



Back to School

This is the current trend in America. Kids are gearing up for new classes and parents are preparing for busier schedules. Some remain unaffected by the School Days. Their years as students have come and gone or their days as school parents have passed them by or not yet begun. My three-year-old starts preschool in two weeks but my time for back to school shopping is still two years away. Whether you are gearing up or watching from a distance, Back to School is a theme we can all relate to. We at Great Lakes Kayak would like to offer some of our own "refresher courses" this academic season.

As Glenna O'Doul stressed in her first installment of her safety series, *Safety Mantras & Cold Water Obsessions*, we must continue to educate ourselves about **Safety on the Water**. Unlike students who pass grades year after year and take with them cumulative knowledge, paddlers can never accumulate enough education. We must never consider ourselves graduates of safety, skill, or survival.

There are many professions that require continued education. This is because education evolves. There is always something new to learn! Approach paddling with confidence and respect...take the initiative to learn, and then practice the discipline of continued education.

Glenna's article *Foot Fetish* continues her series on Kayak Safety. Just like kids need their back to school supplies, kayakers need their kayaking supplies and proper footwear is definitely essential to kayak safety! We hope this edition of the GLK newsletter serves you well on and off the water!

Happy Paddling!

Heidi Holmberg

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Foot Fetish!

Glenna O'Doul

Did you know that most kayaking injuries are related to improper footwear? Those who are familiar with Great Lakes Kayak know firsthand how particular we are about what you have on your feet when you demo one of our kayaks or take a lesson with us! Some have even referred to me as the "Foot Fascist"!

Over the course of my short career in paddling, I have seen would-be kayakers come to the beach with everything from bare feet to flip-flops; army boots to open-top waders. I do not recommend any of these for paddling. What we like to see people wearing is water-specific footwear that has enough sole to protect the bottom of the foot from cuts, abrasions, and bruising.

1. **Footwear should be high and secure.** If your shoes is high enough and secure enough at the ankle, it should prevent sand and stones from sneaking their way into the foot opening.
2. **Footwear should be Lace Free.** I am not fond of the water shoes that look somewhat like athletic shoes and have a bungee cord kind of lace. These shoes are certainly sharp looking, but they are screaming "Foot Entrapment". Bungee and standard laces can become entangled with footbraces.
3. **Footwear should fit properly.** Crocs, flipflops, and walking sandals are not made for kayaking. These shoes can be caught up in the footbraces. Water-specific footwear that does not fit properly can get caught under seats or in other nooks and crannies in the cockpit. Make sure your footwear fits snugly, but not so tight as to create hotspots and blisters.

Over the course of my eight years as a guide and instructor, I have seen and administered care for lacerations, infected lacerations, blisters, fractured toes, bone bruises, and strained ankles, wrists and backs, all because of improper footwear. Luckily, entrapment in the kayak has not yet happened on my watch, and with due diligence from myself and my staff, I pray it never will. This is the ultimate horror that has resulted in death by drowning.

We recommend for folks just getting into kayaking an inexpensive water shoe that can be purchased at Target or Sports Authority for \$5.99. Using the criteria listed above, you can make a choice to get you through a few trips on the water. This is a minimum investment that could ultimately save your life.

For those of you that have made Kayaking your primary sport, the options can be overwhelming! First, we applaud you for choosing the best sport on the planet! The staff at Great Lakes Kayak has some footwear favorites that we feel are awesome!

In warmer temperatures we like the Chota Low-Top Bootie. I personally like to wear socks with them. It may not be a fashion statement, but I do not like sand between my bootie and my foot. Socks solve that problem. The advantage of the Chota Booties, besides a more than adequate sole and no lacing, is that they are easy to get in and out of. This feature also puts them at a disadvantage because if you are in surf conditions or standing, wading, or walking in sandy areas, sand and small pebbles do collect inside the footwear.

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(Foot Fetish!, continued)

In cooler environments we love the Chota Light Mukluks. They are marvelously warm, but it does have two disadvantages. (Hey, we're just being honest!) The Chota Mukluks are sometimes difficult to get in and out of and if you spend quite a bit of time in water that is higher than the adjustable neoprene top, it will loosen up a bit and water (but no sand or pebbles) can start leaking into boot. Now, there is a bright side, it's a great leg workout tramping up and down a sandy beach with two to four pounds of water in each boot!

We have found other great choices at NRS! Though a bit pricier than Chota, we like the Desperado and the Attack Shoe. We have also gotten some great feedback on the NRS ATB Boot. The ATB has the side-zip advantage which makes them easy to get on and off, but keep in mind (another one of those pesky disadvantages!) zippers can sometimes get jammed with sand.

Great Lakes Kayak stocks the Chota Low-Top Bootie and the Chota Light Mukluks in most sizes and we are more than happy to special order any of the NRS Footwear. Don't miss the coupon at the bottom of the newsletter!

Coming Next Issue: *What to Look for in a PDF, Oops!, PFD!*

Happy Paddlers

Bevis Musk, United Kingdom

"I bought a [Fathom](#) this week from your English distributor, Reed. Firstly the boat is superb, at last a kayaking product that lives up to the ads and the testimonials!! There is a lot of waffle spoken about USA versus British waters and kayak suitability. You have made a very well finished product the handles beautifully, it tracks superbly and in the first days of paddling has given me (mid fifties but still fit experienced sea goer but not too experienced paddler) much better utilization of skills and much more confidence in high winds and tricky currents and sea conditions. Plus the finish is superb and the fit is as a custom made boat! (I also help to run a composites company making structural carbon fibre products in the automotive sector and had a business making technical scuba gear so am qualified to comment). Kayaking people often forget that composites are really plastics too and do not realise the benefits of thermoforming with the right materials and that snobbery gets in the way of considering buying kayaks like yours. Very well done and thanks!"



Meg and Gus Goncalves, Palm Coast, Florida

We love the [Equinox](#)! I have been paddling the NightHawk 16 for years. My husband paddles the NightHawk 17.5 We needed another kayak for my brother who has just moved to Florida. We ordered an Equinox for him. It arrived this weekend. With remnants of hurricane Wilma still lingering, I took the Equinox out for a paddle in 15 to 20 knot winds. The Equinox was light, responsive, tracks beautifully, and a breeze to maneuver. The winds were not an issue at all with white caps churning up the waters. I am very happy with its design and ease of paddling in the winds. It was not a wet ride at all! Great job to Eddyline for designing a perfect 14 foot kayak! The Equinox is now one of my favorite all around kayak for short or long trips. 5 Star rating on the Equinox, the value and performance is superb! ps... I am 51 and have tried many kayaks out there! I rarely will give such a review, but this kayak deserves it! Eddyline Kayaks have proven to be a superior design with high performance for our family, and we recommend them highly to all our friends and guests!

Seasonal Farewell and a Personal Thank You to GLK Staff and Friends!

Many of you already know that two of our most valuable assets are off to their next adventures at their respective colleges. New to our staff this year, Alex Hertel left on August 7th to continue his college education. After a family vacation to Costa Rica he returned to Boulder, Colorado as a sophomore at the University of Colorado. Alex had a great year with us! Thank you Alex, we hope to see you back next year.

This past year was Andrew Blum's third summer with Great Lakes Kayak. This year his responsibilities increased dramatically. In addition to being a huge contributor on the water with his outstanding teaching and coaching skills, he was responsible for training Alex as well as managing the shipping portion of our business. Andrew exceeded expectations this year! He is now off to the University of Rhode Island to begin his sophomore year. Andrew has an intensive training regimen to look forward to this year as a valuable member of the URI Men's Crew Team. We want to thank Andrew for an outstanding season with us. Your contributions will be missed and we hope to have you back next year!

We also want to thank Kate Moring for her wonderful contributions over the last couple of years. I met Kate in Crete, Greece. She was a guest of The Northwest Passage's "[Inn to Inn Crete Kayaking Adventure](#)" where I was one of the guides. The first time I got into a tandem kayak with her in Crete I was blown away! She had not had much formal instruction, but man, the girl could power a kayak - complete with awesome torso rotation, which I do not see very often in beginners. After the Crete adventure, she kept showing up at demo paddles and the rest is history. She has become my go-to gal when I am out of town or injured. Kate is a full time pre-school teacher for the Chicago Public Schools and will be attending Graduate school at Northeastern University this fall. I am not sure where that will lead her or what time she will have to give us in the future, but we thank her for all she has done for GLK and for me.

Those of you that know me know that technology is not my best friend. Heidi Holmberg, my daughter-in-law and a dear friend, has been a tremendous asset to us in developing our newsletter and email communications. In addition, she works in the shop when the rest of us are out on the water. Her computer, communication, and people skills are amazing. I am blessed to have her in the family as well as in the shop. Heidi will be leaving us for a short period of time around the holidays to welcome the arrival of her second daughter (my fourth granddaughter!).

Lyn Stone has shared her amazing teaching and coaching skills and helped with our instructional programs this season. Lynn has great talent and it is my sincere hope that we can continue to work together next season. Thank you, Lynn! Liz Scheri is a recent addition to our staff and has proven to be a valuable member of our team - she is a real trouper! Liz has been available to help out on the water and in the shop at a moments notice. We really appreciate her support and hope she can continue to grow with us in the future.

A special Thank You to Tom Goldblatt, who helps out GLK when he can; Maureen Hamilton Stapleton and [The North Shore Yacht Club](#); Nancy Vedder, Rick Sweitzer, and Keith Haeger of [The Northwest Passage](#). Thank you all for your continued support! And last but certainly not least: Thank You, Steve Murrill. As owner of [Great Lakes Kayak](#), he has provided his staff and local paddlers with amazing opportunities! We appreciate what you do and what you have given us!

Thank you from the bottom of my heart!
Glenna O'Doul