

## Carving History From a 2x4

By Michael Morris

So what's up with all these people you see paddling around with skinny little wooden sticks? Well, it's a revival of sorts.

The Greenland or Inuit kayak paddle is an ancient design developed over thousands of years in the Arctic. It is a classic example of form following function. The long narrow blades serve efficiently underwater, propelling the craft forward, while above the water line provides little resistance to wind from any quarter. Coupled with proper technique, the narrow loom allows for a relaxed grip and smooth stroke. The "shoulders" of the blades give a loose but solid grip, as well as reference to blade orientation, but the paddle can be comfortably gripped anywhere along its length for extended paddle maneuvers, sculling, bracing or rolling. The paddle dimensions are



### Greenland Paddles

determined by anthropometric measurements of the paddler and, to a lesser extent, the boat being paddled; ultimately, a simple and elegant design.

My first paddle was carved from a \$7 2x4 piece of lumber and is still my favorite. With some scraps left over from a boat building project I tried my hand at laminating a paddle blank and liked the

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## Calendar

- Saturday, July 7 - Adventure's Edge Demo Day (\$5)
- Saturday, July 7 - Kayak 101 at Adventure's Edge Demo Day (FREE) (KZ)
- Sunday, July 8 - Surf Zone for Sea Kayaks with Dick Wold (\$50) (KZ)
- Monday, July 9 - Membership Meeting [Explore North Coast (ENC)]
- Saturday, July 21 - Strokes and Maneuvers Clinic (\$30) (KZ)
  - Sunday, July 22 - Wilson Creek or Crescent City (ENC)
- Saturday, July 28 - Lake Earl Paddling Clinics (\$30 per clinic) (8:30 a.m. - Balance, Bracing and Edging, 11 a.m. - Strokes and Maneuvers, 2 p.m. - Kayaking in Wind - 10% of proceeds go to NCRIA. (707) 465-6191 to enroll. (KZ)
- Sunday, July 29 - Interpretive Bird Watching Guided Tour (\$50) 8 a.m. FREE if you have your own kayak and gear. 10% goes to NCRIA. (707) 465-6191 to enroll. (KZ)
- Sunday, July 29 - Surfin' the Waves with Dick Wold (\$50) (KZ)

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*Submissions for future newsletters can be sent to:*

[www.explorenorthcoast.net](http://www.explorenorthcoast.net) • [info@explorenorthcoast.net](mailto:info@explorenorthcoast.net)

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- Saturday, Aug. 4 - Greenland Paddle Clinic and Dinner at Stone Lagoon (ENC)
- Saturday, Aug. 4 - What is this Gear Used for? (FREE) (KZ)
- Sunday, Aug. 5 - Surf Zone for Sea Kayaks with Dick Wold (\$50) (KZ)
- Saturday, Aug. 11 - Pilates for Paddlers with Susan Kidd (\$30) (KZ)
  - Thursday, Aug. 16 Club Expedition to the Mendocino Woodlands Camp (ENC)
  - Monday, Aug. 20 - Balance, Bracing and Edging at the Club Expedition (\$30) (KZ)
  - Monday, Aug. 20 - Strokes and Maneuvers at the Club Expedition (\$30) (KZ)
  - Tuesday, Aug. 21 - Sea Kayaking techniques for Rock Gardens at the Club Expedition (\$50) (KZ)
  - Sunday, Aug. 26 - Surfin' the Waves w/ Dick Wold (\$50) (KZ)
- Saturday, Sept. 8 - Big Lagoon Paddle and Swap Meet (ENC)
- Sunday, Sept. 9 - Surfin' the Waves with Dick Wold (\$50) (KZ)
  - Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Sept. 14 to 16 - West Coast Sea Kayak Symposium Port Townsend, [www.wcsks.org](http://www.wcsks.org).

For more information about Explore North Coast events, visit [explorenorthcoast.net](http://explorenorthcoast.net). For more information about Kayak Zak's events, visit [kayakzak.com](http://kayakzak.com). (Kayak Zak's prices do not include kayaks and gear.)

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result. Spending \$60 on pieces of more exotic woods, I ended up with three more paddles. Not bad considering a commercial touring paddle runs \$200 and up.

Paddling technique with a Greenland paddle (or GP) differs somewhat from with a Euro paddle, but there are some fundamentals that cross-over. Torso rotation and leg drive still come into play, but the stroke itself tends to be longer. Power is applied gradually after the "catch" and then lightened up through the finish. Perhaps the most significant and initially disorienting factor is that the hands are placed much closer together on the loom. This lends itself to a more neutral wrist position, which some with wrist problems find helpful. In fact, many paddlers find the GP to be gentler overall on joints and muscles, and that is why a number of them have switched over from Euros. Elbows are held low and loose throughout the stroke, resulting in less lifting of the arms and possibly less fatigue over long distances.

The blade itself is symmetrical; there is no front or back. This gives the paddle very predictable characteristics in the water, which some find both reassuring and advantageous when performing steering and



**Breaking through surf Greenland style.**



### Sculling.

other maneuvers. The blade shape also gives tremendous lift when sculled through the water; this support can be utilized to good effect for bracing and rolling.



### Traditional boats and paddles.

A Greenland paddle is just another piece of equipment and should not be considered better or worse than a Euro blade; it's just different, and either works well in the hands of a skilled paddler. Many people find they prefer them to the more common paddles available today, and if you carve them yourself there's considerable financial advantage. If you think you might be interested in catching the GP bug, come to the ENC club paddle on Stone Lagoon August 4. If you've already caught the bug, bring your paddle and I may be able to help you refine your technique. If you've never tried one or don't own one I'll have plenty of paddles to borrow and you can see if this might be for you.

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*Have you registered for ENC's  
Mendocino trip yet?*

*No? Well get on it!  
glapeer@sbcglobal.net*

**Each year our club organizes a great kayak expedition.** In years past we have explored the South Puget Sound, the San Juan Islands and even went en masse to the West Coast Sea Kayak Symposium. This year we've decided to keep things a little closer to home so that more members can enjoy the fun. From Thursday, Aug. 16 through Tuesday, Aug. 21, we will hold base camp at Mendocino Woodlands group Camp Three. Camp Three has 16 four-bed tent cabins, two toilet facilities, a kitchen and fire ring at the creek. Check out the amenities at [mendocinowoodlands.org](http://mendocinowoodlands.org). From here we will have easy access to paddling on Big River and the wonderful coastal features that Mendocino has to offer. The cost will be divided pro rata. You can come for the whole time, or just a couple of nights. For more information or to register, visit [www.explorenorthcoast.net](http://www.explorenorthcoast.net).

## Explore North Coast Sea Kayakers Association

invites you to

**Paddle for FREE**

[explorenorthcoast.net](http://explorenorthcoast.net) • [info@explorenorthcoast.net](mailto:info@explorenorthcoast.net)

This coupon entitles the first 200 people to present it to have their American Canoe Association fee waived. It is valid for Explore North Coast paddling events only and expires on August 15, 2007. It is valid for one person and one paddle. The paddler must provide his/her own boat and gear, and the paddler must follow all Explore North Coast rules, including, but not limited to, wearing a fastened personal floatation device during the entire duration of the paddle.



Explore  
North  
Coast



**Kayak Zak's**

707 498-1130  
info@kayakzak.com  
www.kayakzak.com

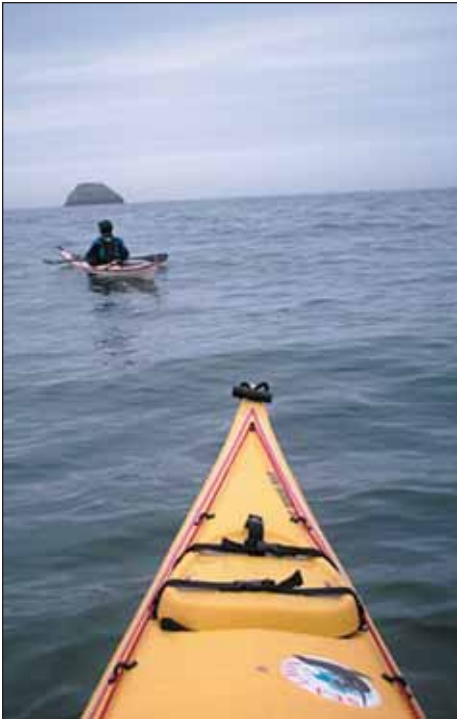
**\$ 5 coupon**  
**FIVE DOLLARS OFF ANY SERVICE !!!**

includes classes, clinics, guided tours, and rentals  
not to be used in conjunction with any other discount.

On Saturday, June 2 Explore North Coast members headed out for an easy and fun paddle from the Big Lagoon Boat ramp to Maple Creek. On the way they encountered river otters and enjoyed lunch on the shore before heading back across the lagoon.

Photos by: Mark Lufkin

# Trinidad...



On Sunday, April 29 and Sunday, May 20, Explore North Coast members explored Trinidad Cove. Along the way they saw abundant wildlife, including gray whales, harbor seals, harbor porpoises and numerous species of birds.

Photos by: Mark Lufkin



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*John Dayism*

*Life is a simple proposition, really -  
a simple choice between gearing up or gearing down.*

*What's your choice going to be?*

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