

# Drums Along The Mohawk

**Or in our case it was**

**ATVs & Dirt Bikes Along The Walkill**

**(Or how we survived the "Redneck" campground.)**

*A HRCKC Trip Report - Walkill River May 1, 2022*



*"The Redneck Campground"? What is that they asked? "You'll find out soon enough", I replied. "You'll find out"!*

On this marvelous May O'Day in the year of our lord MMXXII AD, nine intrepid explorers from the elite and prestigious, world renowned Hackensack River Canoe & Kayak Club, set out on an extraordinary adventure down the foreboding, dark and mysterious (and of course "The Mighty" as Mr. Bob R. would state) Walkill River.

Those courageous paddlers participating on this expedition were... Monica O., Burton H., Lisa F., Teri R., Peter W., John F., myself and two guests - Connie B., and Jeremy C. - all in 7 kayaks and one canoe (there was supposed to be another person but he never showed up after we waited around for 20 minutes - not at all cool.. I gave my cell # if problems or lost).

Meeting at the now Sit & Chat Diner (formerly known as the Sussex Queen Diner) on Rt. 23 in Sussex, NJ, the group partook of all the obligatory trip paperwork and a few visited the "rooms-of-rest" in the diner before we set out on the two minute journey to the put-in on Glenwood Rd. a.k.a. Rt. 565. It seems on that stretch of RT. 565, traffic has gotten worse every time and

it's getting almost hazardous unloading the boats and gear on the side of the road at the put-in with cars whizzing by, so one has to be extremely careful before crossing the roadway while carrying boats.

Leaving two people behind to watch the boats, the rest of us ran the 20 minute (each way) shuttle to the take-out (the river kind - not the Chinese food kind) at Oil City Road just across the NY border. The shuttle is actually quite nice with spectacular views of the north-west corner of the State with the High Point Tower visible in the distance.

After a bit of a protracted launch due to extreme mud at the put-in (**MUD** - something that pretty much describes the rest of the trip) we finally got started downriver.

***As a side note of possible interest... The Walkill River is one of only two rivers in New Jersey that actually flows North (the other is the Millstone River) due to the ancient geological processes of the area. The land surrounding the river is slowly being acquired by the National Walkill River Wildlife Refuge.***

Alas, it was fairly smooth going for a while with the water level not too low and not too high. We managed to skirt around the blowdowns for the first half mile or so, until..... we encountered "**The Blowdown**"!

It was indeed a sight to behold and thereby causing a perfectly synchronized group exclamation of "Oh tweetilee-do" (actually it was another, much more descriptive word). This huge tree had fallen completely across the river blocking it from bank to bank. If we had 6-8 inches of higher water it would have been no problem but that was not the case that day. Lisa and I (in the canoe, and after getting out of the boat and standing on the tree) managed to pull the boat over the lowest spot

of the blowdown and with the somewhat impressive if not comical acrobatic skills of the aged (in my case anyway) got back into the canoe without a "man/woman overboard" situation.

The rest in kayaks didn't have it quite as easy. See... an advantage of canoes (other than never having to ask/beg other canoeists to carry their gear) is that canoes are far easier to get in and out of, especially with blowdowns. Step out... pull the boat over... step back in! Vola! Kayaks on the other hand.... wiggle yourself out, try not to roll over... pull the boat over... try not to roll over again... and wiggle yourself back in... Need I say more.

But most made it over the fallen tree... except two who decided to climb up the muddy bank with their boats and put back in past most of the tree but "eventually" made it through. Continuing downstream, we luckily didn't encounter any major obstacles. Here the river opens up into savannah-like open water, shallow but wide. One had to try to stay in the deeper part to prevent getting stuck on the sand bars. The old beaver dam where we always stopped for lunch is no more, so we continued onto the Bassett's Bridge access for our lunch stop.

In contrast from last fall's trip, where we could paddle right up unto the end of the boardwalk that leads to the parking lot, this year due to the much lower water levels, it was the muck&mire exit. Everyone got dirty!

After a good lunch, we headed out (with one incident of a spill getting into the kayak thereby getting a free mud pack beauty treatment. Hey, people pay good money for those at a spa).

Again, I warned everyone of approaching "The Rapid". Since water levels were moderate the run was going to be a bit interesting. Last time we ran this you didn't even notice the rapid due to the very high water level. This time it was cooking pretty good so we got a bit of an exciting run (for the Walkkill anyway). The kayakers got a slightly wet lap out of it. Lisa and I ran it first in the canoe so

I could get video of the others coming through.

After all were through “The Rapid”, I then warned everyone that we were about to enter the realm of the “Redneck Campground” .... Once again they asked “*What is the “Redneck Campground”?*” And once again I replied... “*Just wait, you’ll find out shortly*”.

As we paddled on, the obnoxious sounds of ATV’s, dirt bikes and pickup trucks emanated in the distance. Clouds of billowing dust, engine exhaust and charcoal briquette smoke filled the air. I think the rest of the group was surprised at the sight. Now they knew what the “Redneck Campground” was! It is a gathering place for local yahoos to drink vast quantities of Budweiser or Coors and drive their motorized toys around in circles creating as much noise and destruction as possible. Luckily it took only 10 minutes or so to pass this mayhem and back to peace and quiet.

A little further, around the bend and we came upon the Oil City Road bridge and out takeout. But we had one more hurdle to overcome... getting out of the boats and up to our cars in extremely muddy (what else) river banks. But we were already pretty filthy so at this stage who cared.

So, after a fine day, good company, good laughs and plenty of mud, we said goodbye and headed home.

\* We did see two minks, a deer, one beaver and plenty of turtles.

**And again... No one died!**

# Wallkill River Photo Links

## Monica's Photos

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/3vrkqgaPAU9PzAac6>

## Martin's Photos

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/Jsr3APGyocxVW1fu5>

## Video

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/Gkqy2qXFhnh83zfMA>