

# PADDLERS SHARE ADVENTURE

Canoes, kayaks join 10-day trip on Housatonic

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REPUBLICAN-AMERICAN

CORNWALL — Those taking part in the Housatonic Valley Association's Source to Sound Paddle Trip agreed it was a beautiful day to paddle down the river after completing day five on Wednesday.

The trip's leaders and some of the boaters gathered in West Cornwall as one of the accompanying river celebrations was going on at the shore.

"We've had a lot of interest this year," said Dennis Regan, one of the expert paddlers leading the 10-day, 150-mile trip. "We had more than 100 joining us for sections of the trip."

The journey started at Hinsdale Flats near Pittsfield, Mass.; meandered through flood plains in Sheffield, Mass., and then steered through the rocky rapids of Cornwall. Next it will proceed across three lakes, ride the tidal waters in Derby and end Sunday at Long Island Sound in Stratford.

Regan, HVA's Berkshire director, said it looked like low tide when they traversed Hinsdale Flats and they hit 31 beaver dams.

The rain on Tuesday brought up the water level and helped to keep them moving.

"At times the river does most of the work," said Michael Nesbitt of Salisbury, an association board member doing a few days of paddling.

The flotilla is made up of both canoes and kayaks, and participants of all skill levels take part, depending on the conditions of the river. Joe Ruggerio, a software developer from Southbury and civilian leader, talked about the great bird sightings, including the American bittern and the black crown night heron.

"And lots of hawks," Regan added. "And the sunbirds were spectacular."

Regan said the pace depended on location and conditions. He especially enjoyed meeting the people who joined at certain sections. Paddlers moving along tributaries met up with the crew to help highlight partnerships that are protecting the vari-



PHOTOS BY RUTH EPSTEIN, REPUBLICAN-AMERICAN

Participants in the Housatonic Valley Association's Source to Sound Paddle Trip end Day 5 Wednesday in Cornwall, where one of the river celebrations took place. From left are Michael Nesbitt of the HVA board; Joe Ruggiero, civilian leader; expert paddlers Schuyler Thomson and Dennis Regan, who are leading the trip; and participant Seamus McKeon. Absent from the photo is David Sinish, the third expert/lead paddler.



Amelia deNeergaard explains the replica of an eagle's nest she built on the shore of the Housatonic River during Housatonic Valley Association's education program Wednesday in Cornwall.

ous waterways.

"This is a great way to showcase what a great resource the Housatonic River is," he said.

Seamus McKeon of New Milford said people of all ages have joined them during the adventure, including a group of students from Berkshire Country Day School.

"We've had young and old," McKeon said. "It's really very invigorating."

He said sometimes the off-shore logistics, such as park-

ing and off loading, are more difficult than the trip.

At the start in Hinsdale, the water was only as wide as the boats, they said. What a difference it will be when they reach Long Island Sound with its salt water and waves.

"The transition is phenomenal," Regan said.

He explained the whole trip is planned around the outgoing tide at the sound. So far, they've had to circumvent a few sections because of low water levels.

The two other expert leaders are David Sinish, a kayak/canoe instructor and former National Canoe Poling champion; and Schuyler Thomson, owner of Thomson Canoe Works in Norfolk and a former two-time national white-water downriver canoe champion.

The trip can be followed by visiting the association's Source to Sound Tumblr page at [hvas2s.tumblr.com](http://hvas2s.tumblr.com).

The HVA riverside adventure was going on when the paddlers ended their day. Students from Cornwall Consolidated and Sharon Center schools were taking part in various activities arranged by coordinator Maria Grace. Artist Amelia deNeergaard built a life-size eagle's nest of twigs and sticks, and explained to the youngsters the habits of eagles.

"I wanted people to see just how big these nests are," she said.

While hers is a bit smaller, the average size is 3 feet high by 6 feet wide.

Other activities included learning about the food chain and classifying aquatic invertebrates.

The program was co-sponsored by the West Cornwall Library with funding assistance from the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation.

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