

Out & Away

Pioneering the

Finger Lakes 'water trail'

Paddlers explored all 11 lakes, the long way around.

By KRIS DREESSEN

Messenger Post Staff

In Keuka Lake, sunbathers and grillers on shore cheered them on as they dipped their paddles in the water and glided by. Bats swooped down in the moonlight on Hemlock, and undeveloped Canadice was a haven for wildlife.

They spotted rare fossils along the banks of Skaneateles and stopped for a dip off shore in the 90-degree heat on Cayuga last summer.

Part of the fun of kayaking is finding spots where there's no one around and you can just enjoy, said Gerry Wahl, of Greece.

He and Jennifer Pivovar and a small band of kayakers discovered all 11 of the Finger Lakes' little treasures on the water. It was a 400-mile pleasure cruise, with the time ticker turned off.

They took on the challenge in segments, starting in spring 2002. Pivovar and Wahl were the first two paddlers to finish circumnavigating the lakes, last fall. Others are in various stages of completion.

"It was a long, strange trip with many chapters," said Pivovar, of Dundee, Seneca County, who organized and led the trips. "It was good to be done and have the sense of accomplishment but somehow we would miss the journey that had become part of our paddling habit."

Pivovar started the "Paddle the Finger Lakes" program for the Adirondack Mountain Club's Genesee Valley Chapter. Lakes were tackled in trips of about 15 miles and up and geared toward experienced paddlers used to being on the water for up to eight hours at a time.



Bill Pakulski, left, of Chili, and Gerry Wahl, of Greece, glide across Skaneateles Lake last summer. Discovering the character of each of the lakes is highlight of the goal to circumnavigate them all, they said.

to complete the challenge.

"They covered a lot of miles," he said. "Because of their effort they really deserve some recognition for that."

Cayuga Lake has 87 miles of shoreline — certainly not a day trip. Pivovar sliced it up into five outings to make it manageable. On Keuka, they increased their distance on each segment.

"It was long, but it made me feel like I really accomplished something," said Bill Pakulski, of Chili, who paddled with his wife, Karen.

The group circumnavigated the smaller Skaneateles Lake in two 17-mile loops. It made for some long days in the boat, but always with great scenery and company.

"It's really striking how different the lakes are from one another," said Pivovar. "Every lake had its own social environment and physical environment."

For Wahl, Canadice and Hemlock

lakes are like a step back in time because they are undeveloped. "They must look today like they did 200 or 300 years ago," he said. "There were two bald eagles on Canadice Lake the day we paddled ... You could think you were in a remote part of the world."

A highlight last summer was ruzzing across fossils of coral, called ram's horns, in Skaneateles Lake. They are remnants of life 30 million years ago, when a sea bed was here instead of houses, highways and power boats. One of the paddlers on the trip knew where to find the fossils in the cliff walls, said Imperato.

"That's the beauty of the group," he said. "Someone usually has a little something to donate to each paddle."

Going to new places was another perk, said Karen Pakulski. They experienced places they might not have gone on their own.

SUBMITTED PHOTOS

Gerry Wahl, left, and Jennifer Pivovar paddle on Cayuga Lake during their final trip last fall. They circumnavigated all 11 of the Finger Lakes. Pivovar now wants to establish a water trail in the area through the American Canoe Association.

bee
PS

and weather
vival tips
mean
or death

in upstate New York, been demonstrated with warmth and bitter days seems to be a bit to extremes. In have sunny days agrees one day, then into that would make no shiver a day or more. For anyone who the outdoors or venting from home on foot of year, surviving the become a life or situation in the blink of

water damage in the thought on by the piled loss of body and while its most obvious are usually those plunged through it can affect anyone. ive been many is where people unprotected in 35- to e temperatures have exposure," the most media term for

less of how an emer- lises, there are things greatly increase a chances of survival the coldest situation. st is to dress in trapped between the clothing acts as an

It is relatively hen you leave home, additional layers of just in case. the most body heat rough the head. Much st heat goes out with beath that was inside the lungs, but skin on the head also t to heat loss, which is important to keep covered. A knit cap liva is best and don't I to wear it even while

rtime campers should pling bags designed worst possible cond- model rated for cold — in the 10- to -e range — is just fine. d cloth or closed-cell prevents ground e from being absorbed pling to retain heat.

"It makes me appreciate the tremendous opportunity we have for water activities around here," she said. The lakes, she said, are beautiful in all seasons.

Now that the goal is complete, Pivovar and her band of paddlers still expect to get together for trips.

Pivovar wants more people to experience the Finger Lakes as they have — up close. The American Canoe Association recognizes "water trails" throughout the nation, which are essentially established, good routes for paddlers. Pivovar hopes to establish some in this area.

She has kayaked many routes on day trips and will try a few out as longer ones to get details paddlers would need, such as places to put their boat in, to stop and eat ice cream and stay overnight, and get the ball rolling.

"We deserve to have our own water trail," she said. "I think it's good and will bring people to the area."

Kris Dreessen can be reached at (585) 394-0770, Ext. 253, or at kdreessen@spnews.com.



**Inter-
action**

• jpivovar.net — See photos and read trip memoirs of the Paddle the Finger Lakes circumnavigation at the page of Jennifer Pivovar, who organized and led the trips.