

RESCUES

From time to time you may find the need to help out one of your compatriots who find themselves in the briny alongside their craft – hopefully they will be hanging on to boat and paddle. If the boat to be rescued is empty of overnight kit etc. then a traditional X rescue will work fine but if it is loaded manhandling the boat may be extremely difficult and heaving it across your boat may lead to personal injury or boat damage. The method I have adopted in all circumstances (and I must point out that this is a personal preference) is to simply right the boat, raft it against mine, brace firmly with paddles and get the person back in their boat directly from the side (i.e. not between the boats) without emptying their boat. The person being rescued is encouraged to pull themselves across my boat and put weight on my boat while climbing back into theirs. The flooded boat is then pumped out (using a plunger type pump if no pump is fitted). The advantages are:

- This can be done with the boats either way around,
- The person does not become entangled with splits etc stowed on the deck of either boat when re-entering,
- The person spends the absolute minimum of time in the water,
- There is minimum risk of boat damage since the boats should always be 'side by side' and at no point in a 'T' configuration,
- It should be possible for the rescued paddler to paddle away from danger (rocks etc.) with their boat flooded and then to be pumped out in a safer position.

The disadvantages I have come across are:

- Some people may have difficulty kicking and pulling themselves directly up over the side and into their boat,
- Some lower volume sea kayak designs may be low in the water when flooded leaving the cockpit rim close to the water and leading to more water slopping in when trying to pump out.

I have seen a refinement where a loop of cord or tape is hung on the paddles protruding across the boats so that the person being rescued can use it as a step-up when climbing back in – seems like a good idea but I have not tried it. Why not give this rescue method a try next time you have a practice session and see if it works for you, unless, of course, you are already using it.