

Up the Lower Wappingers Creek, with Two Graphite Paddles

by *Ralph Ferrusi*

Over the years we've canoed the Lower Wappingers Creek a lot; it's relatively nearby, and a pretty good round-trip workout: a decent bang-for-the-buck. Next to Constitution Marsh,



Lower Wappingers Creek



We headed upstream, past the Bleachery looking spiffy with it's new modern windows.

it's probably our most-visited canoeing site. Whoops, wait a minute, how about the Great Swamp out in Patterson??? And, White Pond, right around the corner from us???

OK, just about all the Lower Wappingers is tidal; but even at low tide, there's still a very decent channel that gets you all the way out to the Hudson. Higher tides are simply a bonus. And, there's never a problem paddling upstream to the gorge; the current is rarely strong enough to prevent this.

Tides are a significant factor in the Marsh: too high, and there's no way you can get under the Metro North railroad bridge and into the marsh. Too low, and you risk being stuck in the marsh until the tide comes back in; six hours, you and the bugs; not a pretty thought...

The Great Swamp is a super paddle—a whole other fascinating world—mostly dead quiet (except when a pack of Harley's roars down out-of-sight Route 22): just you and the eagles and the beavers. Most of the time it's navigable, but after a long, long dry spell it pretty much runs out of water (though when there's a LOT of water, it's a real trip slaloming through the trees).



White Pond is a very decent-sized "pond": a half-mile long, wonderful nearby DEC resource. It's very often our get-the-cobwebs-out first paddle of the new season. But, having been-there-done-that a zillion times, paddling around it's now-very-familiar shoreline does not have the cache, say, of Lava Falls or Crystal Rapids in the Grand Canyon, if you take my meaning. More often than not we paddle White Pond the day after a more dramatic paddle somewhere else, before we wrestle the boat off the roof and stash it back on the storage rack.

So, let's check out the Lower Wappingers. It's a pretty decent mid-spring day, but thundershowers are forecast in the afternoon, so we'd better get going. We always put in at the (going to need some TLC pretty soon) boat ramp on Creek Road/



Market Street, downstream from the Bleachery. The tide was low; I hoped it was coming in, but it wasn't... But, not a problem. There was a fairly stiff wind coming from the west (downstream), but nothing we hadn't dealt with before.

As usual, we headed upstream first, past the Bleachery looking spiffy with it's new, modern windows. As usual, I wish somebody would put a trendy restaurant in there somewhere, overlooking the creek, starting a real revitalization of this whole has-the-potential-to-be-much-more-charming-



We went as far into the imposing gorge as we could.



someday area (think Cold Spring, the Newburgh and Kingston waterfronts, and Beacon's "renaissance").

Past the Bleachery, things always get a bit dramatic with the turbulent outflow from the long brick hydroelectric plant on river left. As usual, we snuck around the rocky corner on river right and went as far into the imposing gorge as we could. The water level was very low, and we beached the boat and rock-hopped farther up towards the stone ancient-Roman-looking arches of the downtown Wappingers Falls Route 9D viaduct as we had ever had. Wow!!! I just hoped the dam didn't burst, or there was some kind of "release"; don't know if we could have escaped.

Heading back downstream, we used the current along the (now) left shore to jump-start us for a while, until we went around the next corner and began



The Mowat Northwile and Lewis

dealing with the stiff in-our-face upstream wind, an impossible-to-ignore presence all the way to the Metro North railroad bridge just below New Hamburg. As usual the creek widened out, and I was impressed that there were a dozen or so fishermen in small groups along the Creek Road shore.

Paddling smart, as we had on the Rondout (go to boatingonthehudson.com June 2016, page 56.) a couple of weeks ago, we kept in the lee of the wind as much possible. We'd wondered if we'd see any turtles—turtle-spotting is one of the joys of the Great Swamp—and did indeed spot a big old snapper sprawled on a big dead log. We paddled up close to it—it had a prehistoric scariness about it—hoping it wasn't dead. It finally stretched it's head out just a little bit—what beady eyes you have!!!—and casually ignored the two humans in their red plastic boat.

On to the New Hamburg Road bridge (the third of this four-bridge paddle), then across to the Metro North railroad bridge. The Hudson was kicking up, so the plan was just to stick our noses out there and tag it, then scootch back upstream. The skies were also getting more and more overcast. A Word of Caution: there are several old, rotted pilings sticking up under this bridge: they were very obvious at this particular low tide, but at higher tides can be hidden just below the surface of this often-turbulent water, and could be Big Trouble).

The River had, very surprisingly, all things considered, turned relatively calm, so we decided to scootch north to White's Marina, to pick up a couple of copies of the May BOTHAB (NICE "spring is here" photo-collage cover!). Back up the creek with the wind at our back was a breeze (a stiff breeze). We noted



The author in front of White's Marina.

that the snapper wasn't on the log, but none of the fishermen had left. At home, we left the boat on the Subaru's roof, figuring to go to White Pond on Sunday. Sunday morning, it was cold and windy, and stayed cold and windy; not at all a pleasant day to be out on the water. We wrestled the boat off the roof and unto the rack and under the big green heavy-duty tarp, safely stashed away for another, warmer, sunnier, day. Stay tuned: the Stockport Flats await.





**Newburgh
Yacht Club**

(845) 565-3920
WWW.NEWBURGHYC.COM

THE GREAT NEWBURGH YACHT CLUB

We Have it All in 2022



- Club House with sheltered patio/grill area
- Pool
- Floating docks
- Jet ski docks (if available)
- 25 ton Travel Lift
- Restaurant on site
- Fuel station, 89 Octane and Diesel, available 24/7, self-service with credit card. Only fueling station between Haverstraw and Ulster county on the West bank of the Hudson. Available April 1 – November 1.
- Pump out station
- Striper slips (for the season, based on availability)
- Seasonal slips (based on availability)
- Call 845-565-3920 and leave a message for further information.

1 PARK PLACE | SUITE 1, NEWBURGH NY 12550

WHITE'S

HUDSON RIVER MARINA

NEW HAMBURG, NY 12590



845-297-8520



A FULL SERVICE MARINA



CLEARANCE PRICES ON ALL MERCURY OUTBOARDS
5 MILES SOUTH OF POUGHKEEPSIE ON THE HUDSON RIVER

- Engine & Outdrive Service
- Shaft, Strut & Prop Service
- 25 Ton Open-End Lift
- Launch Ramp
- Gas/Diesel
- Pump-Out