

Adirondack Daily Enterprise

Beyond the fog: A morning paddle on Osgood

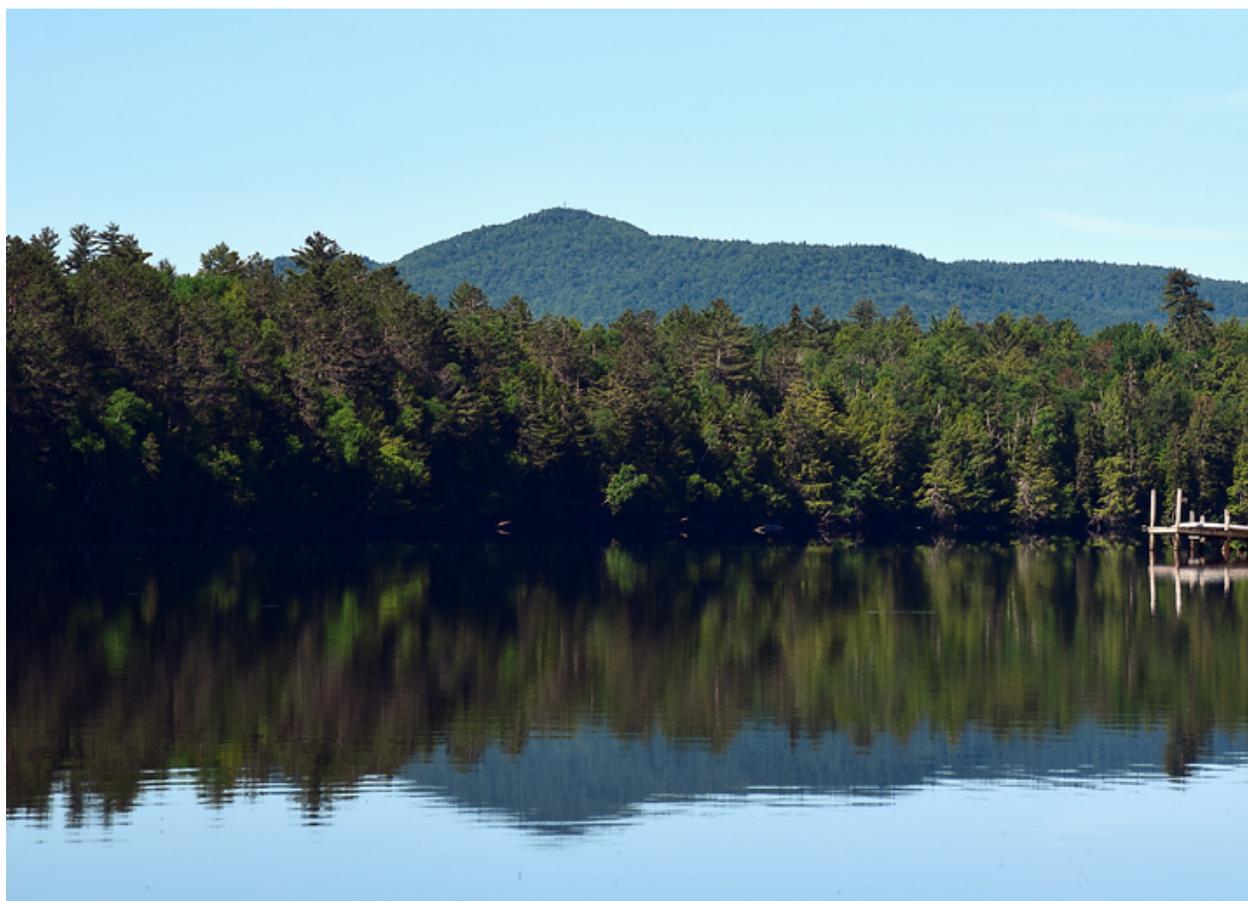
It was so foggy that we basically paddled until we saw land in front of us and then turned. Sure, I could have gotten out the map and compass, but that's no fun. So as Aaron and I made our way into the gray, we kept an eye out for land and only had to make a couple of course corrections before hitting the mouth of the Osgood River.

I had been hoping to snap some photos of the fabled White Pine Camp tea house in the morning mist, but the fog was so thick that we pretty much hugged the north shore of the pond in our blind search for the river.

Aaron and I had no real plan, other than to venture up the river for a ways until we couldn't go any farther. So that's what we did.

We hit the water a little after 6 a.m., and by the time the sun came over the trees we were already into the river. The fog began to burn off, and as the visibility went from just a few feet to almost normal, we were treated with some neat sights.

Spiders had created virtual cities of webs, strung between aquatic plants sticking out of the water. The lingering mist, combined with the dew-covered webs and little streams of light, made for an interesting look at these killing factories.



St. Regis Mountain and its 100-year-old fire tower stand sentinel over Osgood Pond. (Enterprise photo — Justin A. Levine)

The river was plenty wide, and in turns shallow or deep. We passed over a few ancient remnants of beaver dams and easily picked our way through fields of lily pads and stands of pickerel weed. About 2 miles from the boat launch, I saw some movement on the left bank and we stopped paddling to watch a mink make its way through the brush and dead sticks.

After another three-quarters of a mile or so, the river began to narrow, and we scared a great blue heron from its fishing spot. The heron made us well aware of its displeasure as it made a sound I could only describe as grunting while flying away. The bird, which seemed large even for a great blue, made a leisurely circle, grunting the whole way. I would see the bird again on our way out, but it took off long before we got close.

At the 3.34-mile mark, we hit a fork in the river, and again decided to forsake the map and just pick a way. We chose left and started picking our way down the much narrower river. We were going with the current, which

until this point had been unnoticeable and remained pretty much a non-factor.

After almost another mile, where we heard plenty of songbirds and had a gray jay buzz the canoe, the faint sound of rushing water came floating through the woods. We paddled a little farther and found the river blocked by a line of rocks that created a small waterfall. With the sun well overhead and other deadlines to work on, Aaron and I decided that was as good a place as any to turn around.

Despite paddling against the current, the way back to Osgood Pond was easy going. With the fog totally gone, the views of dead trees and bright green tamaracks were beautiful.

When we reached the pond again, it was a whole new world. The famous long bridge and tea house of White Pine Camp came into view on our left, and we paddled the shallow shore over that way before hanging a right and making our way back toward the boat launch.

A pair of loons fished while we went past, and a man enjoyed morning coffee at White Pine Camp, which started out as an Adirondack great camp and during one summer hosted Calvin Coolidge when he was president.

According to a 1987 article in the Enterprise, Coolidge came to the camp three days after his birthday, arriving at the Gabriels train station on July 7, 1926.

–Calvin Coolidge was an avid fisherman and he planned to take full advantage of the opportunities at his doorstep,” the article says. “Both bass and pike were available in Osgood Pond, and he enjoyed a standing invitation from William Rockefeller to fish the trout streams coursing his private park at nearby Bay Pond. Orman Doty of Rainbow Lake and Oscar Otis, who was Kirkwood’s [White Pine Camp’s owner] caretaker, served as guides on the fishing expeditions. The two local men agreed that Coolidge was not only a good fisherman but a kind and considerate companion as well.

–Quite naturally the fishing had to be constantly interrupted by national affairs.“

Our pleasant time on Osgood was also interrupted. For me, it was the Lake Placid Horse Show and for Aaron it was the NY21 primary. But maybe we'll be back to follow a little more closely in Silent Cal's waders.



St. Regis Mountain and its 100-year-old fire tower stand sentinel over Osgood Pond. (Enterprise photo — Justin A. Levine)
