



MUCHYEDO BANKS PADDLE

PENACOOK, BOSCAWEN & CANTERBURY, NH

North of Concord, NH, the Merrimack River is largely free to run its natural course, which results in deep meander bends as the river winds through this largely undeveloped landscape. Farm fields and forests line the river's banks, along with stunning sand cliffs like those of Muchyedo Banks in Canterbury. These cliffs rise as much as 80 feet above the river, formed over centuries as the river cut into the sandy glacial deposits of a terrace above the waterway. This is an out-and-back paddle that can be truncated or expanded in length if desired.



JERRY MONKMAN, ECOPHOTOGRAPHY

What you'll see: This is one of the most beautiful sections of the Merrimack River, as paddlers are treated to the incredible scenery of the towering cliffs of **Muchyedo Banks**. In summer, look for **bank swallows** nesting in burrows they have dug into the sand cliffs.

There are many inviting **sandbars** on the insides of meander bends; the first one you pass (**Riverland Conservation Area**) is a town beach accessible by car,



CARRIE DEEGAN, SPNHF

but numerous others beyond it are more isolated and perfect for a quiet picnic or swim.

Spotted sandpipers and **Eastern kingbirds** are common along the shore.

Location: Penacook, NH through Boscawen and Canterbury and back on the Merrimack River

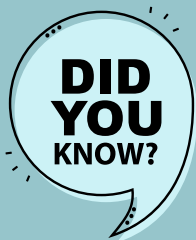
Length of Paddle: ~6 miles round trip (out and back paddle)

Approximate time: 4 hours

Difficulty: Easy to moderate. Flat water, but you will be paddling upstream against mild current for the first half.

What to bring: PFD/lifejacket, water, lunch, water shoes, sunscreen and hat (high sun exposure), binoculars (optional), swimsuit (optional)

Be Aware: Recent precipitation and weather can impact water level and current velocity.



- As you are heading upriver, the paddling will be **easier** on the **inside of the meander bends**, as the current moves slower here. This is also where the sandbars are, so just keep heading for the sandbars!
- The sand cliffs along this stretch of the Merrimack are a **rare natural community**, called a **Dry River Bluff**. The cliffs are highly unstable, so **please do not try to climb** or slide down them. It's not only ecologically damaging; it's also dangerous as material from dozens of feet above you can quickly fall down on top of you.



MERRIMACK RIVER
WATERSHED COUNCIL



GETTING THERE... maps & DIRECTIONS

Put In Location: Rivco Boat Launch, near junction of Merrimack and Penacook Streets, Penacook, NH. At this intersection, you will see a grey building (see photo). Drive to the left of this building to find the entrance to the boat launch.

GPS/Navigation App Coordinates: 43.285902, -71.5910241



SUGGESTED ROUTE

- Put in at the **Rivco Boat Launch** near the junction of Penacook and Merrimack Streets in Penacook, NH. At this junction you will see a large grey building (see photo above) and will need to head to the left side of it to access the boat launch.
- This launch is actually at the **mouth of the Contoocook River** where it empties into the Merrimack, so paddle to the right after leaving the launch and under the **trellis bridge**. Once under the bridge, bear left upstream on the **Merrimack River**. On the left here, you will see the **Hannah Dustin memorial statue**.
- You will pass under the **Route 4 bridge**, and in about 1/2 mile will begin to see the cliffs of **Muchyedo Banks** on your right.
- Continue paddling these meander bends for **2-4 miles** (up to you!) and make sure you turn around with enough energy to paddle back to the launch point at the mouth of the Contoocook!



CARRIE DEEGAN, SPNH



Tag your photos
#merrimackpaddlechallenge
to share your adventures!