a man's life. They all told different stories, but the one thing they all agreed on was that knowing and working with John Krevey was an honor and a privilege.

And for myself, what did I say that night, squirming and fumbling on those hard, metal folding funeral parlor chairs? Nothing, I said nothing. It might have been the only time in my life that I had no words. And as I walked away from the service, feeling most incongruous amidst the hustle bustle, party atmosphere of Bleeker Street on a Friday night, I found myself understanding that I had the answer to "How big was a heart?" In John Krevey's case, his heart and his reach were as big as the waterfront that he championed.

May we all do as well with our lives.

## **John Krevey** **He Never Stopped Dreaming**

*Robert Huszar*

Our good friend and colleague, John Krevey, died of an apparent heart attack, Friday, February 4 at the age of 62 while on vacation with his son in Santo Domingo. For those who didn't know John, the quote from his longtime friend and collaborator, Captain Doswell, sums things up nicely, "John was waterfront when waterfront wasn't cool."

It all started sometime in the 80's when John raised the Frying Pan, a sunken light ship that had succumbed to the mud at the bottom of the Chesapeake Bay, and managed to sail it north, planning to install it into the landscape of modern Manhattan. It was quickly a hit with the artist/musician/writer set of the Village, but not quite as popular with the suits who are forever safeguarding the public from the public.

Consequently, John found himself with no dock where he could permanently moor and was, more or less, told that no dock in the city would allow him to moor. Smart enough to ignore officialdom, he created his own dock, by anchoring a 350 foot Lackawanna Railroad barge in the industrial waste lands in back of Basketball City. And thus was born the first part of a legend. The Frying Pan and barge, newly christened Pier 63 Maritime, complete with small bar and restaurant, became an instant neighborhood hit and one of the first public, small-boat access sites in the city, as well as the first home of the NY Outriggers, The Manhattan Kayak Company and NY Water Polo. When the Hudson River Park finally became a reality, Pier 63 was unmoored and move to its current spot at 26th Street, where the barge is now known as Pier 66 Maritime.

In 2000, John Krevey and friends bought the decommissioned fireboat, the John J. Harvey, as another historical ship to add to the pier, and it ended up being one of the pivotal boats used during the evacuation of Battery Park City after the September 11 terrorist attack. Last September, the Working Harbor Committee -- a not-for-profit civic association -- honored John for his lifelong commitment to revitalizing the New York waterfront.

This past year, John purchased a block-long building in Long Island City that he was planning on converting to a community arts center, with a boat building workshop and a public launch area on Anable Basin.

He never stopped dreaming.

## Cold water dangers

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3) Boat with friends. Assisted rescues are almost always easier and less tiring than self-rescues, and if hypothermia sets in the other members of the group can see the symptoms and render aid.

4) Carry a VHF radio, and know how to use it. Cell phones aren't so good; most can't stand much water and, more importantly, 911 operators may not know the waterways or have any way to dispatch a boat to help you. A VHF is a much better way to reach someone who can actually help you (Coast Guard, Harbor Police, or even a nearby angler).

5) Carry supplies to help combat hypothermia – these can vary according to your tastes and the space in your boat, but I usually carry a thermos of hot cider, something to eat (the body burns calories just staying warm), gloves, a space blanket, spare dry clothing, and if it's a really cold day, a windproof balaclava.

6) File a float plan. Tell someone where you're going and what time you expect to be back. If you don't check in at the expected time, they can kick off a search.

7) Play it safe, don't push your limits. Our winter paddles tend to be much shorter than our summer trips, and we get much more conservative about the weather conditions in which we'll run a trip (we pay very close attention to the forecast in the days leading up to a trip).

8) Practice rescues in controlled conditions and work on them until you can get yourself and/or a friend back in a boat without having to think about it. Don't assume that you're not going to capsize or fall in; accidents can happen to any skilled paddler.

9) Take care of your gear, and test it occasionally to make sure you can rely on it. Rescue practice is the best time to

find out that your drysuit is leaking. Tugging at the buckles and straps of your lifejacket can reveal seams weakened by age and UV exposure. If you keep flares or other emergency gear in a zippered pouch, check the zipper now and then to make sure it hasn't seized up from the salt air, and so on and so forth. Basically, if you would need it to work in an emergency, don't wait for the emergency to find out if it works.

10) Educate yourself! I've just given an intro here. There's a lot more information out there, and all sorts of ways to find it. You can surf the web, pick up a books or pamphlets at your local outfitter or chandlery, ask more-experienced boaters for advice, attend a cold-water workshop run by a local club or boating shop, or all of the above. Whether you want to boat 12 months out of the year, or just break out the skiff on a nice day in March, you're sure to have a better time if you've taken the time to learn what you need to know about cold water boating safety.

Happy boating!

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Always looking to paddle and somehow give back, he became involved with swim support for various non-profit organizations, among them: The Swim for Life, supporting the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society; The Swim across America to fight Cancer, and Pete Seeger's Riverpool Swim; to name a few.

It was at one of these events that he was introduced to a fellow paddler who not only volunteered as a swim-support coordinator for local charities, but was also doing it professionally for majors such as World Triathlon Corp and Ironman. Carl quickly gravitated into that arena and now travels to New Orleans, Washington, DC, Miami, Las Vegas, and other venues directing swim support.

In his other professional world, Carl is a Kayak and Thule Rack Guru for Eastern Mountain Sports in Scarsdale, NY, and travels regularly to the firms headquarters to evaluate (read: play with) all the new yaks and gear.

### Paddle For The Cure

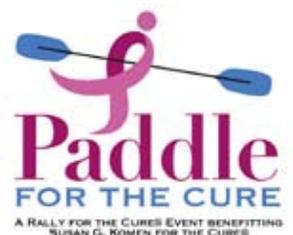
Mark your calendar. On Saturday, August 6th, HRWA will sponsor **Paddle For The Cure**, a kayak event benefiting the Susan G. Komen Foundation, an organization which funds cancer research and awareness. The event will have three major components:

1 A 16 mile race for Advanced Paddlers, which begins at Dockside, on the northern end of Cold Spring, heads North to the turnaround point at Bannermans Island, finishing at the Annsville Creek Paddlesport Center.

2 A Poker Paddle which also begins at Dockside, leisurely paddling the 11 miles to Annsville Creek while picking up 5 playing cards along the way. The best hand at the end of the paddle wins a prize!

3 The day culminates at Annsville Creek where there will be music via Motherlode, a BBQ, and an awards ceremony. The cost is \$45.00 per guest and includes participation in either the race or poker paddle, an event T-shirt, the BBQ and music, and, of course, a donation to Susan G. Komen for the Cure.

**Check the [www.hrwa.org](http://www.hrwa.org) website for registration information.**



## HRWA Membership Application

name (1)

address

city, state, zip

telephone #

e-mail address

I am available for volunteer activities \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Membership: New \_\_\_\_\_ Renewal \_\_\_\_\_

Basic \$35       Renewal \$25       Contributor \$100

Patron \$500       Saint \$1,000       Archangel \$5,000

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**Hudson River Watertrail Association**  
Box 110, 245 Eighth Avenue, New York, NY 10011

## HRWA notes

I don't know how the winter was for most of you, but this year, the closest I got to any bladed implement that even remotely resembled a paddle was a snow shovel. SIGH!!! It probably accounts for why I had so much fun with Carl Steiniger, manning the HRWA table at PADDLESPOORT this season. It was just such joy to get back into the spirit of things and hang out with the boating community that it almost made me forget my serious lack of boating time. And speaking of joy, feel good about yourself by helping a good cause. Check out PADDLE FOR THE CURE on page 7 and the ACHILLES CHALLENGE on page 3 and help spread the love.



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