

## Tales of Water Trails: Red Lake 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 Red Lake River.

Lynne:

A river in a hurry, the Red Lake River races across flat land between the towns of St. Hilaire and Huot in northwestern Minnesota, land that once lay under the waves of glacial Lake Aggasiz. When the river's running you can paddle at six miles an hour without breaking a sweat, launch at St. Hilaire in the morning, have lunch at Red Lake Falls, and be off the river by mid-afternoon.

This is a river that's flat in many of its other reaches, but this is one of its points at which it descends. That's about a thirty-eight mile stretch between St. Hilaire and Huot, filled with boulder beds and gravel riffles. The high eroded banks are spectacular. The erosion's not a good thing, but they certainly are a visually amazing sight.

Bob:

From our reading, the reason that this stretch does have some gradient and some speed in an otherwise flat landscape is that this used to be the edge of glacial Lake Aggasiz. So you're basically paddling down a long beach.

It's a very exciting paddle in terms of its rapid speed. There are not many challenging rapids in terms of conventional whitewater, but it's a very nice paddle.

Lynne:

One of the things that we noticed was that downstream of the town of Red Lake Falls, the land got more wooded and the valleys spread out a little bit more. As we got into Huot, by that point we were

noticing there was a fair amount of wildlife along the banks. Prior to that we had just been marveling at how fast we were paddling.

Bob:

And the way the river has carved out this flat landscape, leaving the high banks to look at is one of its real attractions. And speaking of the flat landscape, further down the river at the Old Crossing Treaty Park is where the Pembina Trail – also known as the Woods Trail that went from St. Paul up to Winnipeg – went through this area of the state. This is where they used ox carts to travel and take goods through this part of the country, and the park still has some wagon ruts from where they used to take the wagons across the river at this point.

Lynne:

We had a lot of fun on the Red Lake River and we hope you will too.