

Paddle Trip Report – Upper Newport River from US 70 Bus. Newport, NC

On December 12, 2004, my wife, I and a friend paddled up the Newport River. This was something that I'd wanted to do for a long time but for one reason or another had not gotten around to it. The first time I had seen the river was crossing over it in the little crossroads community of Newport. I'm always drawn to the swampy, still waters of the coastal tributaries and this was one that I wanted to paddle upon. Winter is the best time to hit the swamps and creeks. The monster mosquitoes and sneaky snakes are all on vacation down in Florida so one doesn't have to wear snake proof clothes and gobs of bug repellent in order to venture into the backwaters.

We put our kayaks in at the NC Wildlife launch in Newport, NC on the main road (US 70 Business) that comes in from Hwy 70. The river there is about 35 ft wide. One paddles to the left or west and after about 300 ft head off to the left again. From here you pretty much just follow the river. The width stays about 50 ft until you cross under Hwy 70, after Hwy 70 the width tapers down but not much. Winter time doesn't give one a lot of wildlife to see. We spotted a couple of Great Herons and that was about it. People fish this section so there were places where trees had fallen across the river and they had been cut to allow small fishing boats access. We only saw two other boats and they were small john-boats.

After about 1/4 mile past the Hwy 70 bridge the river gets small enough to be a creek, at one point we passed the edge of an older housing development and a dock with a couple of folks fishing. I asked what it was they were catching and they replied that they were catching Bluegills. After we get out of sight from the dock we are obviously back in the woods and I see something going through the brush. This was probably a deer but hard to say. Further on we passed by another community but there is no one accessing the creek from this area. We are now past what one would consider an easily accessed waterway. There are trees across the creek that we have to duck under or just barely paddle over. Off to our left or southwest we hear shooting, sounds like 22 rifle shots so I figure squirrel hunters. By now we have been on the water for about 2 hours and the sun is starting to fall below the treetops so it is time to head back to the truck.

I would have liked to have gone further but we ran out of time. The paddle was very pretty in that unique winter way. I like the starkness that one gets in the winter. The temperature was at best 53°. On the way back we picked some wild Mistletoe for kissing excuses over the holiday season. We were on the water at 11:30 am and back at the launch ramp at about 3:30 pm. You only have about a 4 hour window of opportunity in the winter as far as the heat of the day goes. The backwater creeks offer you protection from the wind so if you can get away from the open areas and into the creeks you won't be subjected to the cold as much.

I highly recommend this paddle for people of all skill levels; the creek is not too deep and should one spill they could walk to shore within 15 feet in most places.

See you on the water.

Mark Tenney