

Tales of Water Trails: Long Prairie River

Welcome to 'Tales of Water Trails' presented by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

Our guests, Lynne and Bob Diebel, are experienced canoeists and kayakers who have paddled more than 2,400 miles of Minnesota water trails. They describe these routes for other travelers in their two books, *Paddling Northern Minnesota* and *Paddling Southern Minnesota*.

For this series of programs, the Diebels are sharing their insights about Minnesota's state water trails. The Minnesota DNR manages over 4,000 miles of water trails for canoeing and kayaking including the north shore of Lake Superior and dozens of rivers statewide.

Here are Lynne Diebel and Bob Diebel, talking about paddling on the Long Prairie River.

Lynne:

Paddlers who like a lazy float on a river with lots of wildlife, lots of waterfowl and songbirds in residence will enjoy exploring the Long Prairie. That's the stream that meanders for almost 100 miles from Lake Carlos north to the Crow Wing, near the Mississippi.

Bob:

If you looked at this section of the country on a topographical map, you'd notice right away that there's not much elevation change. This river is rather slow and you might think that it would not provide much of an exciting paddle, and I guess "exciting" would not be the word to be applied to it. But it's a beautiful river going through farmland – but the farmland seems to be pretty much at a good distance from the edge of the river, so there's a lot of adjoining marshland that makes it particularly beautiful and really good for birdwatching.

Lynne:

There are low wooded hills in the distance, which also give you a nice aspect of the view from the canoe. You'll go by, as you get into the wildlife management area – which is a pretty significant part of this stretch – you'll go past these high wooded stretches of land, too, which are glacial outwash levees. It's piles of glacial debris that got woods on them right in the middle of the marshes.

There are two towns along this stretch that we like the best. It's about 50 miles, it's upstream from the town of Long Prairie and you go on downstream through Long Prairie, and then through Browerville, and then through the wildlife management area to just short of Philbrook. It's about 52 - 53 miles.

This is a great river for families to paddle. The fishing is good. There are plenty of walleye and northerns, and there's some bass on the river as well. The wildlife is what drew us in particular. Pretty long list of the things that we saw along there – otters, eagles, kingfishers, snapping turtles – big, big snapping turtles – red-tailed hawks, marsh hawks, great blue herons, sandhill cranes, owls, blue-winged teal, grebes, mergansers, wood ducks, geese, beaver, deer, just about anything you can imagine.

Bob:

It's a twisty river that makes it kind of fun to paddle. It goes through a lot of marshland so deadfalls are not a problem over much of it, but there are some areas where there are black willow thickets and significant deadfalls. We had to kind of thread our way through those and duck down low in the canoe to get under some of the trees.

Lynne:

There's a pretty good access in the town of Long Prairie, but other than that, we used bridge access points and these are fine. The roads along there are pretty quiet. There's a really nice looking old bridge – we're bridge fans, we're historic bridge fans – and there's an old iron truss bridge at one of the roads.

One of the things to consider is that because of all of the waterfowl and because of the wildlife management area, there's a lot of duck hunting that goes on, duck and goose hunting. And so, probably don't paddle it during the hunting season.

Bob:

But for all the rest of the summer it's a beautiful place to go and paddle. We highly recommend it. Thanks for joining us.