

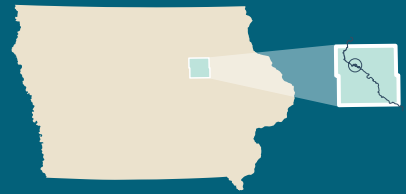
MAQUOKETA RIVER LOWER DELAWARE WATER TRAIL



Photo: Creative Commons CCO

DELAWARE COUNTY

Before setting out, plan your paddle and become aware of hazards on your route. The Lake Delhi Dam forms a major lake that is popular with all manner of boaters. Be vigilant for other kinds of watercraft. Powered boats are present on the lake -- keep eyes and ears open for their position, passage, and wakes. Check water levels in advance. Avoid paddling during high water levels.



DELAWARE COUNTY

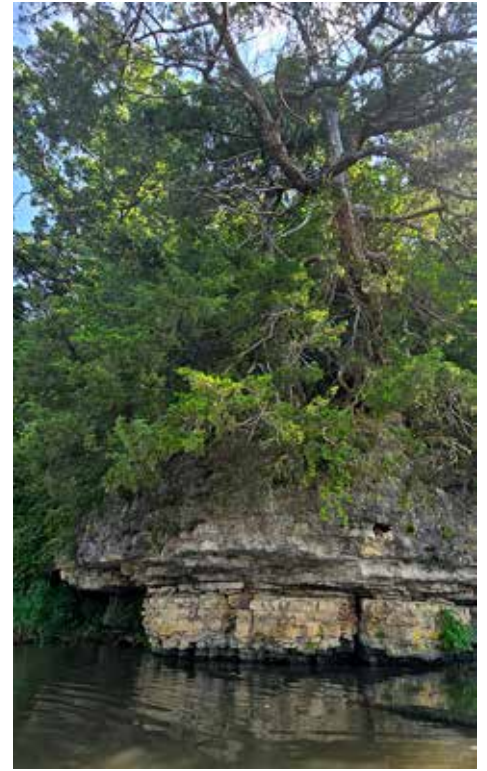
The Maquoketa River is a navigable “non-meandered” stream in Iowa. That means that the State of Iowa owns the water flowing through it, but not the land adjacent to it or under it. Except at access sites and public areas marked on the map, the land adjacent to and underneath the river is private property.

MAQUOKETA RIVER MAGIC

Flowing through picturesque northeast Iowa, the Maquoketa River lends its name to a trio of state-designated paddling trails. The 23.2-mile section in the lower portion of Delaware County begins at Bailey’s Ford Park, traverses the length of Lake Delhi, and ends at Hardscrabble Wildlife Area near its southern boundary. The river’s spring-fed cold water sources promote satisfying fishing opportunities, rich encounters with nature, and a multi-faceted paddling experience. Along the way, the water trail showcases limestone cliffs, mature oak forests, shallow impoundments, lowland forests, and diverse wildlife. An excursion on this water trail is an excellent centerpiece for exploring this historic county.



A paddler sets out from Bailey’s Ford Access



A red cedar tree grows atop limestone bluffs



The artistic lines of the Lake Delhi dam



A view downstream near Hardscrabble Wildlife Area highlights the wild feel of the river

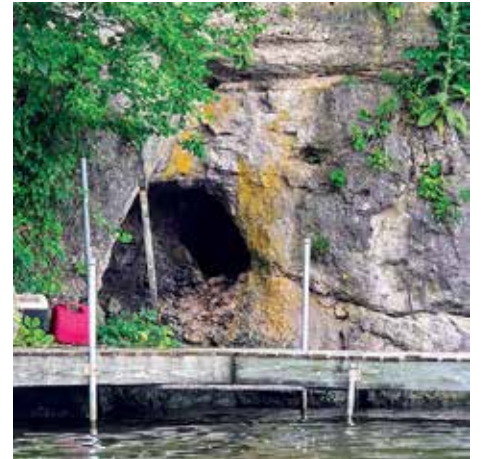
MAQUOKETA RIVER LOWER DELAWARE WATER TRAIL

Bluffs and Hillside Ridges

Lower Delaware County is entirely within the lowan Surface landform region. Valleys tend to be shallow and wide except where they cross high points in the underlying bedrock surface. In these areas the valleys are narrow in width, incised into the bedrock (creating bluffs), and often make abrupt turns controlled by fracture networks in this foundation.

The hillside bluffs and ridges are a special feature not only of the Maquoketa but also other rivers in northeast and east central Iowa. Some 435 million years ago, limestone formed as plants and animals lived and died in shallow reefs of an inland sea that once covered what is now Iowa. As the continents shifted, as the climate changed, and as the land uplifted, those rocks became exposed and weathered away. As snow melted and rain fell, the acidic content was sometimes enough to dissolve the carbonate limestone, creating cracks and fissures and eventually caves and sinkholes. This porous landscape is called karst and it describes the topography of northeast Iowa where rivers flow today.

Some of the exposed bedrock is more resistant to weathering and it directs the rivers back and forth, often looping the river in horseshoe bends. The resistant dolomite limestone cliffs further upstream in Backbone State Park famously guide the river around the “Devil’s Backbone,” but this also occurs further downstream as water courses by rock faces and “chimney rocks”. The karst also gives rise to many springs and caves and seeps that are found in the area. The nooks and crannies of such a landscape are fascinating and many species of wildlife take advantage of its secret places. Karst features allow for quick movement of rain and other surface water into ground water, taking with it anything we may have put on the surface, including any chemicals or other pollutants. To have karst means to have rivers with the beauty of exposed cliffs and caves. But it also means that we must exercise extra care in how we use the land, lest we spoil the water beneath it.



First rock outcrop along wooded ridge south of Bailey’s Ford Access, river-left, Lake Delhi



De L’Isle’s (1718) revised map showing “R de Macaret” (Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division)

“There Are Bears”

A succession of early maps label the Maquoketa River with variations on the name as interpreted by Euro-American cartographers, including “Macaret.” It is claimed that the river’s name derives from Maquaw-Autaw, which means “Bear River” in Sauk or Meskwaki, however the Sauk and Meskwaki were not in the region until the 1780s, making these languages the source of the word Macaret unlikely. It is clear that Macaret evolved into “Maquoketa.”

A more likely source for the name are the Miami-Illinois, who lived in the area since at least the 1680s. Their language is closely related to Sauk and Meskwaki; “black bear” translates as mahkwa in Miami, as it does in modern Meskwaki. A closely related prefix mahkat-, means “black” in Miami, and may also be the source of the name Macaret. It is likely the Miami name for the river continued in use by the Sauk and Meskwaki.



North American Black Bear

Indigenous Culture

Archaeological evidence indicates that Indigenous people were hunting, fishing, and gathering wild plants in this part of the Maquoketa River valley at least 10,000 years ago.

Native American presence in the valley intensified around 2,500 years ago, exhibited by camps with stone tools and tool-making workshops, pottery fragments, evidence of horticulture, a rock shelter habitation, and conical and linear burial mounds near Lake Delhi.

Early Native American contact and activity in the Maquoketa and North Fork Maquoketa river valleys has been well documented. The indigenous groups, primarily Meskwaki, Sauk, and Ho-Chunk, were pressured out of their native territories to the north in the early nineteenth century. In the first decade of the nineteenth century Zebulon Pike noted large occupations inhabiting the present-day Bellevue and Sabula areas along the Mississippi River, north and south of the mouth of the Maquoketa River. As those groups spread west they found new areas to occupy in the two river valleys. The area surrounding the confluence of the Maquoketa and North Fork Maquoketa rivers was especially attractive to these groups with its abundance of natural resources. Early European settlers recounted seeing several native groups camped and living in small to medium-sized villages north of Maquoketa, near Hawkins Ford, near Bridgeport, a short distance east of Maquoketa, and the eventual town of Hurstville. The first European settlers documented “large Indian villages” where “large poles were still standing and a large kettle was still hanging over ashes where cooking had been recently done.” Other remnants included what they referred to as “dancing grounds” consisting of a smooth level dusky floors encircled by large cedar trees. Those early accounts also told of how some of the villages suffered great population loss to due diseases such as small pox. Several large burial grounds were also noted along the sand ridges that bordered the river valley.



Photo: Office of the State Archaeologist/Iowa
Middle Woodland Linn Ware Pottery found at Levsen rockshelter, Jackson County



Euro-American Settlement

By the time eastern Iowa was being platted and surveyed for American settlement in 1838 and 1839, the rivers continued to be recognized under different names including Maquokety, Mequokety, Mequochity, Makequeta, Makoketa, and Makoqueta. These differences reflecting the individual surveyor’s understanding and interpretations of the river’s name. One surveyor even identified the North Fork Maquoketa River as Fall River in 1838 while mapping T85N-R2E in Jackson County. The cities of Bellevue and Dubuque offered gateways into the Maquoketa and North Fork Maquoketa river valleys for early settlement and territorial expansion. Some of the earliest settlers to this area include the DeLong family who settled in 1834 in Cascade Township of Dubuque County. William Bennett also settled in 1834 or perhaps 1835 to the northwest Milo Township of Delaware County. The Maquoketa and South Fork Townships experienced early settlement when Alfonzo Gowan, followed soon after by John E. Goodenow, arrived in 1838 and constructed the first buildings in the city of Maquoketa in Jackson County. It is also around this time that the now well-researched and documented village of Bowen’s Prairie was established in 1836 in the northwest corner of Richland Township in Jones County. Other early settlers in Jones County include C. P. Hutton and Abraham Hostetter who came to Washington Township in 1836 or 1837.

“Deer were quite common and elk were found occasionally. This was a little too far east for the bison... Rabbits, squirrels and raccoons enjoyed life in the thick woods and tall grass unless surprised by the bears, panthers and wolves which had their dens in the rocky bluffs along the streams.”

-- from Stories of The Beginning of Delaware County, by Belle Bailey

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An 1869 landowners' map of Delaware County by Thompson and Everts shows parcels belonging to "J. Bailey" in the area of the ford. A faint, handwritten addendum denotes "Bailey's Store."

Citizen Bailey

Joel H. Bailey first came to the Delaware County area in 1837-1838. When he had helped Milo Jones survey the south half of the county in 1837 he had liked the Hopkinton location so well that he planned to come back and settle there but when he and his friends, Cyrus and John Keeler, came early in the spring of 1838 he found that the Nicholsons had located there a few days before, so he went up the river and settled at the spot known ever since as Bailey's Ford. Here the travelers to all points west crossed the river and later the stage coaches stopped on their way from Dubuque to Independence via Rockville and Coffin's Grove.

Many interesting and exciting episodes occurred at Bailey's Ford. Wagon-boxes were made water-tight and chained to the running gear when fording deep water. One day a drunken stage driver forgot to put on the chain at the ford. Fortunately, the passengers were afraid to cross the swollen stream in the stage and got out to cross by the boat which was kept ready. As the four horses swam the stream the couplings loosened and the body of the coach went rolling down the stream. The driver clung to the lines and the horses pulled him and the front wheels of the stage to the shore. After considerable trouble the stage was put together again and they went on their way. Sometimes the river was so high that travelers had to wait several days to cross.

There were humorous incidents at the ford, as well, sometimes repeated. Mr. Bailey had a horse which was in much demand because he would swim so high that he kept his rider out of the water. "Old Cub" would make three successive crossings without protest but if anyone one tried to make him go the fourth time he would wade as long as he could stick his nose out of water and give the rider a good dunking.

Bailey's Ford was a post office for some years and the black walnut cupboard in the pigeon holes of which hundreds of dollars of school money were kept until the sum could be sent to Dubuque to deposit is still in perfect condition. The early settlers of Manchester got their mail from this cupboard.

When Manchester got the railroad it was given a post office and the one at Bailey's Ford was discontinued. A grass-grown cellar hole and some old lilacs and cedars on the rise of ground just east of the bridge mark the site of the home of one of Delaware county's most influential pioneers. From 1843 onward, Joel Bailey served as that first postmaster, then held numerous offices of public trust spanning many years including county treasurer, school commissioner, recorder, judge, supervisor, and mayor of the town of Manchester.

Joel Bailey died November 8, 1897 and is buried in Oakland Cemetery, Manchester.



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Furman Mill and Hartwick Bridge on Maquoketa River, near Delhi

Mills on the Maquoketa

The early years of Euro-American settlement involved harnessing the Maquoketa River as a power source to process the natural resources of wood and grain that helped advance development. Mills were built along the river, traces of which survive today.

In 2003 investigations by the Office of the State Archaeologist located the foundation of the mill that served the Hopkinton area.



Hopkinton Mill was first a sawmill, then a flour mill, and finally a generator plant for electricity.

Delhi Dam History

The Lake Delhi Dam forms the recreationally popular and scenic Lake Delhi, a lively environment of lakeside homes and motorized boat traffic.

The Delhi dam was built between 1922 and 1929 by the Interstate Power Company for hydroelectric power production, but its generators ceased operating in 1973 shortly before the Lake Delhi Recreation Association, a private organization, took ownership. Since then, it has been used for recreation.



A Skidoo rider zips down Lake Delhi

The southern embankment of the Delhi Dam failed on July 24, 2010 due to ten inches of rain that fell in twelve hours. Water overtopped the dam, causing a 200-foot-long portion of the embankment and roadway to erode away and the lake to empty. By March 2012, \$1.7 million in donations was collected to replace the dam and \$9 million in local and county bonds was approved. Five million dollars in state funding was then requested for repairs as well. In April, 2014, ground was broken on a project to replace the dam embankment and spillway. In September, 2016, the river level was back to pre-flood stage levels.



View of Delhi Dam spillway from the overlook

Delaware Crossing Scenic Byway

Several of the roads in the area are marked as being part of the Delaware Crossing Scenic Byway.

The Byway (DCSB) is a 44-mile route that loops though in the heart of Delaware County, running along the Maquoketa River and encircling Lake Delhi. The DCSB is a destination that encourages exploration of the entire county's scenic, recreational, natural, historic, cultural, and archaeological resources.

One steadily increasing and expanding market in the DCSB Corridor is the formation of Amish Cultural Hubs. These clusters of Amish businesses allow byway visitors to easily interact with Amish community members and develop a better understanding of Amish culture. Near Lake Delhi there is an established cultural hub that includes a general store, a bakery, a bulk foods store, and a greenhouse where travelers can purchase authentic Amish goods.



Photo: Creative Commons CC0

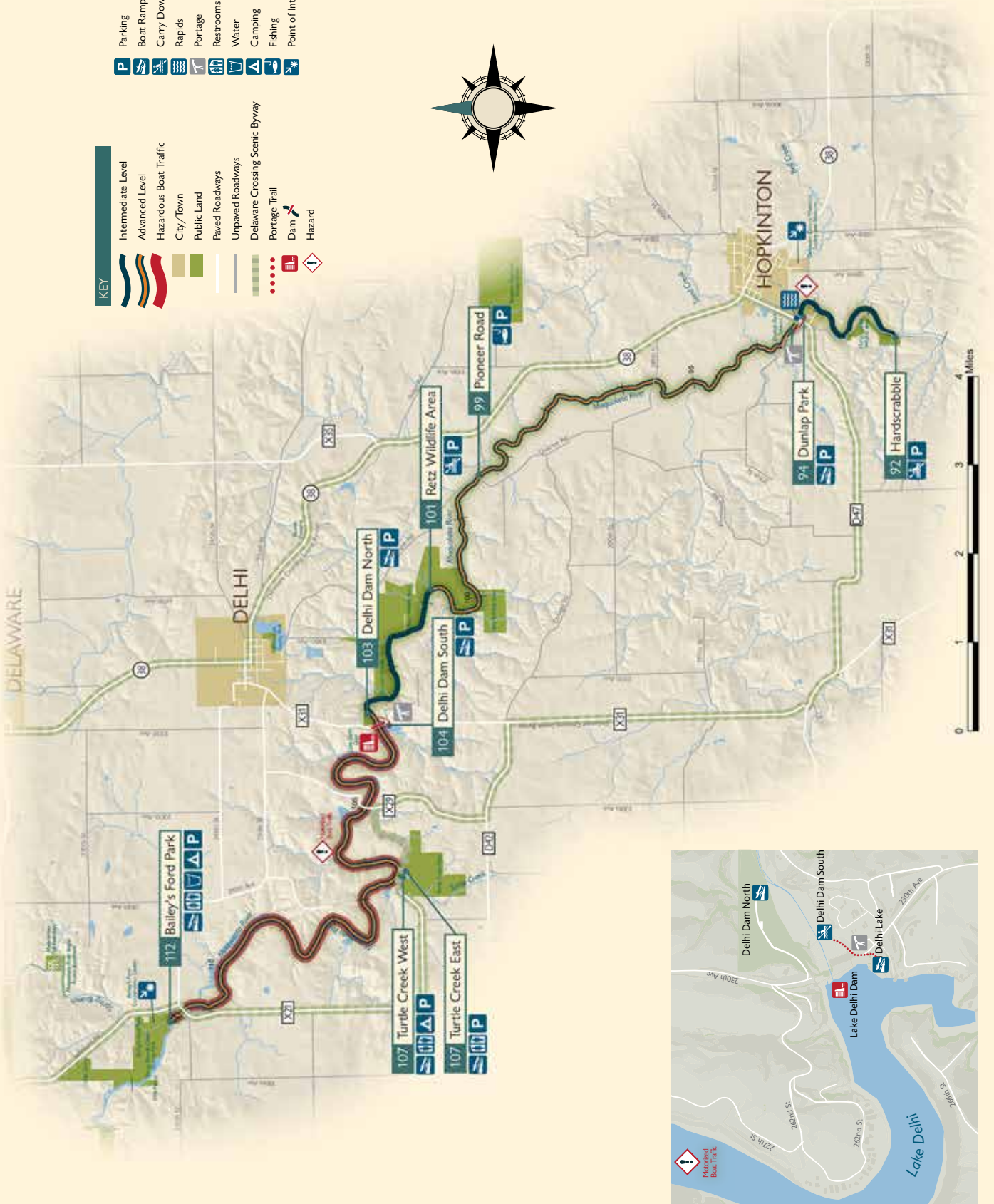
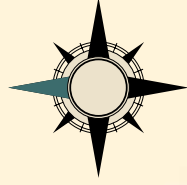
Amish buggies may be present on DCSB roads



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- KEY**
- Intermediate Level
 - Advanced Level
 - Hazardous Boat Traffic
 - City/Town
 - Public Land
 - Paved Roadways
 - Unpaved Roadways
 - Delaware Crossing Scenic Byway
 - Portage Trail
 - Dam
 - Hazard
 - Parking
 - Boat Ramp
 - Carry Down Access
 - Rapids
 - Portage
 - Restrooms
 - Water
 - Camping
 - Fishing
 - Point of Interest



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Bailey's Ford County Park to Hardscrabble Wildlife Area is a distance of 23.2 miles



Common soapwort



Cliff swallow nest and bird



Catalpa tree foliage

A Report on a Reconnaissance Float

The river takes on lake characteristics in the reservoir above the Delhi Dam, beginning less than a mile downstream of Bailey's Ford Park. The width varies between 200 and 750 feet, and depth exceeded the length of a paddle at the water levels that existed. Below the Delhi Dam, the river quickly narrows and takes on characteristics of a more natural waterway, varying in width from 100 to 170 feet. There are some wonderful limestone rock bluffs, especially between the dam and Pioneer Road Access. Water clarity is more than a foot, being dirtier after rains and then slowly gaining clarity. Bank erosion is rare, except in some areas between Pioneer Road Access and Dunlap Park. The river channel bottom is rocky below the dam, becoming more a mix of sand and gravel as one proceeds downstream.

There was considerable motorized use between Bailey's Ford and the Delhi Dam, especially for a weekday, but no motorized use of the river below the dam. The only paddlers encountered were a family that went from Pioneer Road to Dayton Park. Anglers were seen using the lake and just below dam.

Stream Reach #1 Description

Extent: Bailey's Ford County Park to Delhi Dam Approximately 8 miles (Bailey's Ford Park to Turtle Creek Park - 4.5 miles); (Turtle Creek Park to Delhi Dam- 3.5 miles)

This section of the water trail begins at Bailey's Ford Park, which provides many amenities and good river access. Our narrative recounts a recent reconnaissance float along the route.

Canada geese graze on the mowed park lawn and enter the river water along with the kayak as the float begins from the paddler accesses in Bailey's Ford Park. A patch of blooming common soapwort (phlox) adds color to the right bank as the slow current floats the boat away from the landing, and toward the nearby County Road X21 bridge and highlines crossing. A catalpa tree is on the right bank, with long seed pods dangling below broad, green leaves. Birds sing from the shoreline and park grounds – catbirds, common yellowthroats, cardinals, robins, red-winged blackbirds, indigo bunting, house wren, warbling vireo, and more. A kingfisher flies from a tree branch. While floating under the bridge, numerous cliff swallows take flight from their mud nests plastered on the concrete undersides of the structure. The birds also can be seen peeking out from within their nests. What appears to be a fishing pier is soon seen on the left bank. The bank is neatly ripped and the area is mowed like park land, but appears to be private property with a house set further back.

About 1,000 feet beyond the bridge, the river channel splits with most the water flowing to the right. This indicates a very large mid-river island. It is recommended that paddlers keep right. Some 500 feet downriver are the first of many homes and boat docks. The left channel will take paddlers through an undeveloped wooded corridor that may be an interesting, more natural place to explore, but may also present some issues with

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shallower water and some tree debris when river water levels are low. The woodland is quite diverse, with clusters of black walnuts near the park and hard maples and basswood more common downstream. At a higher water level, there are no sandbars or exposed shorelines.

Near the first lakeside home there also appears to be a makeshift bar and social gathering area with campers parked nearby. Further downstream an inlet leads to more houses and docks river-right. Fishermen in motorboats are buzzing along the waters. A bald eagle flies off from a cottonwood tree on the undeveloped left bank. The left river channel rejoins the right channel, forming a broad river with little to no current. This is the start of Lake Delhi, a result of the dam some seven miles downstream holding back and slowing the flow of water. Near the downstream point of the island is a small private monument, with a cross bearing the name of "Alex" and a small deer statue. Honeysuckle, willows, and canary grass are at the end of the point.



Be aware of passing fishing boats

Most development along the lake appear to be large, well-kept, expensive, private homes, but there are a few businesses. The first obvious business is the Lake's End Resort. A woman walks her dog down a path to the river. She is staying at the resort with a friend while doing day hikes at nearby parks and wildlife areas. She says her favorite trip thus far has been to Backbone State Park, but she also enjoyed some of the nearby Delaware County parks.

Fishing boats, pontoons, skidoos, and larger motorboats are at docks along one or both shorelines for nearly seven miles to the dam. Shorelines in front of homes often have concrete walls or stone riprap. Many homes have well-manicured lawns. Modest homes are rare, and there appear to be no "cabins" in the traditional sense of the word.

Paddlers share the narrow lake with fishermen, speed boats, water skiers, skidoos, etc. Weekday mornings are the best time to avoid this traffic. It is advised that paddlers wear bright or fluorescent shirts/hats to make themselves more visible while navigating the busy lake. Caution is especially advised when paddling some of the narrower bends in the lake, where boat docks extend from both banks and motorized users speed through the passage. Paddlers also need to be able to know how to paddle through the wakes left by motorboats, sometimes appearing out of nowhere. They should not assume that large boats will slow down when passing – few do. The lake also provides no current. Wind will determine how hard kayakers and canoeists will need to paddle. Travel is slow, and people should be prepared to spend more time going a short distance. There are no sandy shorelines, sandbars, or public places where people can step out of their boats to take a break from paddling, even when nature calls.



Great blue heron perched on tree

There are undeveloped stretches and other places where development has left less of an impact. Some houses are situated atop wooded bluffs, with trails or stairs leading down through dense forest to boat docks. Where the woods are largely intact, they are quite wonderfully diverse and full of bird song. Paddlers may get a quick glimpse of the brown fur and white spots of a fawn deer moving through the dense vegetation. Larger trees often include hard maples, basswood, black walnut, white and red oaks, and elms. Ironwood is very common, and has blooms showing this time of year. The occasional

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catalpa tree continues to be seen. Great blue herons and belted kingfishers fly from tree perches, often after a loud croak or rattling call. Other loud singers include tufted titmouse, red-winged blackbirds, northern towhees, house wrens, and common yellowthroats. Vines hang down the banks with grape, wild cucumber, and Virginia creeper being the most common.



Virginia creeper on rock face

Most wooded areas are associated with bluffs that form ridges about 100 feet above water level. There are a few places where the limestone bedrock of these ridges is exposed as a rock face or outcrop seen from a distance. The first is located on the left bank at the bend past the first large expanse of houses and docks clustered along both banks. Just up from the rock face, there is an area with a few picnic tables and a sign asking users to watch their pets, and another sign indicating private property boundary. There is no indication of public land on Google Earth, and therefore it is unclear who manages the area. There also is an interesting wetland seep with cattails, jewelweed, daisies, field thistle, and goldenrod just before the rock face. The rock face has strands of Virginia creeper vines attached to its hard surface.

Beyond the rock outcrop, the wooded ridge extends above the left bank some 2,000 feet, tapering down before the next riverbend to the left. Docks line the shoreline with houses hidden by trees atop the hill. Still, the diverse woodland is quite beautiful with leafed limbs of hard maples, basswood, elm, and ironwood extending over the shoreline. Two great blue herons fly out from the tree branches. Fishermen are scattered throughout the lake, but are more commonly seen along the wooded areas. The lake has a variety of game fish species – smallmouth and largemouth bass, crappies, bluegill, and walleye. Anglers encountered were targeting crappies and bluegills.

Houses continue to be built on newly cleared areas of shoreline. Replacement of older, smaller homes with larger, more expensive houses is a continuing trend. Even just 20 years ago there were quite a few small, seasonal cabins still along the lake, but nearly all of them have been torn down and replaced with bigger houses. Some 11 highlines cross the lake reservoir. The highlines all have balls on them to make them more visible to people in low-flying aircraft, boaters, and birds. Many of the highlines have swallows (barn, rough-winged, and purple martin) perched on them.



Barn swallows on highlines

On the last left bend before the Turtle Creek Accesses, there is a white fence and a shoreline restaurant signed The Pizza Place, with its own lake access. The lake bends back to the right, and the 267th St. bridge that connects the Turtle Creek East and West accesses comes into view along the right bank. The concrete bridge has many cliff swallow nests, and the birds flitter about and above paddlers entering the small bay. Paddlers have a choice as to which access they use – the West Access is to the right and the East Access is to the left. Both accesses are well developed with ramps, docks, restrooms, and ample parking. Turtle Creek is aptly named as a softshell turtle is seen basking on a log – the only turtle seen on this trip.



Leaving the quiet bay of Turtle Creek and crossing back under the bridge head north, there may be a feeling of paddling upriver depending on the wind direction. On a busy weekend, paddlers should also watch for motorized boat traffic coming around the blind approach. At the end of the north straightaway, the lake curves right, and at the bend is a small bay to the left with a sandy beach and a large house set back beyond a mowed lawn. Past the beach, there is a rock outcrop at the start of a tall bluff that continues as another river-left wooded ridge with diverse forest between scattered houses. A bald eagle flies from the shoreline and ten turkey vultures kettle overhead, gliding on the rising air current. Red cedars grow atop the rock surface, and grape, poison ivy, Virginia creeper hang from the shoreline. White and red oaks also are seen, and some of the



Bald eagle in cottonwood tree

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hillside homes have oaks planted in their lawns. Perhaps these plantings help spur oak regeneration in the adjacent woodlands. The ridge tapers down and houses and docks again crowd the shorelines. A boat ramp and small beach are at the end of the crowded left shore. The ramp is at the end of 218th Avenue, but the ramp and the beach appear to be private property.

The lake curves right and the 220th Ave. bridge can be seen crossing the lake from a distance. This is the only bridge crossing the lake. Hartwick Marina is just past the bridge, with a signed building river-left. The bridge is sometimes referred to as Hartwick Crossing and the Lake Delhi reservoir is sometimes called Hartwick Lake. Just before the bridge, a boat landing and mowed grass can be seen in a small bay on the right shore. The entrance to this area is off 262nd St., and is signed as private property. A red light is mounted near the center of the bridge, facing the water. It is assumed this a night-time navigation marker for boaters.



Last rock face ridge river-left before dam

There are three more big bends in the lake before the Delhi Dam, and some nice stretches of forest exist on the outside bends. There are some nice stretches with no development. Exposed limestone is seen along the left bank at the first bend to the right. A cave entrance appears just past a boat dock. Limestone bedrock has many fractures and eroded fissures and caves, becoming more common in Jones County.

Lost Beach Resort and Marina is further down the left bank. The restaurant and outdoor area with beach volleyball are signed from the river, and campers are seen parked beyond the building. A long boat dock follows the shoreline into a bay, and at the end of the bay is a boat ramp assumed to be for resort users. A Google search reveals that this used to be just a restaurant called Smokey's Lost Bar and Grill, with the camping and marina added as it became a resort.

Prior to the takeout, there is a large limestone face on a hillside river-right. A house is atop the hill. There is a bay to the right, but the takeout ramp is straight ahead, right of the dam, somewhat hidden by a cluster of docks and boats. The sound from the dam is quite loud. To the left of the ramp, orange buoys mark the dangerous area just before the dam. The ramp is grooved concrete, with private property signs on either side. It is located a good, safe distance from the dam.

The Delhi Dam ramp serves as both a takeout and portage. Paddlers may choose to leave the water trail or traverse the portage and continue downstream. See descriptions of the takeout and portage in the Accesses section below.



Barn swallow on dock rail

With very little open shoreline, wildlife sightings are relatively few. Swallows (barn, rough-winged, purple martin, and cliff) were the most common songbirds. Bald eagles, turkey vultures, and great blue herons were also easy to spot. Many other songbirds were seen and heard, including northern cardinal, great-crested flycatcher, warbling vireo, common yellowthroat, red-winged blackbird, eastern kingbird, tufted titmouse, northern towhee, killdeer, American robin, eastern wood-peewee, black-capped chickadee, catbird, house wren, cedar waxwing, song sparrows, indigo bunting, belted kingfisher, Canada goose, American crow, and house sparrow.

Other animals seen or heard include white-tailed deer, softshell turtle, frogs jumping from the bank (no ID), and fish splashing and surfacing. Anglers were fishing for bass, bluegill, crappie, and walleye. Gnats, mosquitoes, cabbage and sulfur butterflies were seen. Water levels were higher than normal, and it is possible that more sand shorelines may attract more shorebirds when water levels are lower. Other wildlife species also may be easier to see along open shorelines when water level is lower.

Where the land has not been cleared for buildings, woodlands are quite diverse. They often are associated with hillside bluffs and rock faces – places that present more difficulty for residential development. Black walnuts, hard maples, silver maple, basswood, and ironwood are the most common trees. Other tree species include honey locust, mulberry, catalpa, elm, willow, and white, red, and burr oak. Shrubs and vines include dogwood, elderberry, honeysuckle, grape, wild cucumber, Virginia creeper, and poison ivy. Other ground vegetation includes soapwort (phlox), cup plant, field mustard, stinging nettles, field thistle, cattails, canary grass, jewelweed, daisies, and bellflower.

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Stream Reach #1 Accesses



Bailey's Ford paddler access ramp

Bailey's Ford Park Access has both a paddler access ramp and motorized boat ramp. Both are concrete ramps with good landings. It is advised to use the paddler ramp since it is designated for this purpose and provides good landing areas on, and adjacent to, the concrete. There is ample parking, a port-a-potty, water hydrant, bench, and garbage can close to the parking and the access. The 170-acre park contains 70 campsites, including modern and primitive sites, nearly three miles of walking trails, and a stocked trout stream (Spring Creek). A "Camping" sign exists on Highway 20 at the County Road X21 (Jefferson Road or Delaware Crossing Scenic Byway) exit, and park signs exist for Bailey's Ford and other Delaware County Areas on the county roads. Upon entering the park, there is a sign pointing to the boat ramps. The paddler access is signed at the parking lot with DNR water trail signs, and there is a water trail access number sign facing the river just upstream of the landing. The park is located at 2379 Jefferson Road, Manchester, Iowa, and is managed by Delaware County Conservation Board.



West Access ramp and dock with East Access in background at Turtle Creek Park

Turtle Creek Park has two separate accesses with concrete ramps and boat docks, well signed off 267th Street. The west access lane winds through the 12-acre park, which is mostly a campground with 26 sites providing both primitive and modern camping. Ample parking is available above the boat ramp area, and paddlers can drive down to the ramp to unload and then drop off vehicle(s) back at the parking area. It is a short but steep walk down the road from the parking area to the boat ramp. The east access is located on the east side of the 267th Street bridge and provides a larger parking area adjacent to two boat ramps. Both the east and west accesses provide very good river access, with the west access providing a better earthen launch adjacent to the ramp. Vault restrooms are located near the parking areas for both accesses. The accesses provide a launch into a small bay, mostly protected from the high-speed motorized traffic on the lake. Turtle Creek Park is part of a 111-acre Turtle Creek Wildlife Area. It is located at 2124 267th Street, Manchester, Iowa, and is managed by Delaware County Conservation Board.

Delhi Dam Access above the dam has a concrete ramp. It is grooved and in good condition leading to a good landing. It is rather steep (10-degree slope). There is only room for a few vehicles to park, and paddlers will compete with motorboaters for parking spaces. There are no other amenities. Private property signs are on either side of the ramp and along a dock that extends toward the dam. There are no signs indicating public access facing land or water. There also are no signs along roads leading to the dam indicating public access.



Delhi Dam Access/Takeout landing

The Delhi Dam Portage Access is a concrete paved trail that begins just south of the dam. The first third of the 450-foot trail is very steep, dropping some 50 feet at a slope of about 18 degrees. The concrete is not grooved, and likely is slippery when wet. At this water level, the landing is at an abrupt end to the trail in some fast water. Regardless of water level, paddlers will need to navigate through some swift water and obstacles to get out to the normal river flow. There are no amenities or signs indicating the trail is meant to be a portage. Fishermen are seen at the base of the portage trail, but there are no indications people have been hauling boats and gear down the portage. There are no water trail signs. The portage trail likely will not get much paddler use as there is a much easier access and landing downstream along the north side of the dam (Maquoketa River Access).

Recommended Experience Classification

Due to the crowded use of numerous motorized water craft and lack of water current and public land for rest stops, this reach is best suited to paddlers with at least an intermediate skill level. Paddlers may put in and take out on the lake at Turtle Creek Park, or paddle from Bailey's Ford and take out at Turtle Creek Park for day use. Paddlers may consider wearing bright or fluorescent colors to make themselves easily seen by motorboat users. Depending on wind, the eight-mile trip with little to no current may seem like 16 river miles. Those wishing to portage down to the river below the dam should be prepared for a long, steep carry-down.

Recommended experience classification: **Advanced**



Portage trail from top looking down

MAQUOKETA RIVER LOWER DELAWARE WATER TRAIL

Stream Reach #2 Description

Extent: Maquoketa River Access (Delhi) to Hardscrabble Wildlife Area (Approximately 11.5 miles - Maquoketa River Access to Pioneer Road Access (4.5 miles); Pioneer Road Access to Dunlap Park (5 miles); Dunlap Park to Hardscrabble Wildlife Area (2 miles).



Angler upstream of accesses

This stream reach begins at the Maquoketa River Access about 900 feet downstream of the large Delhi Dam. The pounding sound of water coming over the dam is evident at the boat launch. The water is running swift at the landing off the concrete boat ramp as fishermen and women stand out on a small island upstream trying their luck.

The first section of this trip is in an Iowa DNR catch-and-release area for bass. It was known for years as a spot for wading with a rod and reel to catch beautiful smallmouth bass ranging to more than 18 inches, as well as occasional walleye, rock bass, and bluegill. The area has made a comeback after the original dam gave way in 2010 and was eventually rebuilt. The great fishing likely has to do with quality habitat. The river has a rocky bottom and the left shoreline is lined with limestone bedrock. On this day, water is moving approximately twice as fast as normal, and some of the quieter pools that normally exist have more flow.

This is the most scenic portion of the water trail, with steep wooded bluffs, riffles, and clear water. After the first bend the river widens and then narrows at a riffle pinch point to the right. With high water, paddlers easily float over the riffle. This is where the river enters the Shearer Wildlife Area, which, along with the Retz Wildlife Area further downstream, provide 583 acres of quality forest and other habitat along the river corridor almost to Pioneer Road Access. Not surprisingly, this portion of protected river corridor provides the most natural features and feel of wildness on the water trail. The wooded shoreline is thick and lush, with silver maples, basswood, river birch, cottonwood, and black walnuts. Some open areas have common milkweed, monarda (bee balm) and cup plant in bloom. A spotted sandpiper flies off, and killdeer are heard as they fly along the shoreline. Great blue herons, bald eagles, and belted kingfishers are seen flying from perches, but in a swift-moving kayak the savvy photographer must be quick.



Spotted sandpiper

Occasional riffles may need more attention at lower water levels, but at a higher water level paddlers can scoot right through them. A mid-river island appears, with more swift water going river-right. There is no bank erosion to speak of and it is a lovely stretch of water. Grape and wild cucumber vines hang over exposed limestone edges and grow on boulders along the water's edge. The river bottom remains rocky, and the clear water near the shoreline allows a good look at the limestone and glacial till on the river bottom.

The wooded hillside tapers down and the right bank is more open, with soapwort, cup plant, mullein, and grasses growing on it. This appears to be private land between Shearer and Retz Wildlife Areas. No crops can be seen, but it seems there may be some farmland beyond the line of sight. Mulberry and catalpa grow in open sunlight, and



MAQUOKETA RIVER LOWER DELAWARE WATER TRAIL



catbirds, song sparrows, and field sparrows are singing. The river continues along a straightaway with occasional riffles.

A wooded bluff along the left side of the next bend indicates the beginning of the Retz Wildlife Area. A concrete boat ramp is located along the left bank in the public wildlife area. The Delaware County Conservation Board websites do not indicate river access or a campground, so the ramp is somewhat of a mystery. Perhaps it is available for law enforcement? Further down on the right bank is a fractured limestone outcrop. A hen wood duck bobs in and out of vegetation along the right bank. A red-bellied woodpecker trills its song.

Another riffle scoots the boat along, and the first fully exposed sandbar is at the end of the swift water. More riffles and sandbars are likely revealed along this stretch during normal all low water conditions. Where the hillside tapers down to a flatter shoreline, there are more bank willows and taller black willows. Mullein, ragweed, soapwort, cup plant grow along the open bank. There still is no bank erosion.



Quarter Road Bridge upstream of Pioneer Road Access

The concrete bridge for Quarter Road comes into view. Cliff swallows fly off from their mud nests plastered on the bridge undersides. This is the bridge off of Pioneer Road, and the river access is along the left bank just past the bridge. It is initially blocked from view by an overhanging willow and other plants and can only be seen after passing the landing and looking back upstream. At least at this water level, the landing is a stairway with no level approach. Paddlers wishing to exit at the access need to carefully move from their boats to the steps and begin the carry upstairs. Launching is likely a bit easier than taking out.

The nature of the river from above Pioneer Road Access to Dunlap Park is through a flatter landscape with agricultural practices not far from the banks. Great blue herons, rough-winged swallows, red-winged blackbirds, dickcissels, and kingbirds are among the bird species that seem to be more abundant. Sandbars now are more common, some of which have killdeers, spotted sandpipers, and mourning doves scurrying about. Some of the banks have broken concrete laid as riprap, and farm buildings can be seen. There continues to be the occasional riffles, and paddlers will need to know how to “read” the river so as not to get beached when the river is at normal or low flow. Tree debris tends to get beached on some of the mid-river sand in shallow areas. Some banks, especially on the outside bends of the river, are eroded. Bank swallow nest cavities are seen on



MAQUOKETA RIVER LOWER DELAWARE WATER TRAIL

some of the nearly vertical dirt banks. Willows and silver maples now are dominant trees. Elms and boxelders sometimes overhanging the shore and may become sweepers at the end of a riffle.

Loud motors are heard beyond the bank. A few large, bur oaks grow in what may be a pasture. This appears to be near Lango Dairy on Google Earth. The water flows more slowly between riffles and the open areas along the banks have willows, grape, Virginia Creeper, giant ragweed, mullein, and grasses. A long area of stone riprap is an obvious landmark along the right bank, and begins with a view of a cornfield. What appears to be tree tubes are then seen above the bank, metal cannister/barrel with a device on them. Occasionally they make a loud bang, perhaps some type of contraption designed to scare away deer. A picnic table also is nearby.



Posts blocking inlet from Plum Creek river-left

Plum Creek enters the river on the left. The inlet is blocked by numerous, wide-diameter posts (more than a foot). Perhaps this was a barricade to fence in cattle. Again, it is a very noticeable landmark. The 295th St. concrete bridge comes into view downstream of Plum Creek. There are no river accesses from the bridge, and no good approach is obvious. The landscape becomes even flatter with more sandbars. Still, shorelines remain intact with no signs of crops or cattle at river's edge. Red-headed woodpeckers land on dead trees. There is barbed wire fence along the left bank, and while paddling along what at first

appeared to be a floating log, my paddle gets

tangled among some barbed wire attached to a floating post. This could be a hazard for unsuspecting paddlers. A tile outlet also extends from the left bank.

Lowland forest overtakes the river corridor. An inlet to a small bay is river-left. About 1,200 feet downstream is a mid-river island. Most of the water goes to the right, and this is the most direct path to the portage and landing at Dunlap Park. The left passage appears to be passable at this water level, but may be more likely to have tree debris and shallow water at times. This left channel rejoins the right channel about 500 feet downstream of the Dunlap Park boat ramp. This is an option for those who want to bypass the rapids and portage upstream of the boat ramp and don't mind paddling 500 feet upstream, or for those wishing to bypass Dunlap Park and the rapids all together and paddle two more miles to Hardscrabble Wildlife Area Access.

Paddlers that take the right channel will see some large cottonwoods grow on the island, a favorite spot for bald eagles that take flight from one of their high branches. The SW Marion Avenue concrete bridge, with chain link fence along a pedestrian walkway, comes into view. The sound of rapids just downstream of the bridge can be heard. Paddlers have three options:

1. There is an earthen landing on the right shore upstream of the bridge that leads to a concrete paved portage trail. It is a relatively easy, level, 270-foot portage to the access landing.
2. At this water level there appears to be a decent chute left-of-center. Paddlers wishing to run the rapids should get out of their boats before the bridge, check the rapids from shore, and then make their plans to go through the rapids.
3. At this water level, there is ample area along the right shoreline to walk boats through shallow water and over some rocks to the landing.



View from portage trail landing before Dunlap Bridge (SW Marion St.)

Dunlap Park has good park amenities, and the picnic shelter serves as a nice spot to eat lunch before the final, short stretch to Hardscrabble Wildlife Area.

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Leaving the concrete boat ramp, I look upstream at the foamy, white rapids and then downstream at the wooded corridor. The confluence with the left channel from the other side of the island is ahead. The river flows through floodplain forest dominated by silver maples and cottonwoods. A male common yellowthroat loudly sings his wichey-wichey-wichey song. The beautiful, contrasting black and yellow colors of the bird are a pleasure to see, but often are hidden in dense July foliage.

A hill extends up from the right bank. Atop the hill is a house with what appears to be a maintained view to the river. The river bends to the left and then back to the right, and the Hardscrabble Wildlife Area access is then on the right shore down the long straightaway. A juvenile great blue heron provides an advance escort as I make way downriver.

The approach to the Hardscrabble takeout is difficult to see from the river. Before the takeout, paddlers may see a bench or picnic table, but this is on private land. Some local river users told us that they look for a big vine that hangs off the shore just before the access. Sure enough, there is a large grape vine. There also are two large culverts at the inlet to the takeout, but these come into view just as the boat passes the landing. At this water level, I paddle back into the inlet and onto the landing just upstream of the large culverts.



Cottonwood river-left before Dayton Park

Songbirds are numerous and varied, with the species makeup changing as the river flows from forest to agricultural landscapes. Great blue herons, bald eagles, and turkey vultures are seen in all portions of the trip. Open areas have more song sparrows, red-winged blackbirds, dickcissels, bank swallows, red-headed woodpeckers, goldfinches, and killdeer. Belted kingfishers, eastern wood peewees, red-bellied woodpeckers, spotted sandpipers, American redstarts and other warblers are more common in wooded portions. Other bird species seen or heard include white-breasted nuthatch, black-capped chickadee, great-crested flycatcher, Acadian flycatcher, rough-winged swallow, barn swallow, cliff swallow, American robin, grey catbird, northern towhee, northern cardinal, mourning dove, house wren, yellow-throated warbler, yellow warbler, blue-gray gnatcatcher, warbling vireo, red-eyed vireo, yellow-throated vireo, common yellowthroat, house finch, indigo bunting, brown-headed cowbird, American crow, and wood duck.

A white-tailed deer was seen and raccoon tracks were noted. Fish and frog splashes were noted. Invertebrates included cabbage and sulfur butterflies, dragonflies, gnats, and mosquitoes. Mussel shells were not seen. It should be noted that with higher than normal water, observation of tracks, mussel shells, and other wildlife markings may be diminished.



Killdeer on sandbar

The upper stretch down to Pioneer Road has the most diverse forest, with hard maple, silver maple, black walnut, oaks, basswood, elm, cottonwood, and ironwood. Silver maple is more common as the river continues downstream, along with beach and black willows, boxelder, black walnut, cottonwood, elm, and mulberry, and other lowland forest trees. Other shoreline tree species include ash, elm, hard maple, burr oak, black willows, and cottonwood. Undergrowth along forested banks includes grape, Virginia creeper, and wild cucumber vines. Open areas have more mullein, giant ragweed, soapwort, cup plant, daisies, jewelweed, and grasses. Ninebark, grey dogwood, and elderberry are among the shrub species.

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Stream Reach #2 Accesses

Maquoketa River Access provides a grooved, concrete ramp on the left bank below the Delhi Dam. The ramp slope is gentle and the landing is good. There are no restrooms, water, or other amenities at the access. There is ample parking. There is a sign indicating that the stretch below the dam is managed by Iowa DNR for catch-and-release fishing for bass. The access and 10.9-acre area are managed by Delaware County Conservation Board, and includes a foot path that extends downstream along the shoreline for angler use. There is ample parking and area to turn around. The access lane is signed on 230th St. north of the Delhi Dam, and the address is 2624 230th Ave. Delhi, IA.



Retz Wildlife Management Area Access provides a good, short, concrete slab ramp, that is a bit steep. Boulders and concrete slabs are at the landing and either side of the ramp, and some flat rocks provide good footing for getting in and out of the water. The larger wildlife area is open to public hunting and has many wide, mowed trails. Fishing at and below the access on the river through Retz is managed as catch-and-release on all bass. The lane to Retz is off of Pioneer Road. There is a small road sign for Retz that is partially blocked by vegetation. There are mail boxes and address numbers at the turn to the lane, making it appear to be a private drive.



The access is a half-mile down the lane which ends at a turnaround drive around a big cottonwood tree. There is a somewhat steep downhill portion which likely gets rutted during large rain events. Paddlers can drop boats and gear at the ramp and then park vehicles about a hundred feet back up the lane at a very spacious parking lot. There are four well maintained parking lots along the lane, with the last being signed for the river access. The sign off Pioneer Road, and signs at each of the other three parking lots, make no mention that a river access exists down the lane. The park address is 2633 Pioneer Road, Delhi, Iowa.

Pioneer Road Access has a stairway access that ends abruptly at the shoreline, with no flat area for takeout. The stairway has a couple landings as it traverses down the bank, and is usable for most able-bodied adults to put in. It would be more difficult to do the takeout carry up the steps. The landing at the bottom steps was overgrown with trees, making the access not visible from upstream. There is a good circle drive and parking for a few vehicles. The parking area is fenced with a stairway access to carry over the fence to the start of the stairway. The area is signed as managed by Delaware County Conservation Board, but it is not listed on the Delaware County parks page of MyCountyParks.com. There is no restroom or other amenities. The access is located on Quarter Road, just off of Pioneer Road. There are park signs directing traffic from Highway 38, but no official water trail signs.



Dunlap Park Access provides a good, concrete boat ramp and landing. The rapids just upstream of the ramp were constructed during dam removal that was part of the project that replaced the SW Marion Street bridge in 2003. A concrete portage path provides the option to exit the river on the right shoreline before the bridge to bypass the rapids. The landing for the portage is earthen, not signed, and difficult to see. The portage path also connects to a sidewalk that goes to a picnic shelter and then to a paved trail that extends over the bridge. In addition to the picnic shelter and trail,



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the park offers a vault restroom, ample parking, and playground equipment. The park is signed from SW Marion St., and is managed by Delaware County Conservation Board. It is located at 311 Mill St., Hopkinton, Iowa.

Hardscrabble Wildlife Area Access provides a concrete boat ramp that ends short of the water at a mud landing of a small inlet, river-right. It is adjacent to two large culverts that divert water under 275th Avenue, a gravel road that comes right to the boat ramp. The access is not signed and difficult to see from the water upstream. There is parking on either side of the road near the boat ramp for a few vehicles. There also is a bench near the ramp. The Hardscrabble Wildlife Area is not signed until at the ramp, and when taking 275th Avenue to the access, paddlers will pass private land along the river that is park-like (mowed with benches and picnic table). The access is near the dead-end of 275th Avenue, which has lots of potholes. There are no restrooms or other amenities.



Recommended experience classification:

Due to the absence of signage, likelihood of riffles, difficulty to find landings from the water, a mid-river island with blind decisions choosing which side to paddle, decisions regarding rapids near Dayton Park, and a somewhat difficult access at Pioneer Road Access, this section is appropriate for paddlers with at least an intermediate level of experience. Distances between accesses does allow for shorter paddling trips.

Delhi Dam to Retz Park - **Intermediate**

Retz Park to Dunlap Park: **Advanced**

Dunlap Park to Hardscrabble: **Intermediate**



Family of paddlers departs large sandbar before big island



View downstream of 295th Street bridge as the river winds toward Hopkinton

BE SAFE OUT THERE!

Follow these safety TIPS to keep your trip enjoyable:

- ◆ Pack only essentials and keep them in waterproof bags.
- ◆ Check the river water levels and currents before each trip.
- ◆ Know the weather forecast, including areas upstream, and stay aware of the weather on your trip.
- ◆ Make sure someone knows your planned entry and exit points and estimated times.
- ◆ Always wear a properly-fit life jacket.
- ◆ Expect overhanging trees, logjams, and other obstacles, such as bridge abutments or big rocks. If paddling around them is not possible, get out and portage around them. Grabbing onto tree branches may capsize your paddlecraft.
- ◆ Always portage around lowhead dams. Surface appearance can be deceiving. Undercurrents can be strong enough for drowning.
- ◆ If you capsize, remain on the upstream side of your boat to prevent being pinned.
- ◆ Dress appropriately for weather conditions (including air and water temperatures), and avoid weather and water conditions beyond your skill level.

KNOW YOUR SKILL LEVEL!

BEGINNER

Segments are generally less than six miles. Hazards are few and easy to avoid in normally slow-moving currents. Users can easily access these segments from parking areas, and will not need to portage, except to walk a boat around some shallow riffles or to make going around an obstacle easier.

INTERMEDIATE

Segments are generally less than nine miles. Users should be able to recognize and avoid hazards in moderate river flow. The need to portage is rare, but users should be able and willing to carry boats and gear a short distance. Access to the river may involve a short portage, and the launch or take-out may be a bit difficult.

ADVANCED

Segments may exceed nine miles. Hazards are likely and often occur in fast-moving water. The need to portage may be frequent or may involve carrying boats and gear a long distance. Access to the river may involve a portage, and the launch or take-out may be from steeper banks or faster moving water.

BEHAVE AS A GUEST!

- ◆ Respect private property. Only use public lands and access points.
- ◆ Be considerate of others in your group and on the banks.
- ◆ Give anglers a wide berth.
- ◆ Never change clothes in public view.
- ◆ Never litter. Always pack out trash.
- ◆ Do not disturb wildlife.

For more information, visit:

www.iowadnr.gov/Things-to-Do/Canoeing-Kayaking/How-to-Paddle

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