

Chautauqua Watershed Notes
From the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy
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Exploring the Outlet
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For the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy



Good friends M.G. Brustrom and Joyce Wiltsie enjoy kayaking through the trees early in the spring in Chautauqua Lake's Outlet. (Photo by Sue Weaver)

It's good to try new things, especially when it involves playing outside. Since moving here in 1999, I've only ventured into the outlet of Chautauqua Lake to kayak or motorboat either during the summer or on a warm autumn day. This year, I decided to try something new. I kayaked in the early spring and hiked in the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy's Outlet Greenway Preserve.

Burtis Bay was still covered with ice when my friend, Joyce, called bubbling with excitement about kayaking in the outlet with our mutual friend M. G. Eager to join the fun, I put my baby kayak into my car, drove to McCrea Point and paddled up the Chadakoin to join them. The water was quite high - flooding the area and adding to the adventure. What a hoot! We were able to kayak beyond the banks of the river. The water wasn't very deep, but deep enough to allow us to glide in among the trees. We scooted here and there, exploring many wet and wonderful places. Our travels took us up canals, not navigable other times of the year. It was a grand day. My only disappointment was not seeing very many migratory birds, like the tundra swan. Even though, I did see a few skittery buffleheads and a chittering kingfisher.

Before this year, I had never thought about hiking in the Outlet. The land looked too swampy and uninviting. So, when M.G. suggested we go for a walk, I was intrigued with

the idea. M.G. grew up in Fluvanna and was familiar with the area. She, her sister, Sandy, and friends used to play on some of the property that now is part of the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy's 80-acre Outlet Greenway Preserve near Denslow Avenue.

To access the CWC land, we entered the preserve off Old Fluvanna Road where there's a path for a short distance. Then, we had to meander through a swampy area and we finally ended up on the shore of Chautauqua Lake. From there, we hiked west and took Denslow Avenue to the old JW Railroad bed. Walking along the bed, we went past a turtle pond. Then, lo and behold, we ran into Sandy and her grandson on the trail.

I needed to leave but I was determined to experience more of the Outlet. So, I convinced my son Cory to join me on a nature walk the following weekend. Cory's not the nature lover I am, so I was glad he agreed to go. We packed tall rubber boots, Nordic walking poles, sunglasses, bug spray and water bottles into the car and off we went. We had to trudge through the woods for a while to get to the JW Railway bed. Following the bed, we plodded along, observing the moss covered fallen red maple and hemlock logs in the swampy area and the emerging green skunk cabbage. Luckily there were no bugs. We saw a few painted turtles and one little water snake. I was glad Cory was with me and that we had our walking poles. In this area, you need to use good common sense, carry a cell phone, stay on the trail and always hike with a buddy.

A few days later, I decided to stop in to the CWC office on North Main Street in Jamestown to get some information. John Jablonski was very helpful and showed me maps of the Outlet Greenway Preserve. Next time, I'm going to access the preserve closer to the city off Rt. 430. The CWC has a parking area and blue blazed trail under construction, which will be open for use in a few weeks. I was told to look for the beige and green Chautauqua Lake Outlet Preserve sign adjacent to the road at 3085 Fluvanna Avenue Extension. When I go again, I'll be prepared and with a friend, because by land or by "sea" the Outlet is an amazing place to be!

The Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy is a local 501(c)(3) not-for-profit, public benefit corporation supported primarily by membership donations. Its mission is to preserve and enhance the water quality, scenic beauty and ecological health of the lakes, streams and watersheds of the Chautauqua region. For more information, or to support these efforts, please call 716-664-2166 or go to www.chautauquawatershed.org.