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MAGAZINE



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Levesque's Girls at Play Camps Catching On

After releasing her first instructional video last fall, Anna Levesque is wasting no time in going from reels of film to floating the river. This spring, she kicked off a series of Girls at Play skills camps designed specifically for women, with each one drawing more and more women to whitewater. "We talked about a variety of topics from the way women face fear to our external paddling support systems and how our bodies make a difference when it comes to outfitting," says Nicole Meeks, a participant at the inaugural camp at the Nantahala Outdoor Center (NOC). "The information was great because I realized a lot of my questions and

fears are the same as other women. And it was easier to talk about those things with a group of women than it is to discuss them with men. I was also glad when by the end we hadn't done any male bashing. All of us like the guys we paddle with, it was just nice to talk to a species who inherently understands our need to talk about things."

After turning people away at the NOC event to keep participants down to 15 per day, Levesque went on to host 11 other clinics throughout the year, at such locations as the Cheat River, Va., Boulder, Colo., and Hood River, Ore. The program was so successful that Dagger even signed on as a sponsor of the clinic tour. Most of



Photo by Anna Levesque

Honey Hole Girls at play at one of Levesque's camps.

the clinics had between 20 and 35 women, and roughly 300 overall participated. "All of the women are thankful to have the opportunity to get together to share their experiences and paddle with a group of women," says Levesque. "It seems as though women have just been waiting for something like this to come along." And, it's safe to say, so have the men. *Info: www.watergirlsatplay.com.*

GIRLS AT PLAY

As James Brown once put it, "this is a man's man's world." And we all know that after a man has made everything, you know that man makes money to buy from other men. Consequently, videos, boats, PFDs and just about every

type of gear made for kayaking is made for men first, leaving women to retrofit themselves in with minicell and duct tape. Anna Levesque's *Girls at Play* offers practical advice and information from a host of top women paddlers to help with issues like boat outfitting, initiating in holes off the stern for lighter paddlers, and, of course, talking about your feelings. To be blunt, most men would rather drown in a hole than swim in front of the guys or paddle off the edge of the world before they'd pull off the river and have a good cry. So if your policy as a male paddler is to handle fear with cheap whiskey and beat the river into submission with your paddle, there's definitely something to be learned here. *Info: www.watergirlsatplay.com.*

