

# STEPPING STONE

Newsletter of the Bennington Section of the Green Mountain Club

## CLUB OFFICERS

*President:* Reed Goossen  
*Vice President:* Tim Marr  
*Secretary & Director:* Martha Stitelman  
*Treasurer & Members:* Bill Lyons  
*Trails & Shelters:* Matt Vezina  
*Website & Meetup:* Ann & Billy Martin  
*Newsletter:* Hal March, Lorna Cheriton, Ann Martin  
*Outreach Coordinator:* Billy Martin

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## CONNECTIONS

Stay in touch with outdoor happenings in our local area.  
**The Bike Hub** - <https://ourbikehub.com/>  
**Paran Lake** - <https://lakeparanvt.org/>  
**Williamstown Rural Lands** - <https://rurallands.org/>  
**Appalachian Trail Conservancy:** <https://appalachiantrail.org/>



## Bits and Bobs

**Facebook Page:** Keep up with what’s happening with the GMC Bennington Section! Join the [Bennington GMC Facebook Page](#)

**New Podcasts:** Learn about the “10 Essentials for Hiking” and tag along on a “Summer Roadtrip” with a couple of our members. It’s all on our website. <https://www.benningtongmc.org/stories-and-podcasts>

**Trailfest 2024:** Save the date - **July 27th** - for the 2024 Bennington celebration of the outdoors. [More Information](#)

### Upcoming Events from GMC Headquarters

- [Backpacking 101](#), on Zoom 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on Sunday, April 28
- [Long Trail End-to-Ender Panel](#), Zoom 6-7:30 p.m. on Friday, May 3
- [Wild Spring Edibles of the Northeast](#), at GMC Headquarters in Waterbury Center from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on Sunday, May 12
- [Essentials of Map and Compass](#), at GMC Headquarters in Waterbury Center from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday, May 19



## Greenberg Reserve Rebuilding and Trolley Line History

By *Ann Martin & Robin Tarnas*

The Norman and Selma Greenberg Conservation Reserve, located at 413 Route 7 South in Bennington, is undergoing a big renovation! This beautiful 96-acre tract contains meadows, wetlands and wooded hillsides and, best of all, it's right in our community.

The ownership has transferred to the Town of Bennington, and they have done a great job maintaining two of the main paths. However, over the years the woodland trails have become overgrown and hard to find. This was a call to duty for some of the Green Mountain Club enthusiasts! Armed with clippers, saws, rakes, and flagging tape, we wandered the forests finding, cleaning, and flagging old trails, as well as reconstructing two resting benches. There is now a trail system flagged with 3 loop trails in the forest. On an interesting note, the original benches were constructed by a project involving young women, so the tradition has been carried on with women of the GMC doing the reconstruction work.

Next steps! After walking the trails with Jonah Spivak, Communications Coordinator for the town of Bennington, the town has agreed to purchase trail markers, trail signage, kiosk signage, and eventually replace the existing kiosk. We'll be back out there to continue making the loop trails marked and accessible. In addition to the loop trails there is the Trolley Line trail which eventually will make a loop up to the abandoned freeway bed (Grasshopper Alley).

So, right now the main path cuts through an open meadow, over a beautiful bridge and across the wetland, to link to the woodland trails beyond. There is a spur path which takes you to a wetland overlook. The Trolley Line trail just past the bridge opens vistas over the wetland and up and down the valley. Parking is available at the trailhead on Rt 7 just 1.3 miles south of the center of Bennington.

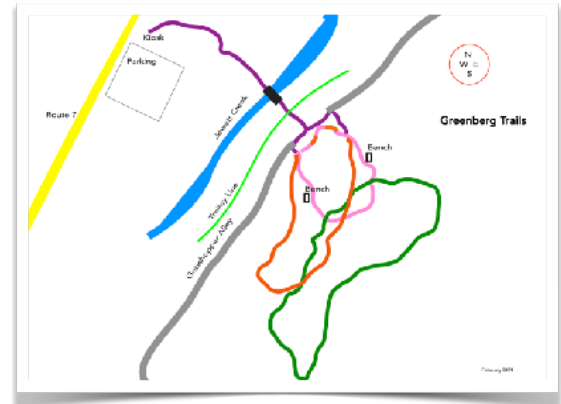
Members of the GMC who are working on this project include Barb Raskin, Robin Tarnas, Ken Milman, Tim Marr, Ann Martin, Billy Martin. We welcome volunteers who would like to help make the trails more accessible. Watch for invitations to do trail work coming up soon on Meetup.

**While it's a work in progress, it is open and available for walking now! Come and take a look!**

Read some fascinating history of the trolley line system, part of which is walkable in the Greenberg Preserve.

### From Bennington to North Adams for 35c

Until the 1890s, the only way to get around was to walk or use a horse. Some enterprising folks would travel a route with a horse-drawn wagon and pick up travelers for a fee. Companies were formed to upgrade these routes and to make schedules more dependable. Rails were laid along raised level beds to allow horses to pull heavier loads. In 1898, the trolley took over these rail systems for shorter trips.



Rough Map of Trails



The trolley motor was powered with current from an overhead uninsulated wire. Sparks flew and steel wheels screeched as the car ran along the rails. As the system grew, Bennington grew. Workers from farther away could commute to work in the mills. Shoppers along the rail lines could come to town, allowing businesses to flourish. The town could expand along these routes beyond easy walking distance.

For the next 29 years, the trolley extended its service. The first route up to Woodford and the Glastenbury hotel and dance hall lasted only a couple of years before it washed out in a flood and was never reopened. Routes to North Bennington and to Hoosick Falls were more sustainable. The system connected to the Berkshire Trolley Line in June 1907, allowing travel to Williamstown, North Adams, Adams, Pittsfield, and all the way to Connecticut. Parks were built along the way with concessions, ponds, and even swan boats. Up to 30,000 people rode these trolleys every day.

By 1918, automobiles were becoming more popular. Roads became smoother. Tires became softer, quieter, and more comfortable. Ridership on the trolleys decreased. When the flood of 1927 washed out several sections of track, these were never repaired. By 1930, the tracks and poles were all removed. Only the raised beds of the old trolley lines remain. Some of these old lines are destined to come alive again, this time serving the public as walking trails or bike paths. Read more about the [Trolley Line Scoping Study](#)

## Nature Notes: Red Fox, Gray Fox

By Terri Armata

Vermont is home to two fox species: The Red Fox, (*vulpes vulpes*) and the Gray, (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*). Both are most active at dusk and dawn, are omnivorous, with a diet of rodents, rabbits, birds, insects, crayfish, nuts, berries and fruit. Both mate between January and March, and have a litter about 53 days later. The kits learn to hunt at a few months of age and stay with their parents until fall when they disperse.

The Red Fox is most often found in open fields. It is reddish in color with a white underbelly and always has dark feet and a white tip on the tail. Old woodchuck and rabbit burrows are used as dens, or the fox digs its own. They are used for multiple generations.

The Gray Fox is smaller, with shorter legs than the Red Fox. The fur is gray with reddish brown on the sides of the neck, back and as a band on the chest. The tail tip is black. It has semi-retractable claws which enables it to climb trees. It prefers a wooded habitat, often near water. It will use old burrows, hollow logs and crevices in rocks as dens, frequently lining them with shredded bark and leaves. Dens are used year after year.



## Ode to Swamps

A Poem for Katherine

by Susan Lambert

I can't get my mind out of the swamps.

They call to me.

Come to us  
in our wilderness hiding places.

Come to us  
nestled in remote mountain valleys  
surrounded by the evergreens  
of those high lowlands.

Come  
not to roam in the dismal swamplands of lore  
but to bask in the beauty  
and pristine peace  
of the frozen winter wetlands  
when there is no place else we'd rather be.

Come while you can  
before the spring thaw swells the rivers  
and floods us  
with murky water running  
insects buzzing, biting  
battling to glimpse moose, water birds,  
wildflowers.

Come  
glide down stream  
from swamp to swamp  
or over the ridge  
from swamp to glorious swamp.  
The mountain meadows call to us  
and we must go.

## Hiking Supplies in Bennington

### Trail Magic at the Bike Hub

Do you know hikers looking for some transportation while coming through Bennington? To help hikers, the Bike Hub delivered two bikes to the Catamount Motel that are equipped with helmets, locks, lights, and baskets for AT hiker use. The Bike Hub has also loaned bikes out to hikers who come directly to the shop. One hiker knew of the bike loan service and stopped by to see if the shop would allow her to leave her bag and cell phone to charge, while she ran an errand, and that was easy for them to help. On shop days (Wed- Sat from 10-6), the Bike Hub is happy to assist AT hikers however they can.

Also, hiking supplies are available at the hub and the inventory is growing. There is camp fuel (4oz and 8oz isobutane canisters), stoves, pots, cups, basic rain gear, tent stakes, water filters, socks, and sleeping pads on order to assist local hikers.

### Bear Canisters at the Bennington Recreation Center

Be bear safe. There are 4 bear canisters that can be borrowed from the Bennington Recreation Center. These are BearVault 1 gallon canisters. See the article about Bears and Bear Canisters on pages 7-8.

## Skunk Cabbage: Our Earliest Wildflower

by Nancy Felix and Margie March

While hiking through the barren forest landscape of March, you may be lucky enough to find skunk cabbage emerging from the ground, or even through the snow. Skunk cabbage comes up long before other plants in spring due to its ability to chemically generate heat, which can raise their temperature more than 20° above the air temperature and melt surrounding snow.

You will have to look carefully to spot the speckled red and green hoods hiding the flowers on the sun-dappled forest floor. The flowers form on a thick stalk beneath the hood. The plant produces female flowers first, and then male flowers, preventing plants from self-pollinating. Flies hatch early, attracted by the warm temperature and foul-smelling odor, to pollinate the plants. The flowers develop into fruits which are connected together in one

structure like a pineapple. The fruits then produce pea-sized seeds, which are spread by water, birds, and small animals.



Skunk cabbage flowers with male stamens. Photo by Nancy Felix

The leaves emerge after the flowers. They are quite large, up to 3 feet long and a foot wide, and resemble cabbage plants. The leaves, when bruised, have a foul odor which discourages animals from eating them, and gives the plant its name. The leaves have netted veins which distinguish them from false hellebores and other monocots which have parallel veins. All of the leaves die back in the fall, and the flowers come up through bare ground the next spring.

Our Pop-up Skunk Cabbage Walk planned for Sunday, March 24, was skunked (sorry) by the big snowstorm. The nearly foot of snow that fell was too deep for the skunk cabbage, and it took several days for them to melt their way out. Fortunately, the outing was rescheduled and we met on a beautiful blue sky day on March 30th where 13 participants examined the wonders of this amazing plant.

Look for skunk cabbage on stream banks, and in marshes and wet forests. We found it along the Robert Frost Trail, approximately one-half mile from the Robert Frost House, an easy location to visit and watch its developing stages.



Skunk cabbage hoods  
Photo by Woody Brooks



Skunk cabbage leaves showing netted veins. Photo by Woody Brooks

## Bennington GMC and The Young Explorers 4H Club

By Ann Martin

It was a great experience as the Green Mountain Club partnered with The Young Explorers 4-H Club at the Bennington Free Library for an afternoon exploring outdoor activities. Explorers went on a scavenger hunt, identified the 10 essentials for camping, learned about setting up a good campsite, and identified animal tracks. Here's a link to a very short video that shows the energy of the room! [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZkjmBMs\\_bPg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZkjmBMs_bPg)



## Ashuwillticook Rail Trail Extension

By Ann Martin

Many of you may be familiar with the beautiful Ashuwillticook Rail Trail in Massachusetts, but did you know that it has been extended for another 1.56 miles from the mall Connector Road to Crane Road in Pittsfield. The trail now runs for 14.2 miles from Lime Street in Adams to Crane Road in Pittsfield. In 2024 another .4 mile extension to Merrill will be completed. There is the 1.5-mile shared-use path along Merrill Road that is currently under design by MassDOT and is scheduled for construction in 2024, and, in 2026, the reconstruction of East Street to Silver Lake Boulevard, which will include both bicycle and pedestrian accommodation on this complete redesign. Williamstown also has a lovely, new 2.4 mile multi-use path. The plan is for these 2 paths to connect.

## Mount Anthony: Overlook and Formation

by Ann Martin and Robin Tarnas

**Overlook:** Have you been up to the new lookout on Mt. Anthony? If not, you'll be in for a treat! About half way up Mt. Anthony you'll get a great view looking northeast into Bennington and out over the surrounding peaks. Thanks to the many volunteers who cut trail, constructed benches, took down trees to open the view, put up the sign-in box, and made a great destination for hikers. Starting from the parking lot on Mansion Drive, you head up the meadow to find the purple-marked trail. Follow this until you come to a cairn which leads you to follow the green-marked trail. On the green trail, you'll see signs for Zaphod's Run, follow these signs until you come to the Overlook sign. It's approximately 1 mile up with a gain of about 500 feet. Be sure and sign the guest box!



**The Taconic Orogeny (Mountain Formation):** At one time Mount Anthony was as tall as the Rockies are now.

Almost 500 million years ago the Iapetus Ocean began to close as the ancient continental crusts drifted together. The African plate slowly smashed into an arc of islands off the coast of North America. These islands, along with the calcium deposits on the ocean floor were pushed on top of the North American plate, creating a massive mountain range. Limestone and fossils from the ocean bed were pushed far inland and high up the slopes.

By 350 million years ago all of the continents of earth were joined together in one great landmass, Pangaea. 100 million years later, Pangaea slowly broke into pieces as these tectonic plates drifted apart and the Atlantic Ocean began to form. The continents still are separating at a rate of almost 4 inches per year.

Mount Anthony and the Taconic range are among the oldest mountains in the world, but they still show evidence of this titanic collision. The towering peaks have eroded to our gentle mountains, but some of the rocks and fossils found on Mount Anthony are the same as those found in the Variscan Mountains of North Africa.

## Bears and Bear Canisters

from the Green Mountain website and Appalachian Trail Conservancy website

**GMC Website:** Black bears have become more active around the Long Trail System in the last few years. To avoid human-bear interactions and ensure the safety of both wildlife and trail users, the [Forest Service mandates](#) that hikers must use a [bear box](#), [bear canister](#), or [properly hang all smellables](#) and carry out all trash while in the Green Mountain National Forest (GMNF). The Long Trail and its side trails from Massachusetts to Route 17 (Appalachian Gap) are mostly on GMNF land.

GMC recommends using these food storage methods on the entire trail. Hikers should use a bear canister or bag approved by the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee (IGBC). Don't have a bear canister? [Check out our lending program.](#) (In the Bennington area, you can borrow a bear canister from the Bennington Recreation Center.)

Bear boxes are located at overnight sites along the Long Trail and Appalachian Trail, and can be used as an alternative to a bear canister or food hang. Please store all food, garbage, and scented items in available boxes, and remove all items when you leave. [Do not leave trash in the bear boxes. See the list of all Long Trail and Appalachian Trail shelters with bear boxes.](#)

Food hangs should be used as a last resort; a hang must be 12' from the ground, 6' from the tree trunk and branches, and 200' from campsites, water sources, and trails. [Check out our how-to video here.](#)

**AT Website:** Much more information about using a bear canister - locking & unlocking , fitting it in your pack, storing over night, finding in the morning, cooking best practices, what to store in the canister, and avoiding wear and tear. <https://appalachiantrail.org/explore/plan-and-prepare/bear-canister-lending-program/#UseTips>

Use the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics' "Bermuda Triangle." Keep 200' or 70 big steps between your sleep setup, cooking and dishwashing location, and food storage.



## Footprints in the Snow

by Martha Stitelman

Found on the Catamount Trail in Searsburg. Our best guess is two bobcats, glad it wasn't two catamounts!



**GMC Membership:** Please consider joining the GMC. Our organization protects and maintains the Long Trail System for all of us. If you have joined, remember to renew your membership.



## Schedule of Upcoming Events: Spring/Summer 2024

Below are brief descriptions of upcoming events - **ALL DETAILS WILL BE POSTED ON MEETUP.**

[www.meetup.com/benningtongmc](http://www.meetup.com/benningtongmc). **Always check before an event - details may change!** Additional events will be added to Meetup as the season progresses. Join Meetup and receive emails about upcoming events.

April 13, Saturday: **Trail work on the Long Trail** covering both sides of Rt. 9. Help get our trails ready for hiking season. 9:00 Meet at Rec Center, event ending mid afternoon. Leaders Matt Vezina and Tim Marr

April 13, Saturday: **Bennington GMC Annual Meeting and Potluck** at 2nd Congregational Church. All welcome. Bring a dish to share, 5:30 gathering, dinner, meeting, followed by a presentation "Biking in Germany."

April 18, Thursday and April 20, Saturday and April 28, Sunday: **Clean Trails in Greenberg Reserve.** 3 sessions, light trail work. Start time at Greenberg Reserve 1:00. Leaders: Robin Tarnas & Others

April TBD **Glastenbury Overnight Trail Work:** Will watch the weather and snowpack. Leader: Matt Vezina

April 27, Saturday: **Wildflower Walk at Mile-Around Woods.** Easy pace, stopping to look at nature, about 2 hours, 2 miles. 10:00 start at Park McCullough House. Leaders: Nancy Felix & Lorna Cheriton

April 30, Tuesday: **Snow Hole Hike from Petersburg Pass.** 5.8 miles, moderate pace and difficulty. 10:30 meet at Rec Center, ending late afternoon. Leader: Reed Goossen

May 4, Saturday: **Bird Walk.** Meet 7:30 am in Greenberg Reserve. Bring binoculars & smiles! Leader: Linda Lyons

May 5, Sunday: **Cinco de Mayo Hike in Savoy Forest.** Tannery Falls Trail, 5.1 miles, 700 feet elevation gain. 9:00 meet at Rec Center. Leaders Ann & Billy Martin

May 11, Saturday: **Headwaters Park.** Relaxed pace, family friendly. 1:00 meet at Rec Center. Leader: Robin Tarnas

May Mid-week TBD: **Trail Work Little Pond Cutoff to Maple Hill.** Leader Tim Marr

May 17, Friday: **Lilac Walk & Optional Dinner.** Relaxed pace, 5:00 pm start at Rec Center Leader Tim Marr

May 18, Saturday: **Woodford State Park.** Trail circles the reservoir, easy pace, family friendly. 2.4 miles 219 feet elevation gain. 9:30 meet at Rec Center. Leader: Ken Milman

June 1, Saturday: **Author Hike.** See some of the largest white pines in VT, walk on Robert Frost property, visit author's grave. Easy walk and pace. 10:00 start at Old First Church. Leader: Ken Milman

June 2, Sunday: **Mile Around Woods.** Relaxed pace, family friendly. 1:00 at Rec Center. Leader: Robin Tarnas

June 8, Saturday: **Bicycle River Road, Arlington.** Meet 10:00 at Rec Center. Leaders Hamilton and Lorna

June 15, Saturday: **Green Mountain Club 114th Annual Meeting** in Waterbury Center Vermont. [Info here.](#)

June 23, Sunday: **Butterfly Walk.** Meet 1:00, location TBD. Leader Terri Armata

June 29, Saturday: **Spruce Hill Loop** near North Adams. About 4 miles, 777 elevation gain. 9:00 meet at Rec Center. Leaders: Ann and Billy Martin

July 6, Saturday: **Greenberg Reserve.** Relaxed pace, family friendly. 1:00 start at Rec Center. Leader: Robin Tarnas

July 27, Saturday: **3rd Annual Trailfest.** [Celebrate Bennington's status as an Appalachian Trail Community.](#)

July 30, Tuesday: **Paddle Sherman Reservoir.** 10:00 meet at Rec Center. Leaders Lorna and Hamilton

August 10, Saturday: **Hopkins Forest.** Relaxed pace, family friendly. 1:00 at Rec Center. Leader: Robin Tarnas

August 17, Saturday: **Ashuwillticook Bike Trail.** About 28 miles. 9:00 at Rec Center Leaders: Ann & Billy Martin

## Winter Trip Photos



New Years Day Bolles Brook

New Years Day Bolles Brook



Reconstructing Benches - Greenberg



Clearing Paran-Frost Trail



Paran-Frost Hike



Woodford Snowshoe



Snow Squall Greenberg Preserve



Harmon Hill



Bald Mountain East Side - water bar work



Bald Mountain with a Friend



Mt Anthony Overlook



Prospect Ski



Lineup!



Snowshoe Mt Meadow



Skunk Cabbage Walk



Tibbitt's Forest Hike



Tibbitt's Forest Hike

## Florida's Greatest River Springs and Swamps 3/23-3/30/24

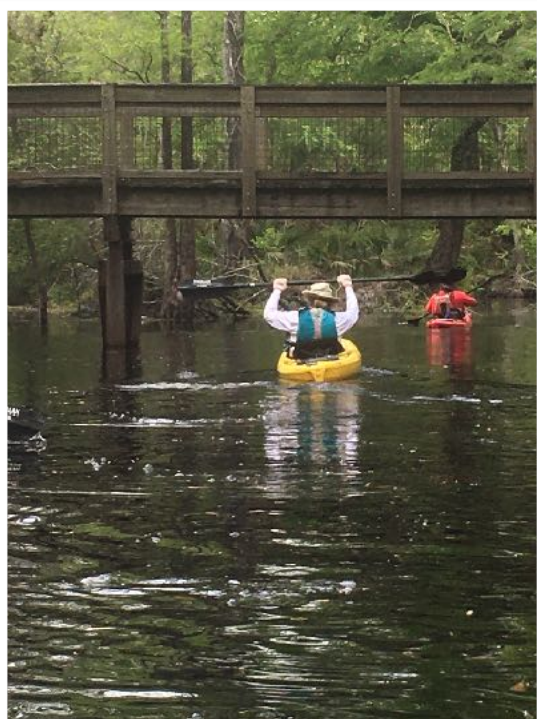
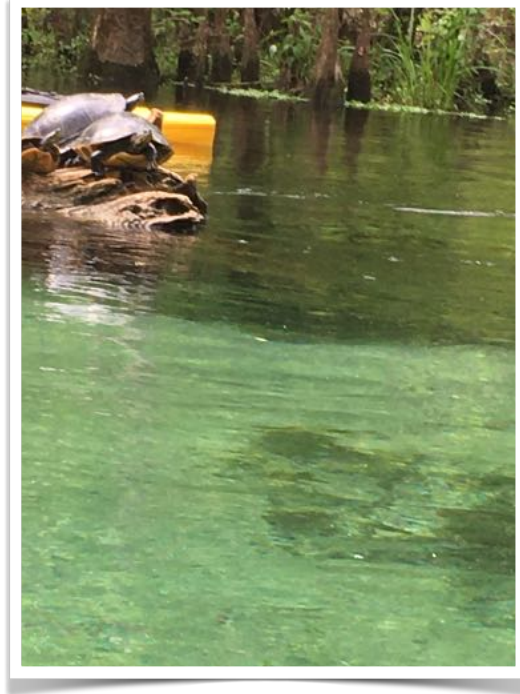
by David Pisaneschi

*FLORIDA'S GREATEST RIVER SPRINGS AND SWAMPS ; 3/23 to 3/30/24.*

Saturday, March 23 ; I could not have timed this trip any better. Having spent the entire winter in upstate NY in anticipation of skiing with the group, I spent most of the snowless mild winter waiting for snow. Although, we did get in some marquee ski trips. Leaving early in the morning of March 23, in the face of a blizzard, I bid farewell during one of our few great snow events

Sunday, March 24: I met the group at the Orlando Airport. Drove to our base camp for the week at Suwannee River State Park (SRSP) near Live Oak. On the way, I stopped at a great barbecue lunch spot in Ocala.

Monday, March 25: We paddled Suwannee River from Gibson Park to SRSP. Taking advantage of the high water, we paddled up Lime Sink Run, stopping halfway up the Run, for lunch. Continuing on after lunch, we worked our way through an obstacle course of blow downs and thick vegetation until reaching the end of the run where it continued underground. Returning to the river, we took a short detour at the confluence of the Suwannee and Withlacoochee to view a spring. We continued down the river past I-10 to our takeout. 13.31 miles in 5.25 hours



Tuesday, March 26: We explored the springs on the Ichetucknee, within Ichetucknee Springs State Park. It was a superb day of wildlife viewing. Observed an alligator, manatee, banded water snakes, turtles, osprey, green heron, tricolored heron and cormorants along with gars and mullets.. Afterwards several of us went for a swim in the springs. Paddled 3.75 miles in 2.5 hours.

Wednesday, March 27: The day started out on a discouraging note as rain and thunder greeted us at 5:00am, causing us to cancel our 6:00am hike. Since the storm gave way to a cloudy day, we embarked on a 3.5 mile late morning hike. After a brief respite, the afternoon consisted of a paddle on the Withlacoochee. Putting in at Madison County River Park, we paddled down to the confluence of the Suwannee and Withlacoochee, taking out at the State Park boat launch. We observed 6 deer, an armadillo, a brown water snake, 2 sturgeon, and numerous birds. The high water created a steady flow, making for a quick, easy paddle. We covered 10.57 miles in 3 hours .



Thursday, March 28: Paddled the Wacissa. Started at Big Blue Spring, ending at Goose Pasture. It's a wide river, with many side channels. I was charged with sweeping and had to regroup stray paddlers, who wandered into side bays and channels. Since this river has many channels, similar to braided Alaskan Rivers, it was important that the group remain in sight. We had an 80 degree day with a 15 mph tail wind. We observed a gator and 2 turtles sunning on the same log, along with numerous birds. We covered 10.6 miles in 4 hours. An evening walk to an old cemetery treated us to black light views of scorpions, along with fire flies and star viewing in the clear night sky.

Friday, March 29: We paddled the Suwanee from the Canoe Outpost to Gibson Park. It was a lazy day of drifting, stopping for lunch at a canoe camp, which was closed due to storm damage. We covered 13.25 miles in 5.50 hours. Dinner at O'Neil's in Madison was topped off by a 3.5 mile evening hike and night time campfire.

Saturday, March 30: It was time to bid farewell. After packing up, we sat back for our ride back to the Orlando Airport, for our flights home.

David P

Reporting



Additional Florida photos courtesy of Christiane

