

Backyard Briefs

A weekly column

By Judy Jessop, A Nature Conservancy Volunteer

I have good news for those of you that frequent the Roanoke River Canoe Trail. Platform number four, Bear Run, is completed. It is now available to reserve for a mild winter's night on the river. This platform is so named because there were occasional signs of black bear observed nearby while the platform was being constructed.

Tucked back among a stand of wild rice, about three miles upriver from Plymouth, this new platform has a sweeping view of a lovely bend in the river. As you stand at the end of the dock and look upstream the wild rice sweeps away from you up the west side toward the river bend. A small island seems to float before you. Its trees, now dormant, stretch delicate branches, in lacy silhouette on the broad expanse of sky.

Jeff Horton, of the Nature Conservancy's Roanoke River Project Office, has already camped there with his son Hamish. Once during the night they were awakened by the rustling and thrashing of an animal either fishing or hunting for tasty tidbits in the wild rice. They sat saucer eyed in their tent upon Bear Run platform wondering—was it a raccoon, otter, a mink, or perhaps... Well, whatever the critter might have been, it meandered off in a short period of time, leaving Jeff and Hamish to drift slowly back into sleep. The next morning they were awakened by another ruckus. Upon crawling out of their tent they were rewarded by a flock of 50 or so Canadian geese, in honking V's, as they skimmed the treetops that were just behind the platform. The geese were so close the sleepy campers could feel the breath of their wings.

Because this new platform is poised near the mouth of the Roanoke, just above the busy town of Plymouth, you cannot escape the occasional sounds of humanity. However, if you like a bit of variety why not put in at the Sans Souci and paddle down to Bear Run for the night, then move on to discover the colorful history of Plymouth. As you paddle you will be passing over sunken ships with much to tell of our revolution and historic battles of the Civil War. Platform reservations are required so be sure to call ahead, 252-794-6501.