

Stewards of the White Oak River Basin

2003-07-05 WHITE OAK RIVER - JOHN EDDY

PAGE 1 OF 3

This adventure might be known as “Extreme Boating,” after Jamie Cameron’s “Extreme Canoeing” experience. On Saturday afternoon, we set off up the White Oak from Swansboro to see some wildlife, avoid the holiday crowds, and avoid the sustained wind out of the southwest. Participants were John, Beth, Jack, Sam, and Nick Eddy in addition to visiting grandparents Don and Esther Cleckner.

If anyone wants to know how this experience compares to Jamie’s, they need only ask Nick, 8, who shares Jamie’s love for spiders. His brothers helped out by identifying many of the species we encountered as they landed in the boat and had their first experience trying to find cover in an open fiberglass boat.

We made it to the powerline crossing above Haywood Landing well before we were ready to turn around. We decided to go forward as far as we could, hoping to make it to the quarry lakes. We lifted the cable that crosses the river at the powerlines and ventured on upstream.

We wound around numerous logs, limbs, and unseen underwater obstructions that churned the water and gave away their location. Several times we had to power up to an obstruction with sufficient momentum to cut the motor and ride up and over it.

We surprised a couple of groups of people fishing from the bank who couldn’t believe what they were seeing coming up the river. Of all the things one might see on the river at that point, a 21 ft. boat with seven people aboard is well down the probability list. We were moving slow by this time, and with the 4-stroke outboard being so quiet, we were upon them about the same time they heard us. We encountered one group who said we had gone as far as was possible.

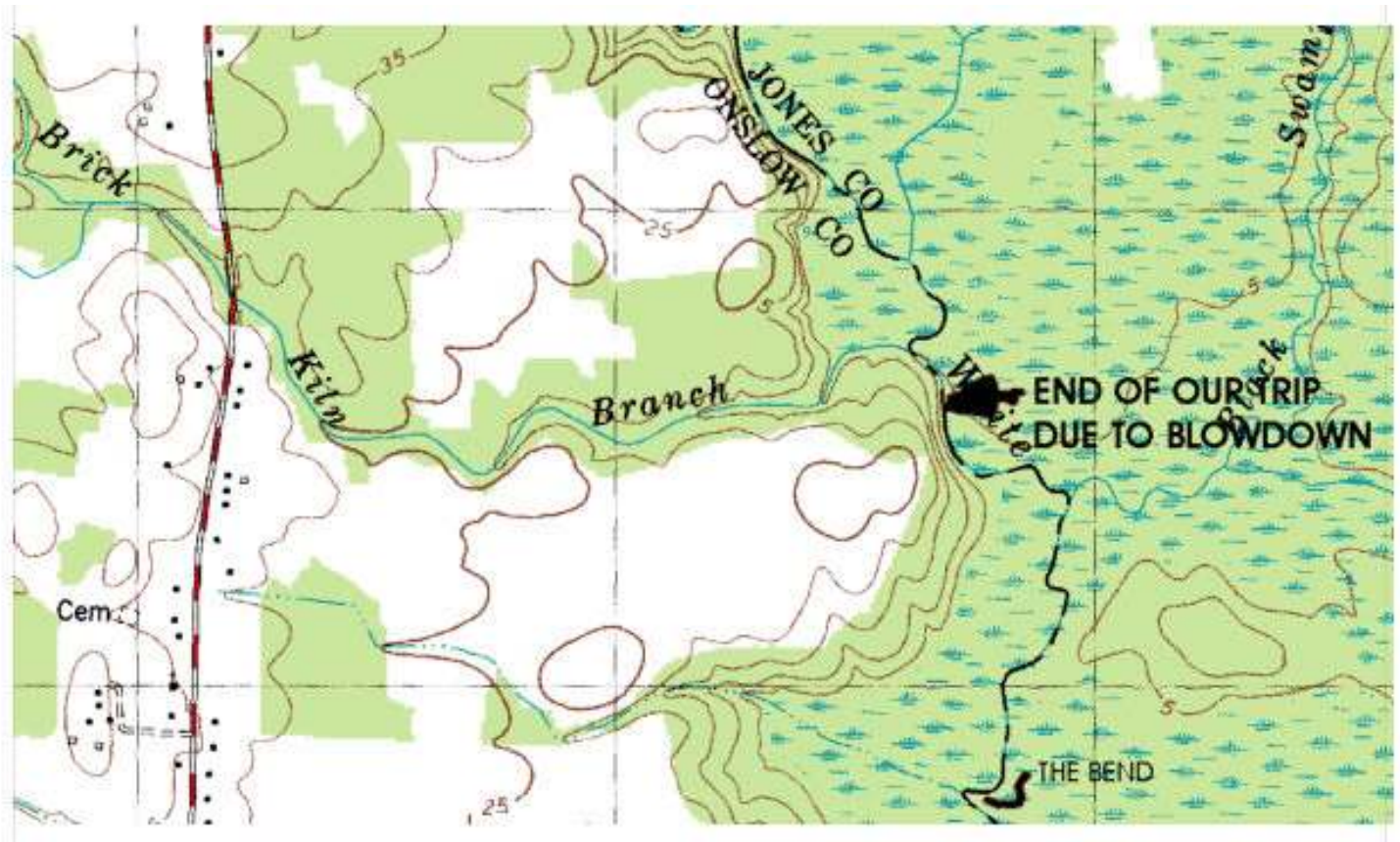
We were told we would soon reach “The Bend” and that we couldn’t get through that. The river separates into at least two channels here as it tries to cut off the bend. We found it to be only moderately challenging on the way up. We took the long route and avoided the cut through because it was narrower than our eight-foot beam. Less water, and it would have stopped us. We kept going.

We passed the mouth of Black Swamp Creek, marked by the picket fence of cypress knees. We were approaching Brick Kiln Creek when we met our match. A tree had recently fallen across the entire creek. If only we had the chainsaw! With the chainsaw we could have done our public service for the day and continued our adventure.

Stewards of the White Oak River Basin

2003-07-05 WHITE OAK RIVER - JOHN EDDY

PAGE 2 OF 3



After turning around, no small feat in itself, the real challenge began. Powering upstream had been relatively easy. It took a fair amount of concentration, but working against the current, we were always under power and had good steering control. Going downstream under power meant we went too fast. Maneuvering downstream was sluggish at best, even with the outboard down.

To get upstream without damaging the motor or the stream bottom, we had hoisted the outboard high on the jack plate (eight inches above standard height) and tilted it up some too. This put the outboard skeg only slightly below the bottom of the boat with the cavitation plate out of the water and prop partly above the water line. With the outboard so mounted, forward thrust is good and steering is responsive. (A side note - This outboard is modified to allow operation in an extremely elevated position. It is not possible to run a stock outboard this high because it would not be able to pick up cooling water.)

Going downstream, reverse was the preferred gear for the upper reaches. In reverse, the elevated outboard thrust acts against the transom. To gain any thrust in reverse, the outboard had to be lowered on the jack plate. It would then immediately need to be raised to avoid obstructions. We gave the jack plate and power trim quite a workout. Often, we had to apply forward thrust to turn the boat, then reverse to slow us down. Even with that, we saw much more of the brush, tree limbs, and spiders that line the river on our way downstream that we did on our way up.

Stewards of the White Oak River Basin

2003-07-05 WHITE OAK RIVER - JOHN EDDY

PAGE 3 OF 3

A couple of times, judicious application of a paddle was in order. This was especially true where we had to zig zag through obstructions spaced more closely than the length of the boat. Under paddle, the 3,000 pounds of boat, motor, and passengers was even less responsive than the Discovery canoe which, some days, seems to weigh as much.

Even though it was challenging and there were spiders, lots of spiders, we had a good time. The river is beautiful and it is clean. Congratulations and thanks to the Stewards who cleaned this section of the river. We saw very little trash.

Our trip lasted just over four hours. That was total elapsed time from Swansboro to nearly Brick Kiln Creek and back. It included a brief period where we tried to wait out an estimated eight-foot alligator's breath-holding abilities. It also included a two mile stretch of the White Oak where the southwest wind had whipped up a nice cappuccino chop. We progressed though the chop at under ten knots after sunset. The sunset over the marshes near Stella was beautiful and made a fitting close to a wonderful afternoon. It also helped one of the crew to forget about some of the passengers we had picked up along the way. Our new passengers, by the way, had done a pretty good job of adapting to their new fiberglass environment. We'll surely be reminded of this trip by their descendants for generations to come.