



Paddle stations: Green River Reservoir, 'quiet lake' ponds offer peaceful paddling

STORY & PHOTOGRAPHS / Kate Carter

Sitting in a canoe in the middle of a pond as the morning mist rises off the water and a loon calls in the distance can leave you feeling so calm and peaceful that for a brief moment you actually believe everything is right with the world. Soon you head back to shore and get on with your day, but that peaceful feeling lingers, and you find yourself wishing you were back in your canoe, sitting in the middle of that pond, hoping that loon will call out to his mate again.

Maybe this time his mate will answer.

Many Vermont lakes and ponds offer this sort of surreal paddling experience. North of Morrisville, Green River Reservoir and several smaller ponds have "quiet lake" designation under the Vermont use of public waters rules. This means no internal combustion motors—no motorboats, speedboats, jet skis, or float planes. Thus no air pollution,

noise pollution, or rolling wakes. Paddling on these ponds on a quiet morning or a warm calm evening is true bliss.

If you'd like a quiet and peaceful paddling experience, we recommend taking your canoe or kayak to one of these lakes or ponds.

Green River Reservoir

State-owned Green River Reservoir is heaven on water for canoeists and kayakers. Located in the towns of Hyde Park and Eden, its 653 acres include the longest stretch of undeveloped shoreline in Vermont—19 miles to be exact. With its numerous coves, thickly wooded banks, and few landmarks, it's easy to lose your bearings on the water. If you're not familiar with the area you could spend an entire day paddling the perimeter, searching for your launch site.

When the state purchased the reservoir and its surround-

IN THE MIST Clockwise from left: Caro Thompson on an evening paddle on Green River Reservoir. A loon and its chick. Orah Moore and fall foliage on Green River Reservoir.

ing 5,113 acres of land from Morrisville Water and Light Department in March 1999, they agreed to retain the reservoir's wild and undeveloped condition, with only low-impact use allowed on and around the reservoir. They promised it would not become a "typical" state park.

So far, that promise has mostly been kept. The state limited parking to only the launch site, and the number of camping sites was reduced from 60 to 30. A few years ago, with help from Friends of Green River Reservoir, a non-profit group of private citizens dedicated to preserving the wilderness-like quality of the park, the state built an information kiosk, a solar-powered contact station, and an ADA-accessible trail. In 2010, to help offset expenses, they began charging a day use fee: \$3/person; \$2/for kids under age 14; and free to those age 3 and under. These changes put an end to the free-for-all environmentally destructive behavior that occurred when campers and paddlers visited the reservoir in earlier years.

Green River Reservoir sees approximately 6,400 overnight campers and 4,500 day visitors each year. That might sound like a lot, but if you go early on a weekday morning, chances are you'll have the place to yourself, at least for an hour or two.

GETTING THERE: From Stowe Village go north on Route 100 to Morrisville. At the traffic light continue straight. At the fork stay left onto Route 15A. At the intersection of Route 15, turn right and take the first left onto Garfield Road. Go 3 miles. At the T-intersection go right, then left onto Green River Dam Road. At the end of the road, pay the fee at the Vermont State Park entrance kiosk. Total distance from Stowe is about 16 miles.

Zack Woods, Perch, and Mud ponds

In January, the state acquired 393 acres known as Zack Woods, located in Morrisville near the southeast finger of Green River Reservoir. The land was added to Green River Reservoir State Park. The Trust for Public Land and the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation facilitated the transaction.

Zack Woods has 11 small undeveloped bodies of water, including Zack Woods Pond and Perch Pond. These two ponds are connected by a narrow water path, and fishermen will find on both ponds a variety of fish, including yellow perch, bullhead, and largemouth bass. The smallest of the three, Mud Pond, is a few hundred yards south of Zack Woods and Perch ponds, on the other side of the Zack Woods Road.

There is a small island on Zack Woods Pond where loons have been nesting since 1996, some years successfully, others years not. Please maintain a respectful distance from loons when paddling on the pond, and if a loon vocalizes as you approach, please back off. All three ponds are small and have undeveloped shorelines that are interesting to explore.

GETTING THERE: Access to all three ponds is from Zack Woods Road in Garfield. From Stowe, follow the directions above to Green River Reservoir. Instead of turning left onto Green River Dam Road, turn right, staying on Garfield Road. Go 1.6 miles and turn right on Zack Woods Road. Go less than a half mile and turn left on a jeep road that leads to a small parking area and access to Zack Woods Pond. Or continue a hundred yards farther on Zack Woods Road and take a jeep road on the right for access to Mud Pond. Or continue along Zack Woods Road, which becomes West Hill Road, and take the jeep road on the left for access to Perch Pond.

Great Hosmer Pond

A large pond worth a visit is a bit farther afield. Great Hosmer Pond in Craftsbury is about 30 miles north of Stowe. The Craftsbury Outdoor Center holds instructional rowing camps on this pond during the summer and fall, and numerous houses dot the shoreline, so it's not as remote as Green River Reservoir and the smaller ponds mentioned above. Nevertheless it's a pretty pond, long and narrow, running south to north. The fishing is good for largemouth bass, pickerel, and perch. Paddlers will find the beautiful white fragrant water lily and their plate-sized leaves floating on the surface during July and early August.

GETTING THERE: Follow the directions above for Green River Reservoir. After turning right on Route 15, continue on Route 15 approximately 4 miles and turn left onto North Wolcott

Road. Go 8.5 miles and at the T-intersection turn left on Route 14. Take the first right onto Post Road. At the four-way intersection continue straight and then go left onto Wylie Hill Road. Take the first right onto Mill Village Road. In a half mile bear left to stay on Mill Village Road (Little Hosmer Pond is on the left). After 0.7 miles turn right onto Lost Nation Road. Drive past the Craftsbury Outdoor Center buildings until the road goes downhill. On the left is a public access point to Great Hosmer Pond. Total distance from Stowe is about 30 miles. ■