



BAY JOURNEY: Vic Madamba, left, and Michael Hunt will spend six months to a year surveying upper Galveston, East, West and Trinity bays. CARLOS JAVIER SANCHEZ / FOR THE CHRONICLE

A new perspective on nature

Kayakers join to survey wildlife in Galveston Bay

By DINA CAPPIELLO
HOUSTON CHRONICLE

Vic Madamba picked up kayaking nearly 20 years ago as a U.S. Navy recreation director on an Okinawa beach. Soon after, he spent 26 days and paddled 2,100 miles circumnavigating Japan's southernmost island.

About the same time, Michael Hunt, a lecturer in psychology at the University of Houston-Clear Lake, began kayaking to research dolphin behavior.

The two open-water kayakers have since become friends, and on Saturday they will begin a joint venture that could be their most ambitious yet: a wildlife survey of 250 miles of Galveston Bay shoreline by kayak. Call it science afloat.

"We wanted to just go around Galveston Bay, a circumnavigation," said Madamba, 70. "Then Michael said, 'You know, just paddling is a waste of time. Let's do something else, and the idea popped up.'"

For Hunt, kayaking the coast is a way to collect important scientific information.

"It all fits together," said Hunt, 58, who for the last year has participated in a wildlife

SCIENCE AFLOAT

The Galveston Bay Eco-Paddle Association will complete the first leg of an estimated 250-mile-long survey of Galveston Bay's shoreline by kayak. They will collect data on bird species, including waterfowl, and fish.



ROBERT DIBRELL / CHRONICLE

survey of Seabrook coordinated by the City Council's Eco-Tourism Committee.

The event will be the first for the Galveston Bay Eco-Paddle Association, a group Hunt and Madamba founded about a month ago. The association links conservation with sport, a combination that has historically given rise to groups such as the Surfside Foundation and the Coastal Conservation Association, a group of fishermen interested in preservation.

Kayaks, as a mode of transport, also are ideal for studying the coast.

"It's very interesting they are using kayaks," said Alicia Stroger, a spokeswoman for the Galveston Bay Foundation, which said it would be interested in the data.

"It's probably the best way to get into remote places," she added. "It's a great way to blend into the environment and move seamlessly."

Hunt says the survey, which will cover the entire bay, should be completed in six months to a year.

If Madamba had his way, the journey would have taken three to four days.

But the pace will be slowed

KAYAKING ONLINE

For more information or to contact the Galveston Bay Eco-Paddle Association, log on to www.galvestonbayeco.org.

by the science. Kayakers will identify bird species. Some participants will take water samples. Hunt will use microphones to record and study marine mammals. And there is also the possibility that data on fish will be collected.

All information will eventually be part of a database posted on the group's Web site.

On Saturday, about 25 to 100 people are expected to put in at Outriggers restaurant in Seabrook. They will finish the first leg at Seascope Park.

For those promoting ecotourism in the Seabrook area, the survey shows off the area's natural resources from a different vantage point. The city's ecotourism committee already promotes hiking and birding trails.

"It is putting a different spin on something, rather than walking our trails, you can glide along the shoreline," said Dori Nelson, chairwoman of the Seabrook Area Ecotourism Committee. Nelson has been learning to kayak in preparation for Saturday's launch.

"It will attract another whole market of people."

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Stalled vehicle leads to wreck that kills one

HOUSTON CHRONICLE

A 38-year-old man died in a chain-reaction accident that occurred along the Katy Freeway

Eight indicted in counterfeiting

They are accused of passing fake cash in West Texas

ASSOCIATED PRESS

currency and various counts of possessing counterfeit currency, the U.S. Attorney's Office in Dallas said.

Garcia, Smith and Brooks also were charged with manufacturing counterfeit U.S. bills.

charges Brian Jake Parsons also known as Benjamin Jacobs — Devan Lloyd Williams, Johnny Lewis Dickey and Richard William Corder with conspiracy to manufacture, pass, and possess counterfeit U.S.

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