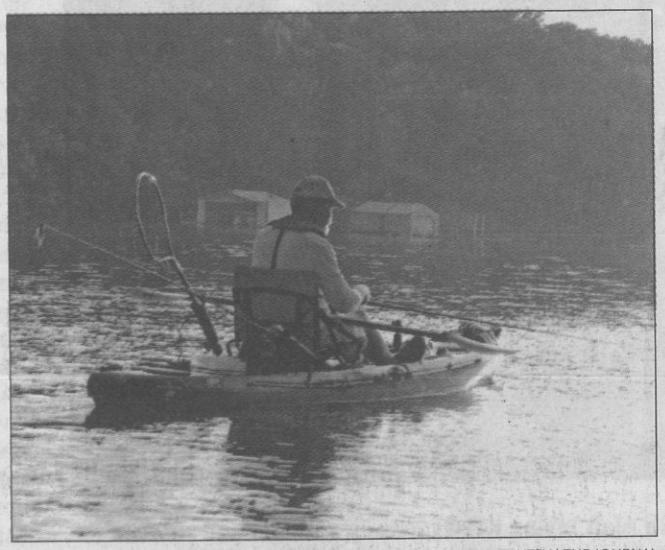
Finding the right kayak for anglers

BY PHILLIP GENTRY
THE JOURNAL



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Fishing from a kayak is one of the most enjoyable and greenest outdoor past times. Make sure to pick the boat that is right for your needs.

It's no secret that going green is the biggest trend in outdoor sports and with that movement comes a tidal wave of interest in kayaking as part of enjoying the area's waterways.

Kayaks can be loosely groups into four usage categories.

The first are the sport models used for whitewater rafting. These boats are small, rugged and spend almost as much time under the water than on top of it. In fact, most whitewater kayaks are what is known as cockpit-style boats and the kayaker wears a waterproof skirt that fits around the mouth of the opening to keep the boat from filling with water.

Another category is touring or paddling boats. These range from extremely high-dollar wooden boats that are long and sleek to more moderately priced plastic models that are designed to track well in the water without causing excess fatigue.

The third group are what are considered glorified water toys. Most people store them at their docks or on the bank and paddle around the vicinity of either the ramp or the owner's property. These boats are not terribly expensive and have little specific features.

The fourth category are kayaks designed for fishing. Recently, an opinion survey of kayak anglers by a popular kayak and accessory manufacturer revealed some not-so-startling facts about the largest growing segment of the fishing community. At the top of the list was that the overwhelming majority of kayak anglers — even those who are leaders and innovators of the sport — have been involved in kayak fishing for less than 10 years.

As with every angler who steps up to a plastic boat with a fishing rod in one hand and a paddle in the other, questions arise. With the holidays right around the corner and a new fishing season on the horizon shortly after, here are some tips and suggestions to help the rising freshman class of 2016 get their feet wet — figuratively speaking — in a fishing kayak.

Fishing kayaks come in two flavors — sit-on tops and cockpit boats. Very few anglers are happy fishing from a cockpit style boat. Sit-on tops allow more freedom of movement and have scuppers to let water that will and does get in the boat drain out.

A one-piece roto-molded boat is generally better than a two-piece seamed boat because eventually the seam will leak. It is better to buy a good used boat than a bad new boat. Holes or wear spots in a good used boat can be repaired cheaper than buying a new high-dollar boat.

Don't buy the biggest and best new kayak on the market when starting out. If you start with a good entry level used boat and like the sport, you will want to go better — meaning pricier — in your next boat. Kayak anglers are always swapping out boats.

If you don't like the sport, a good used boat is easier to get your money back out of.

When it comes to picking a kayak fishing wardrobe, plan on falling in the water every time you fish from a kayak. You won't, but if and when you do, you'll want to be dressed for the occasion. Wear clothing that doesn't hold moisture. If it's cold or even cool, an outer layer than sheds water is recommended.

Wear your life preserver every trip out on the water. With today's inflatables, there's no excuse not to.

PHILLIP GENTRY is the host of "Upstate Outdoors," broadcast from noon to 2 p.m. Saturdays on 106.3 WORD FM. This week's guest will be Britt Myers, winner of the Bassmaster Elite Tournament at Winyah Bay. Contact Gentry at pgentry6@bellsouth.net.