



# BIG-CITY SKIERS

**WaterSki** tours New York's little-known ski scene and witnesses a few sets in the cold, choppy and less-than-sanitary waters of the Hudson River. *By Sarah Kinbar*



Third-generation skier Lynn Jenkins grew up skiing just 30 miles from the Statue of Liberty, on Long Island's Merrick Bay, where her grandparents were once competitive skiers.





Tourists high atop the Empire State Building were treated to Keith Corkery's aerial assault of the Hudson. Opposite: Jonathan Streeter, a federal prosecutor, cabbed it from his office to Chelsea Piers to meet *WaterSki*. He has skied in scores of locales, his backyard here being one of the most outlandish.

October is the bitter end of New York's water-ski season and, even then, skiers head to the calm, tree-protected waters of Twin Lakes in Monroe, New York, to get their final fix before the winter weather fully sets in. They never, even in bolder moments, ski the Hudson River, past downtown Manhattan and Lady Liberty, between barges and ferries. Unless they're nuts.

Maybe it's fair to say that New Yorkers are a little nuts, considering what happened a few months ago. Jonathan Streeter, Eddie Azar, Lynn Jenkins and Keith Corkery each answered an early-morning call in mid-October. "Do you want to ski the Hudson today?" said the voice on the other end. And

"yes" is the only feasible answer to a question like that.

*WaterSki*, with a little help from some friends, was able to pull together a photo shoot in a matter of hours. Eric Scott of Island Water Sports in Port Jefferson, New York, committed a MasterCraft X-35 and X-45 around 7 a.m.; by 9 a.m., the skiers had signed on and by 11 a.m., we were on the water.

Three of the four skiers heard about our photo shoot through connections at Twin Lakes, whose ski club of 40 members tells you that the NYC metro area isn't exactly a thriving ski scene. What they lack in size they make up for with dedication. For many of us, the charm and novelty of skiing a major urban river

would be somewhat offset by cold, choppy conditions; not so for these four.

A federal prosecutor, Streeter heard about the shoot through Twin Lakes ski coach Brad Able. "He called me that morning and I had to show up. I'm always psyched to ski!" he says. "I've heard of people skiing further up the river near West Point, but never here."

Corkery, a graduate student, was reluctant to accept the offer because he had an important class that day, but ultimately gave in to his better judgment. Jenkins also got word and decided to join in: "It was a gift to meet up with strangers with a common passion for skiing and jump in the water. Nothing

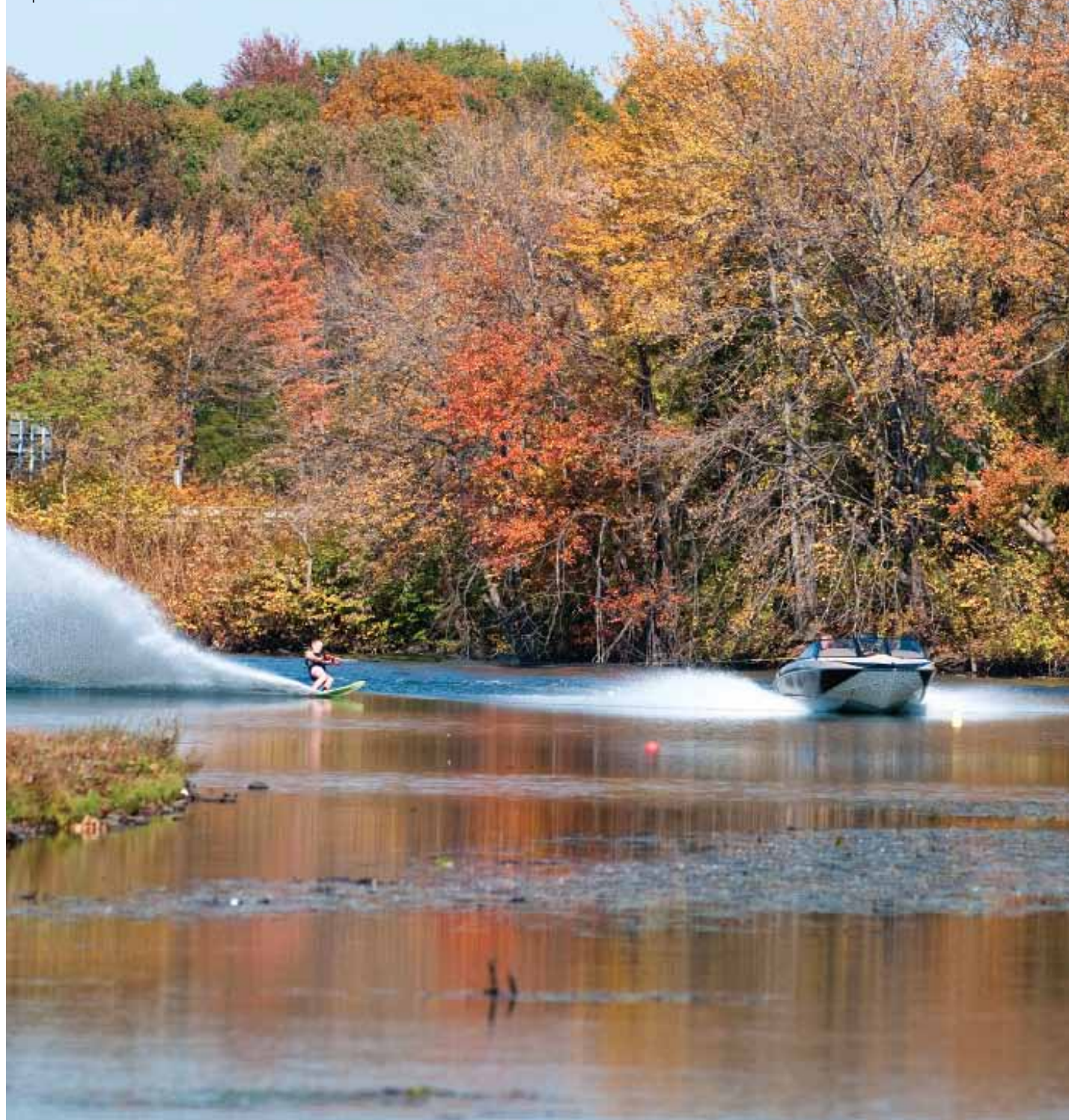
beats our experience on the Hudson. My endorphins carried me through the day."

Azar got a call from Scott at Island Water Sports: "I have only one response to invitations to ski. When I heard we would be skiing by the Statue of Liberty, there was no way I could pass up the crazy offer, so I rearranged my schedule immediately. I asked my wife to throw my ski equipment into a car service, and away we went!"

The common bond among skiers — that constant urge to ski — drives New Yorkers without easy access to a lake to seek out innovative sites. The Hudson River is a stretch, but there are



Tommy Wiley, whose parents are among the 11 Twin Lakes-owning families, braves the mid-50s water in a banana hammock (on a dare). Opposite, top and bottom: National three-event competitor Zachary Kachele warms up before flying high above the two-lake site that was purchased in 1988 and has hosted several high-profile amateur and professional events since.



other unique places to ski in and around the Big Apple. Azar and his friend David Franco have discovered a spot in Brooklyn whose exact location is a closely guarded secret.

“Our ‘Ski Paradise in NYC’ used to be a wasteland filled with trash and abandoned cars, and today it’s been restored to its natural beauty,” Franco says. “It is a mile-long stretch of water with a mix of fresh and salt water. The surroundings are surreal, considering its urban location: beautiful trees, marshland, birds — and planes flying overhead to remind us where we are.”

Jenkins has skied in public saltwater areas where she installed slalom courses and made the best of it. Her home site growing up

was Merrick Bay, Long Island, which is just a short boat ride away from Jones Beach. “That’s where competitive water skiing began and where my grandparents skied and swam competitively. It is the most challenging place I have skied. First of all, it’s salt water. And you only have a three-hour window to ski because the course can only be accessed at high tide. It was always interesting to see how early I could get in to set the course up, then ski to the last possible second and still have time to pick up the course and get back to shore before the tide went out,” Jenkins says.

Greg Sund, who skied on the pro tour, skis all summer at The Quarry in Westhampton on Long Island, and some of our



## Home Ski Home

WHERE TO SKI ON THE REGULAR IN NEW YORK

### ► TWIN LAKES

**The Basics:** “The boat and course go in early April and come out in late October,” resident ski coach Brad Able says. There are two lakes, and all three events are skied here, so there is something for everyone. There are about 45 regular skiers here, and they come from all of the surrounding towns, including NYC, which is an hour’s drive away.

**Who to call:** Brad Able, 845-662-7829

**The Last Word:** “I’ve never met a better group of skiers than the Twin Lakes crew,” Able says.



### ► THE QUARRY

**The Basics:** When miners hit shallow groundwater years ago, the quarry filled with water, much to the delight of local skiers. The privately owned site in Westhampton on Long Island only has 11 members, but anyone is welcome to ski here.

**Who to call:** Greg Sund, 631-219-6626

**The Last Word:** “It’s like the Bahamas!” Sund says.



Hudson River skiers have carved turns there as well. The Quarry, a pristine, completely private hideout, has been a ski site since 1997. "It's about 40 feet deep and usually clear. Most of the time you can see to the bottom. It's like the Bahamas!" Sund says. Today, only a handful of members use the 4-ball course, but in the spirit of fun, Sund invites any interested *WaterSki* readers to join him at The Quarry.

New Yorkers seek warmer climates in the winter, and many got their start skiing abroad.

Azar's first set was in Acapulco, Mexico, in 1974, and he's

been hooked ever since. He has practically toured the world on his ski, his many destinations including South and Central Florida, each and every one of the Caribbean and Virgin Islands, Ibiza and Barcelona, Spain, and the Han River north of Seoul, South Korea.

"I had an office in the Chosun Hotel and I would visit Seoul four times a year for two weeks a pop," he remembers. "My office manager had a boat that I helped maintain by sending parts and ski equipment through the Army base there. We would plan our factory visits so that we ended up north near the boat, and we would go skiing to end our days."

Streeter learned to ski as a young boy, on his grandfather's lake in northern Minnesota. In college, he and a buddy spent a summer at Lake Winnepesaukee, New Hampshire, where they waited tables. "We bought an old, junky runabout boat and skied every day before work. I left the boat on the mooring without a cover each night, and at the end of the summer, a big rainstorm came along and filled it up — and sank it."

Skiers relish their memories on the water and have many stories to tell, but all four agreed that the Hudson River ski day was one of their wildest, most exciting sets.

"Skiing literally in the heart of New York's waterway is the most uncommon place I have ever skied, a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. The excitement I felt skiing in front of the Statue of Liberty was overwhelming. I was elated!" Jenkins says.

Corkery's feelings about the day are much like Jenkins: "My strongest memory is being out on the water and seeing Jersey City to my left, looking right and seeing the New York City skyline, and looking behind me to see the Verrazano Bridge. Individually, these views are amazing, but seeing them in succession while riding on the Hudson River was absolutely crazy."

## Cable Coming Soon

► **Eric Scott, owner of Island Water Sports,** Long Island's MasterCraft and Malibu dealership, has had a passion for skiing for years. Once a competitive skier, he is president of the club that skis at The Quarry in Westhampton.

"Down South there are lots of opportunities for people to be introduced to skiing and wakeboarding, but here it's much more limited. Four years ago, I started developing a new project — a cable park on Long Island — and we are finally going to break ground this winter," Scott says. "This will introduce water sports to a lot more people."

Scott is planning a grand opening for late summer 2011. Island Waterpark, which will be located in Calverton, New York, on Long Island, will feature an aqua-blue, man-made cable lake and even an indoor skydiving facility.

For more information, call 631-331-7216 or email [teamiwp@optonline.net](mailto:teamiwp@optonline.net).



Opposite, top: Greg Sund, a former pro-tour skier, with his sons at The Quarry in Westhampton. Opposite, bottom: Frank O'Brien, a longtime club member, skis The Quarry, where the lake's low elevation protects it quite well from the wind even on blustery days like this one. This page: Eddie Azar, owner of an accessories company in Manhattan, has skied all over the world, but this was his first set on the Hudson.