

Tales of Water Trails: Whitewater 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 Whitewater River.

Lynne:

A fast little river through the Driftless Area, the Whitewater attracts birds and wildlife as well as paddlers. Don't try to reach the Mississippi! Before you get there, you'll run into so many deadfalls that you'll find yourself portaging constantly in the marshy lowlands of the Whitewater bottoms.

The best stretch is the 10.4 miles between Elba and the place where the river swings over to Highway 74, which is the Beaver to Weaver road, and makes it possible to get out there. There's also an access further upstream, at County Road 26.

Bob:

There's a class I rapids right by the Highway 30 bridge near the little town of Beaver. In fact it's so little you'll really miss it when you're paddling down the river, so that's something to watch out for. Otherwise there's no whitewater to think about. It's a narrow river, so deadfalls are a consideration.

Lynne:

This is a river that was a real problem to early settlers because they had farmed the land so extensively that erosion and runoff was terrible. This river flooded so many times in the early 1900's that it completely buried all the houses in the town of Beaver, which is now located a couple miles away from the river.

It's a sand bottom river. The reason it's called the Whitewater is not because there's any actual whitewater, but because the clay-based soil that runs off would turn the water a pale, milky or white color. That's the reason for its name.

You'll find a sand and gravel bottom, a lot of riffles, a deep narrow channel, and the South Fork of the Whitewater flows in a couple miles downstream of where you put in. The importance of that is that the South Fork is a designated trout stream, and the confluence of a trout stream and another river is where the trout like to hang out!

Bob:

This is a very beautiful river valley in the Driftless Area. One of the advantages of going to this area is the close proximity of Whitewater State Park. This is well worth spending a pleasant afternoon paddling when you're doing the rivers in the Driftless Area.

Lynne:

We spotted eagles; back in 2007 we saw an eagle's nest. We saw owls, kingfishers, herons, sandpipers, swallows, warblers, flickers, wild turkeys, orioles, killdeer and some big snapping turtles. We had a really good time with our wildlife watching that day.

Bob:

Yes, we highly recommend this little river. Check it out and have a good paddle.