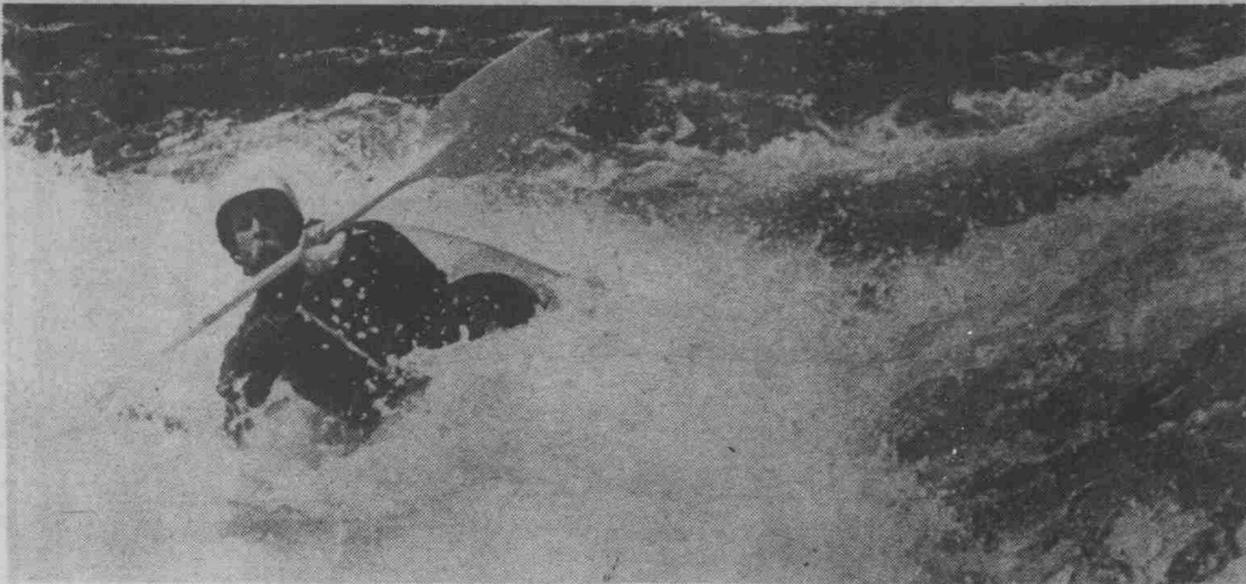


in focus: outdoor recreation



Joe Coates, manager of The Trail Shop, Kayaking on the Haw River rapids

Kayaking: Paddling Haw River rapids provides adventurous, challenging experience

By Jack Mohr

Floating on a calm, smooth river, undisturbed but for the wake of a kayak and the brushing of the wind through the trees, you hear the sound of falling water. The stomach gets queasy as the adrenalin starts following in anticipation of what awaits you downstream.

As the roar of churning water becomes deafening, you sit straining to sight a course through the turbulent water. As you enter the rapids, dodging rocks and finding eddies, the adrenalin takes hold. Instinctively, you choose a route through the rapids, your body and mind pushed to the optimal coordinated performance level. As Joe Coates, manager of The Trail Shop, puts it, "Kayaking in the extreme is an art form."

Just 20 minutes outside Chapel Hill on U.S. 15-501 toward Pittsboro is the Haw River. The upper Haw is a great place to get your feet wet. Slow and flat with intermittent rapids of Class II magnitude, even a beginning paddler can negotiate it at low water levels. However, when the upper-Haw is running high after a hard rain, it should be attempted only with an experienced paddler in the boat.

By river, the trip from Chicken Bridge to the 15-501 bridge takes approximately 3½ hours. (This does not include time for capsizing, picnicking or picture-taking.) Prospective river-runners should plan to take an entire day for the trip in order to fully enjoy the scenery. An abundance of wildlife is visible from the river, including the great blue heron which flies up from the coast, hawks, falcons, owls, deer and beaver.

The lower section of the Haw River is rated Class III and should be attempted only after testing your paddling ability on the upper Haw. This part of the river is not negotiable when the water level is

low, whereas the upper Haw can be paddled year round. The trip down the lower Haw takes about 2½ hours.

But when the lower Haw is especially high, it should be attempted only by experts. Terry O'Brien of the Trail Shop says that at high water levels the lower Haw is a dangerous and potentially deadly river. "Inexperienced persons are killed there almost every year."

Employees at Haw River Runners' Emporium advise that certain precautions should be taken by anyone planning to paddle the Haw River. A float plan should be filed and life jackets should be worn. If you fall out of the boat in the rapids, you should float along until you reach the calm water before attempting to stand. Always float feet first, to avoid striking your head against rocks.

White water rapids are rated by class ranging I to VI. Class I refers to smooth, swift water with obstacles, i.e. rocks, visible above the surface. Class II is swift water with a broken surface and some obstacles submerged. The Sierra Club says that beginning paddlers should stick to water classified Class I or II. Class III, for more experienced paddlers, has submerged obstacles and standing waves. Class III is the maximum level of difficulty negotiable by a canoe.

Maps of the upper and lower Haw are available from either the Trail Shop or the Haw River Runner's Emporium. They indicate the location and difficulty of rapids, landmarks and suggested rest stops. Maps of other white water rivers in North Carolina are also available.

More information on paddling on the Haw River can be obtained at either the Trail Shop at 405 W. Franklin St. or the Haw River Runner's Emporium at 211 E. Main St. in Carrboro. Boats and equipment can be rented at both establishments.

Water safety: Stay out of hot water this summer by remembering rules while afloat

By Martha Johnson

Play it safe this summer, say outdoors specialists in the Chapel Hill area. Whether you're going to the beach, the park, the lake, or just the apartment pool, it's good to keep some summer safety tips in mind.

No matter what the summer exercise, start out slowly. "People need to gradually increase their physical activity," says Skip Hunter, physical therapist at the Student Health Service. "There are too many weekend athletes around who don't consider that they've been sitting around all week long."

If you are planning on taking a dip in any swimming environment, remember never to swim alone. "Always swim with a buddy or friend," says Cindy Billings, senior program director at the Chapel Hill-Carrboro YMCA. "Find out what his swimming abilities are and then keep an eye on him."

"You should never swim in an unguarded apartment pool by yourself," says Ann Colvard, YMCA aquatic director. "If you hit your head or suddenly get a cramp, there'd be no one to help."

If you are going to a lake or beach that is new to you, always check out the site before taking the

plunge.

"Look for posted rules and available safety equipment—ring buoys, logs, balls, anything that floats," Billings says. "Check the water to see if it appears to be clean, if it is moving and free of algae."

If diving is your forte, don't take the dare to dive off that cliff before checking out the water below. "If you are in a lake where you can't see the bottom, you need to determine the depth by a feet-first surface dive," Billings says. "Neck and back injuries are usually severe in water accidents so hands should always be over the head when diving."

Even at a pool you should check out the diving area. "Most apartment complex pools are shallow," Colvard says. "I would not recommend a lot of fancy diving or back flips off the side. Look before you dive to avoid collisions."

Children need special attention in the water. "Keep children out of those commercial swans and inertubes, especially if they can't swim," Billings says. "Unless they are strictly supervised, children are likely to become overconfident and swim into areas over their heads."

Weather conditions can also affect your safety in the water. "Never swim when you can see lightning,

whether in an outdoor or indoor pool," Colvard says. "If you hear thunder, get out because there's the danger of electric shock."

At the beach the ocean is a harsher environment. "Ride with the outgoing current rather than tiring yourself fighting it," Colvard says. "If you get tangled in weeds, remember to stay calm and slowly untangle yourself. Quick thrashing movements only get you more trapped."

"Also be aware of the marine life and know what to do in case of jellyfish stings and so on."

When boating other safety precautions need to be taken. "All passengers in boats must have U.S. Coast Guard-approved personal flotation devices," says Myers Braxton, superintendent of the Crabtree Section of Umstead State Park near Raleigh.

Although in North Carolina you are not required to wear life-vests, you must have one available for each person. "When boating, always keep that vest on if you can't swim," says Colvard. "Also anyone that is around the water should have basic swimming skills and learn how to survive float."

A situation involving a person who is in trouble in the water or drowning is one that should be approached with great caution, Billings says. Often the first impulse is to dive in and rush to the person's

aid. However, this is often the worst action to take, and may result in the loss of two lives.

Billings stresses that unless you are skilled in lifesaving techniques, it is best not to attempt a rescue. Instead, you should throw or hold out an object for the person in trouble to grasp.

A significant number of water and boating drownings are the result of combining drinking with water activities. "Don't mix drinking and water sports," says Sparky Carpenter, social research assistant at the Center for Alcohol Studies. "It causes weakness and makes you physically incapable of what you normally would be able to do."

"You could eventually become confused or disoriented in the water," says Carpenter. "The potential risk is there even with small levels of alcohol because of your increased activity."

Whether you are swimming or boating, you should have some sort of emergency plan. "The most important thing is to find out where the nearest phone is and know what numbers to call for help," Billings says. "Decide who would go for help and what your procedure will be."

Summer sports are fun, but only if they're safe. "Just use common sense at all times," Billings says, "and remember, we are our brother's keeper."

Parachuting:

Fall out of an airplane?
Some jump at the chance

By John Drescher

Picture this: you are in a small airplane, 3,000 feet above acres and acres of tobacco farms in rural Franklin County. The side door opens. You adjust your goggles one last time and run your hand across your back, checking your parachute pack for about the 40th time. The man next to you shakes your hand and wishes you luck. You creep closer and closer to the edge, take a deep breath—and jump.

Sound fun? Hundreds of people think so, says Paul Fayard of Franklin County Sport Center. The Sport Center, located on Highway 56 in Louisburg, is the only parachuting center in the area certified by the U.S. Parachuting Association.

Fayard and the staff at the Sport Center train beginning parachuters and aid those who have jumped previously. First-timers pay a \$55 fee, which covers the use of the equipment, training and the actual jump itself. Prices go down considerably the more the parachuter jumps. The second jump is only \$12.

First-timers get five to six hours of training, depending on the individual. The object, Fayard said, is to train the student "enough so he can enjoy the jump on a personalized basis."

Training starts with orientation with the equipment and continues by explaining how to enter the aircraft and become comfortable in it. Next, students are taught how to exit the plane and what to expect once they do exit, said Fayard. Students are taught how to steer, land and prepare for unusual landing conditions.

Beginning parachuters do not pull the rip cord that releases the parachute. A static line is pulled by the jumpmaster in the plane, although Fayard said that there is a dummy rip cord that students can practice with. A back-up chute is used if the main chute does not open properly.

Parachuters must jump a minimum of five times before they can jump without a static line and pull their own rip cord. Parachuters must also be critiqued by the jumpmaster. Their last three jumps must be successful in all phases as judged by the jumpmaster for them to jump without the static cord.

"It's really not that difficult," Fayard said. "It's just a matter of getting your head (mind) to catch up with your body."

In seven years, there has been one death at the Sport Center. The jumper was an experienced parachuter, Fayard said, who did "several things wrong he knew better not to do." The jumper's first chute did not open, and instead of pulling his back-up chute he tried to fix his first chute. By the time he finally did pull his second chute, it was too late. Fayard said.

Most parachuting centers in North Carolina, other than the ones at Louisburg, Midland and Raeford, are small "fly-by-night, out-of-the-trunk" operations, Fayard said.

The Franklin County Sport Center has 11 instructors, who give on-the-ground training, and 15 jumpmasters, who control activity inside the aircraft and critique the students. The Sport Center is open from 10 a.m. until dark on weekdays and from 8 a.m. until dark on weekends.



Gaynor Collester (above left) of the Chapel Hill area has a bicycle outfitted for cross-country travel. Equipment for safety and comfort including a luggage rack and panniers or saddle bags also can be worn.

Bicycling:

By Sarah West

Bicycling, a long-standing mode of transport for the American preteen, is taking on an expanded role. As gas prices spiral even higher, bicycles provide an economical means of getting around for all ages. Bicycling has also become increasingly popular as a sport.

According to Grady Ballenger of The Chapel Hill area, there is a big interest in cross-country bikes. Ballenger, who does a lot of touring, advocates it as a good way to meet people.

"When you come into a small town on a bicycle, you are less of an intruder than if you were in a car. You are more easily accepted—and people are more interested in you."

Gaynor Collester, who works at The Chapel Hill area, says Chapel Hill is a good location because of the surrounding countryside. "A 15-minute ride, you'll find some good roads with traffic."

Bikers interested in long-distance touring should look out the cross-North Carolina trail from Murphy as well as the cross-America trail. Maps of the Carolina trail, which runs through Chapel Hill,



Joe Coates riding a bicycle.