

Maquoketa RIVER

PADDLER'S GUIDE



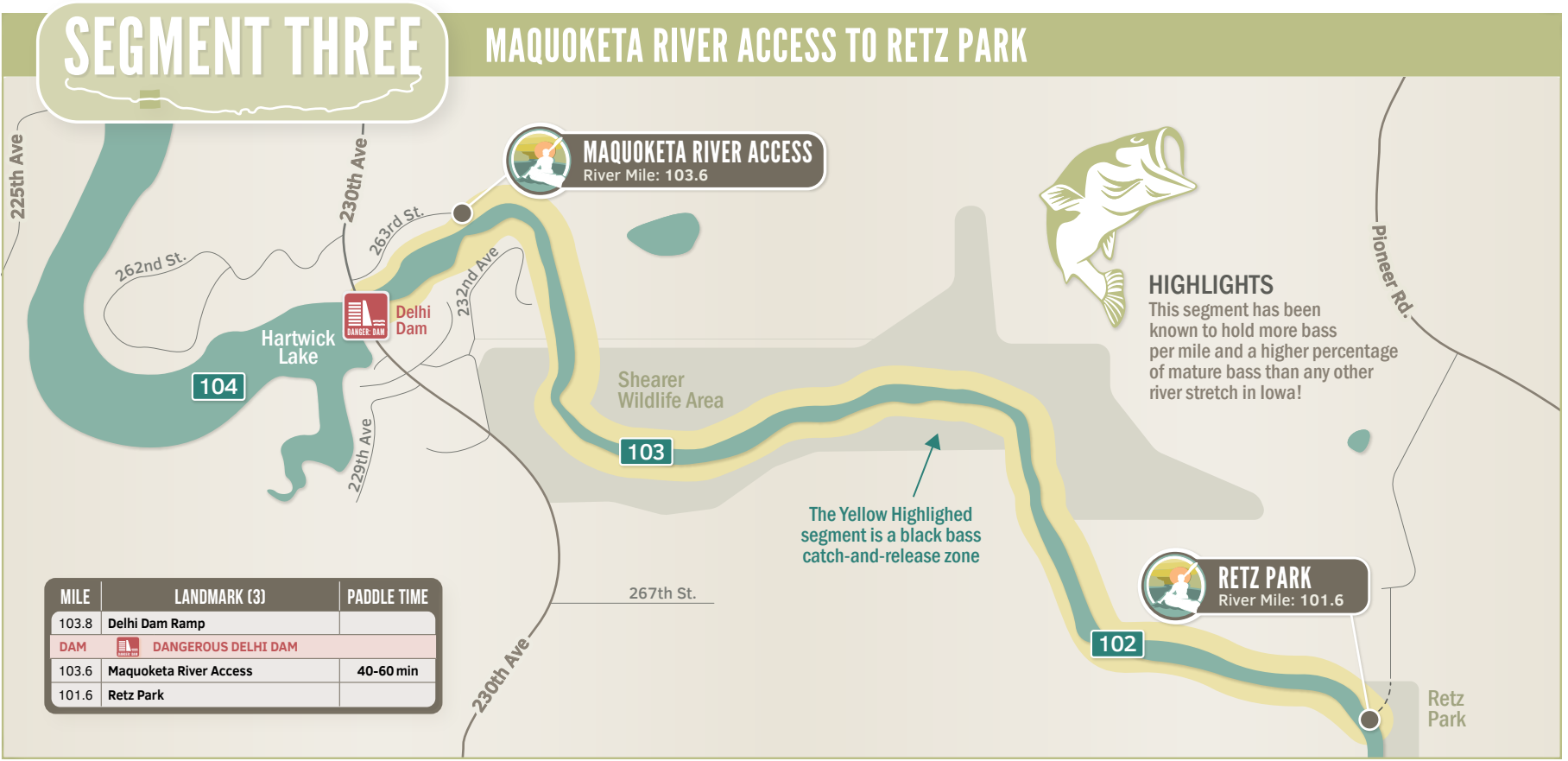
Welcome to the MAQUOKETA RIVER

Welcome to the Maquoketa River! This premier recreational river and corridor provides paddlers with the ultimate experience for sight-seeing, fishing, birding, camping, hiking, wildlife-watching, or a relaxing float on this gentle-flowing, intimate river. Enjoy the stunning views of the lushly forested banks that open to a wide river channel encompassed by limestone bluffs peeking through deeply wooded hillsides. Peer into the underwater ecosystem, home to a diverse mix of fish species and invertebrates on the backdrop of the riverbed that transitions from sand and pebble, to large rock substrate. The headwaters can be found in Fayette County near Arlington and will travel 150 miles through Delaware, Jones, and Jackson County before it finally enters the Mississippi River River downstream of Bellevue, Iowa. As the river traverses the diverse landscape of Eastern Iowa it will pass through several Iowa treasures, Backbone State Park, Manchester Whitewater Course, Lake Delhi, Indian Bluffs and Pictured Rocks County Parks, Maquoketa Caves State Park, finally reaching the Upper Mississippi River Wildlife and Fish Refuge.

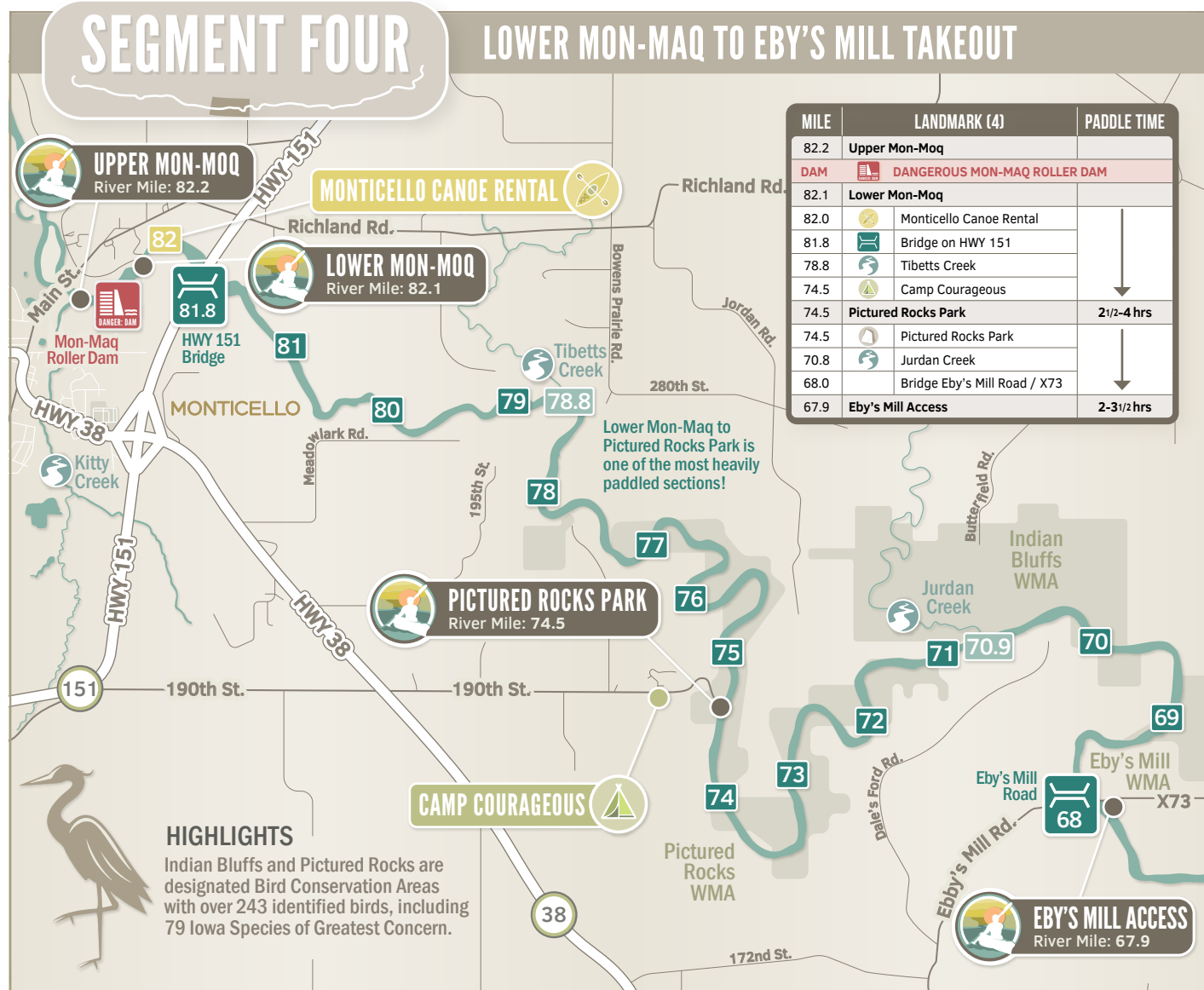


SEGMENT ONE: LINDSEY BRIDGE TO MANCHESTER WHITewater PARK This segment of the river starts downstream of Backbone State Park, Iowa's first state park dedicated in 1920 and still one of the most scenic and popular parks in the State. The dam that forms Backbone Lake contributes to this segment of the river feeling smaller and more rugged as trees hug and overhang the narrower channel. Paddlers will gently meander downstream through stretches of deeply wooded areas opening into peaceful, pastoral views. The tranquility of the upper stretch of this segment will eventually give way to more active waters as it runs into the heart of the charming town of Manchester, home to one of Iowa's 3 whitewater courses in the state. The course consists of six 18-inch drops and spans over 800 feet in length on the river. Note: During times of higher flow, tubers and recreational kayakers should ensure that water flow on the course is below 250 cfs (cubic feet per second) via waterdata.usgs.gov. Be sure to explore the historic City of Manchester, filled with delightful shops and tasty dining options located near the river access.

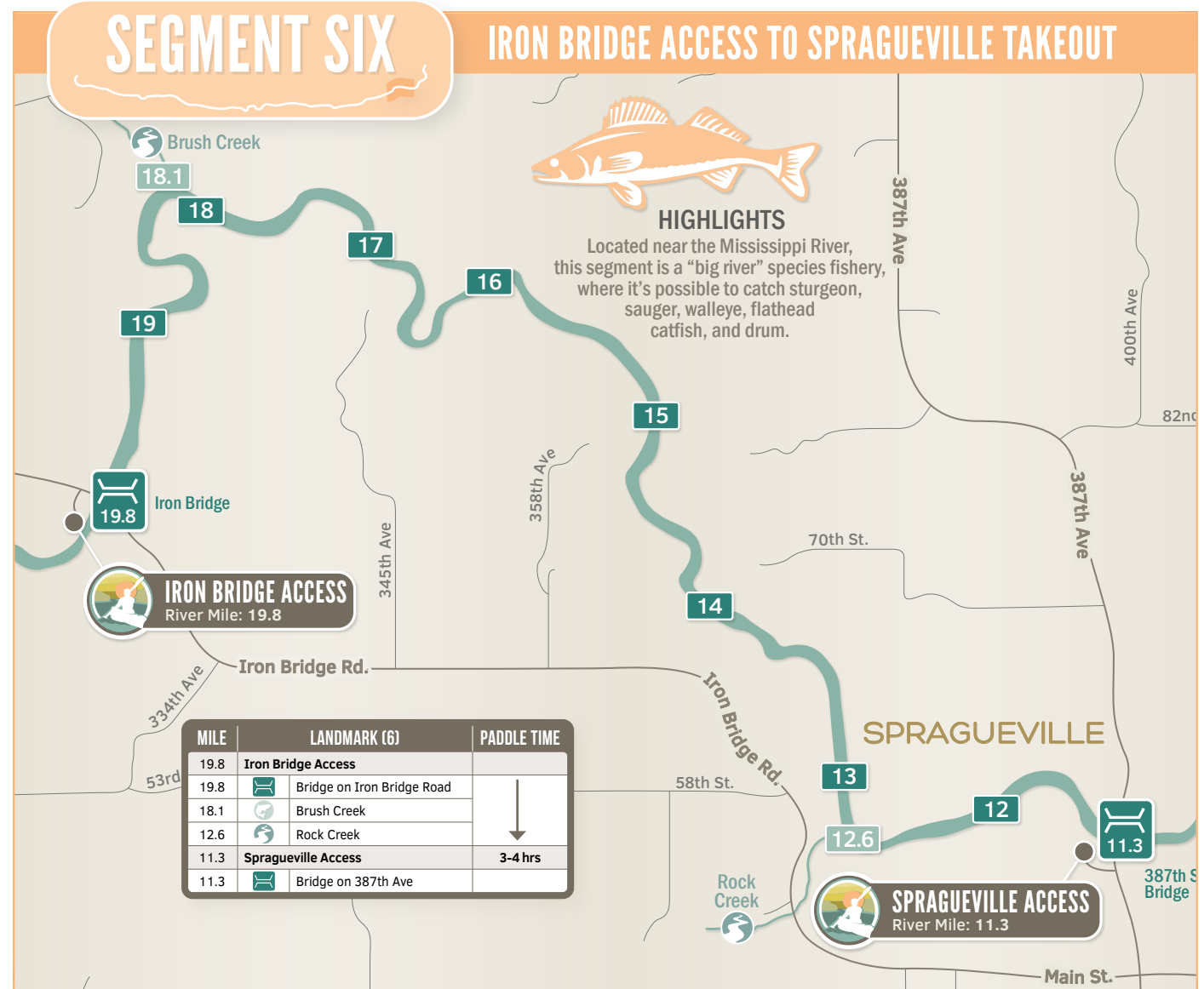
Photos courtesy of Larry Reis



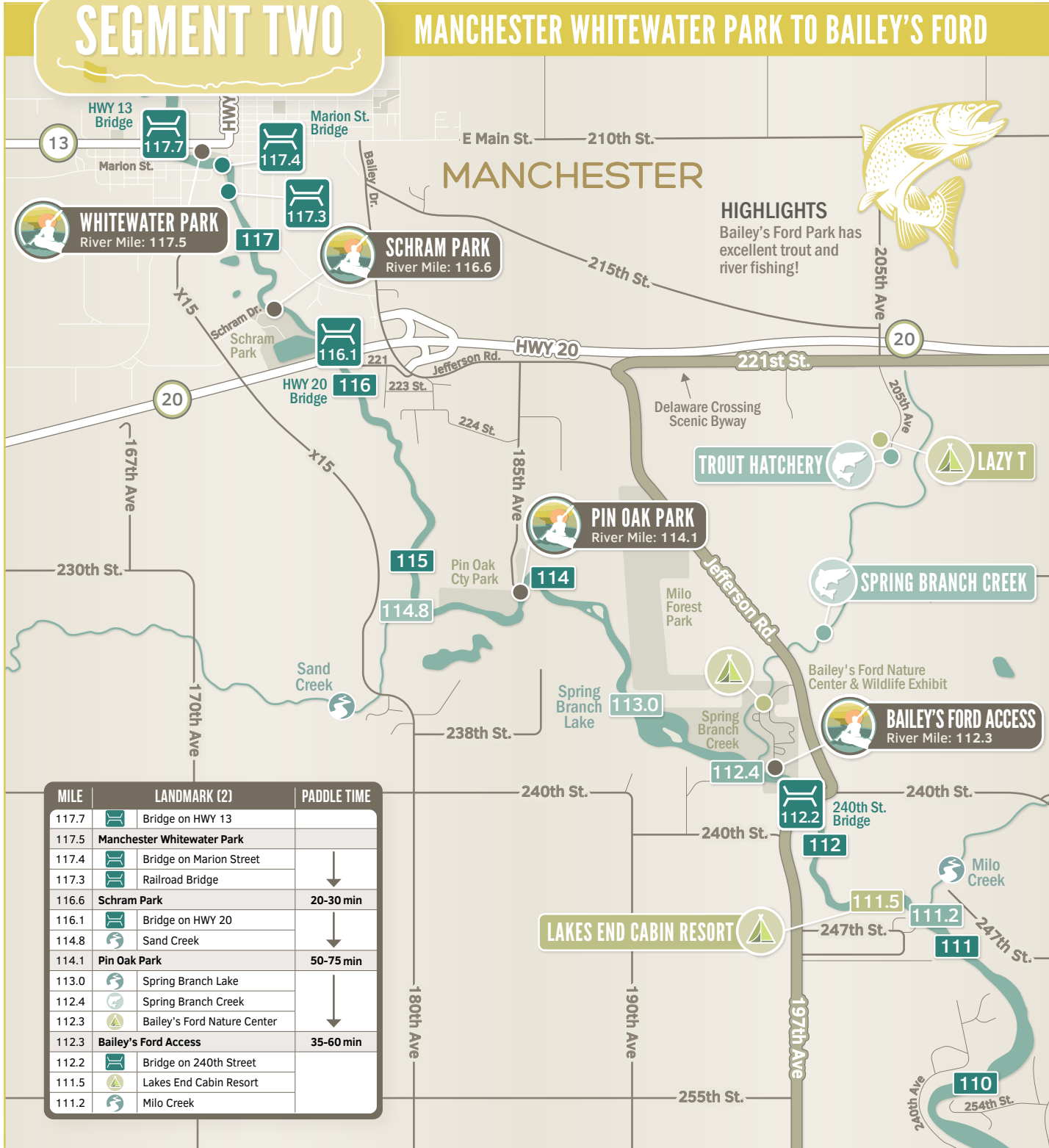
SEGMENT FOUR: MAQUOKETA RIVER ACCESS TO RETZ PARK This short segment of the Maquoketa River begins just east of Hartwick Dam which forms Lake Delhi, a 448-acre man-made reservoir and a favorite recreational area for camping, boating, and fishing. This section provides a great opportunity for wildlife-watching while you drift through the rough, but beautifully wooded section of bluffs and valleys. The river passes through the large Shearer Wildlife Area and ends at the Lyle Retz Memorial County Park providing a long stretch of public access adjacent to the river. This section of the river and associated corridor are known for rewarding hiking, birdwatching, and hunting opportunities as well as fantastic fishing for both recreational and experienced anglers. The county managed sections contribute to habitat features conducive to catching a view of Iowa's common wildlife, while numerous fish species including crappie, bluegill, catfish, sunfish, large and smallmouth bass, northern pike, and walleye also thrive in this segment of the river.



SEGMENT FOUR: LOWER MON-MAQ TO PICTURED ROCKS PARK For an all-weekend adventure, try the 14.2-mile route from Lower Mon-Maq Dam to Eby's Mill Wildlife Area. This heavily paddled section of the Maquoketa River is also one of the more scenic. At the start of this segment, river users will experience slow meanders through a mix of pasture, farmlands and bottomlands dotted by picturesque farmsteads. As the river continues through this pristine segment, a series of straight passes and sharp turns dramatically define the river. The iconic limestone face of Pictured Rock and Indian Bluffs not only provide an amazing view, but is also the perfect locale to look for a number of the 243 species of birds recorded in this recently recognized Bird Conservation Area. At any one time grassland, woodland, and migrating species can be spotted, including prairie natives like Eastern meadowlark and bobolink, savanna birds like red-headed woodpeckers and state endangered barn owls, and declining forest birds like wood thrush and Eastern whip-poor-will. For a majority of this extended route paddlers will witness wooded limestone bluffs that provide breathtaking sights, especially in full autumn color.



SEGMENT SIX: IRON BRIDGE ACCESS TO SPRAGUEVILLE TAKEOUT As the Maquoketa River approaches the Mississippi River, the channel widens providing expansive vistas of the gorgeous Maquoketa River Valley. The scenery in this section is less wooded than the upper segments, with large portions bordered by seasonal cropland and picturesque farmsteads distinguished by panoramic views of blue sky. This segment of the river is calm and quiet with many opportunities to stop at a sandbar for a bite to eat or to throw in a line. Although there are still many meanders throughout this section of the river, the wider basin makes it a good choice during low flow times of the year. Anglers have diverse fishing options as they begin to find a "big river" species fishery, including sturgeon, sauger, flathead catfish, and drum, while Brush Creek, a Maquoketa River tributary, is a DNR seasonally stocked trout stream (April, May, June, September & October), providing the opportunity to find a rainbow trout in the river as well. Some paddlers may wish to continue their aquatic adventure on the mighty Mississippi, which is only 15 miles away from the take out at Spragueville. Explore the Mississippi backwaters or one of the many quaint river towns along Iowa's Great River Road.



SEGMENT TWO: WHITewater PARK TO BAILEY'S FORD For a slightly more challenging segment, paddler's can begin a trip at the Manchester Whitewater Park, the largest whitewater course in Iowa. Once through the rapids, the river eases past tree-lined banks as it traverses near and along multiple public areas, Pin Oak, Milo Forest, and Spring Branch Creek, which all provide excellent options for hiking and fishing. This stretch of river contains several riffles that are shallow and can be challenging to maneuver, particularly at lower flows. The Bailey's Ford river access appears on the right side after a 5.2 mile float. The Bailey's Ford Nature Center and Wildlife Exhibit can be found at this access along with a number of campsites and amenities. The Manchester Fish Hatchery, which started raising fish in 1890 and now produces over 600,000 trout for stocking in Iowa's coldwater streams, is also only a few miles away from the take-out.



SEGMENT FIVE: HWY 136 ACCESS TO ROYERTOWN TAKEOUT Vertical limestone bluffs, river bends, and a wide forested corridor return in this segment after Supplies Access. The presence of a wide variety of birds and wildlife in beautiful hardwood forests abounds along the corridor. As paddlers approach the unincorporated village of Canton they will witness towering bluffs and a continued wild river setting. Continuing downstream the river is again bordered by wooded bluffs that are occasionally dotted with caves common throughout the area. The river then passes along the Buzzard Ridge Wildlife Area and Pine Valley Nature Area. There is easy access from the river to the Buzzard Ridge Wildlife Area creating exploring, hunting, and camping opportunities. Smallmouth bass, walleye and channel catfish are the most common fish species found through this segment, but fortunate anglers may also hook into northern pike, sauger, and flathead catfish. The takeout just upstream of the 50th Ave. (County Rd. Y34) bridge is located just a few miles away from the remarkable Maquoketa Caves State Park, a must visit for hiking, cave exploring, and beautiful scenery.

MAQUOKETA RIVER SEGMENT MAP LEGEND

- Maquoketa River
- Canoe Access
- Public Land/WMA
- WARNING: Dam
- Bridge with Maquoketa River Mile
- Maquoketa River Mile
- Campground
- Livery/Outfitter
- Geologic Feature
- Family Fun
- Coldwater Trout Stream
- Streams & Creeks
- Paddle Time: Based on 2-3 mph

**Effort was made to assure the accuracy of information in this publication. Northeast Iowa RC&D and its partners assume no responsibility in its use.*

RESPECT THE RIVER

Rules & Regulations: Below are guidelines to help you paddle the Maquoketa River. However, it is not a complete list of all paddling regulations so always be sure laws haven't changed. For more information, visit www.iowadnr.gov or contact the DNR Central Office in Des Moines at 515-725-8200.

- Respect Private Property:** Understanding the difference between meandering vs non-meandering streams is the responsibility of all river users. River mile 131.6 to the headwaters is considered a non-meandering river meaning river users only have the right to float on the water surface. The stream bed and banks are private property.
- Plan Ahead:** Prepare for extreme weather, hazards, & emergencies.
- Travel & Camp on Durable Surfaces:** Visit in small groups (4-6) and only camp at designated campsites on public land.
- Dispose of Waste Properly:** Pack it in, pack it out.
- Leave What You Find:** Leave rocks & plants where you found them.
- Minimize Campfire Impacts:** Be sure to put out fires completely and only light a fire when they are permitted.
- Respect Wildlife:** Observe wildlife from a distance, do not approach.
- Be Considerate of Other Visitors:** Respect residents and other visitors and protect the quality of their experience.
- Boat Registration:** Required if canoes/kayaks are over 13 feet.
- Life Jackets Save Lives:** From the National Safe Boating Council, be ready for the unexpected by ALWAYS wearing your life jacket.

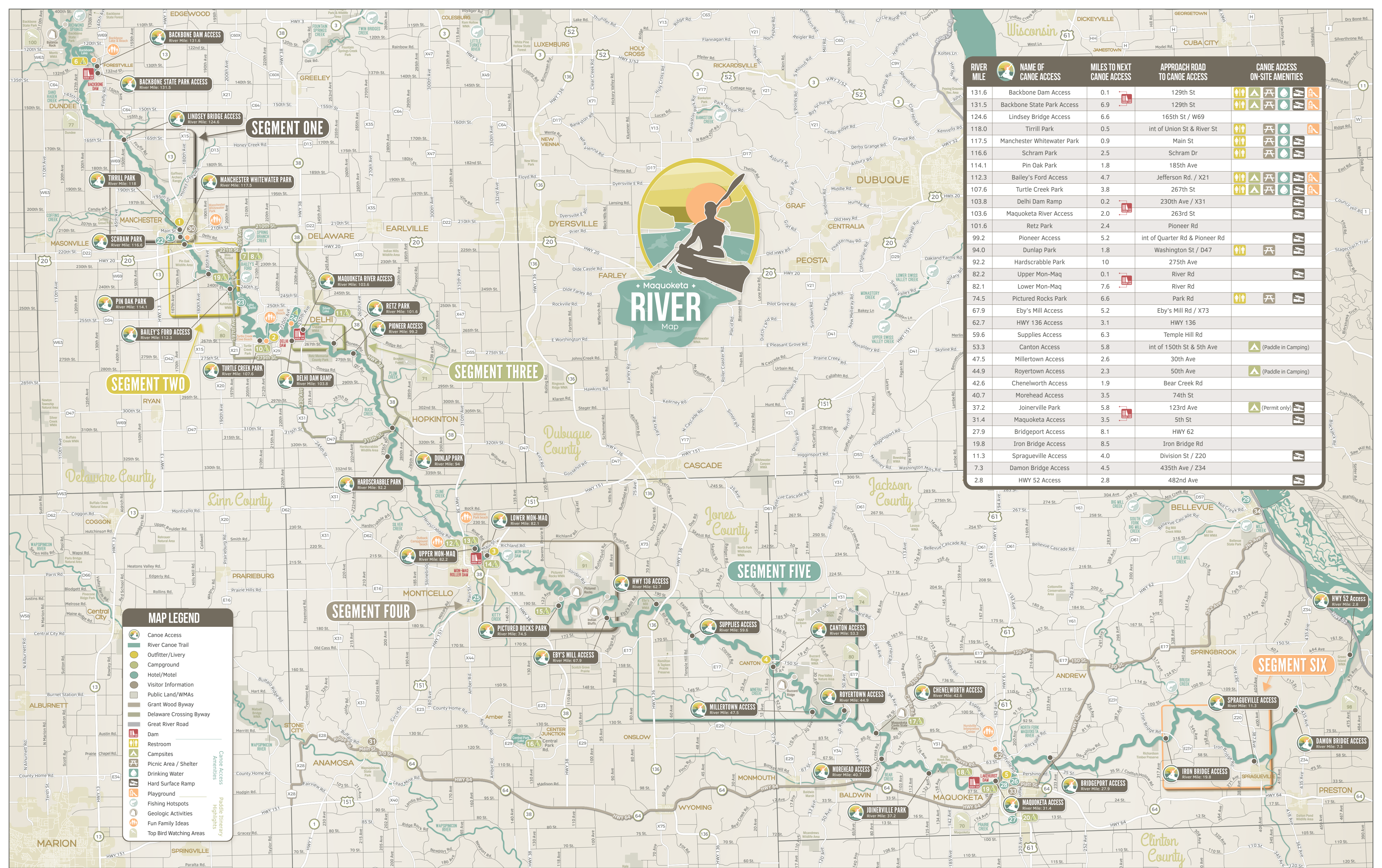
Dams are Dangerous: Dams come in many sizes, but ALL dams are drowning machines no matter how small they look. Paddlers should portage around all dams and NEVER attempt to go over them.

PARTNERSHIPS

Northeast Iowa RC&D works with partners in our region to explore natural resource based economic development opportunities while at the same time protecting and enhancing natural resources. Need help developing your idea into a project? Learn about our organization at www.northeastiowarcand.org.

This Guide was developed in partnership with the Delaware Crossing and Grant Wood Scenic Byway Boards and designed by Northeast Iowa RC&D with input from the Iowa DNR Fisheries Bureau, Iowa DNR Wildlife Bureau, local landowners, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, local livey owners, and river users. This guide was made possible through generous contributions and grants from Iowa Tourism, Community Foundation of Jackson County, Jones County Community Foundation, Foundation for the Future of Delaware County, Jackson County Conservation, City of Manchester, Iowa Department of Transportation (DOT) - Iowa Byways Sustainability Project / Grant Wood Scenic Byway & Delaware Crossing Scenic Byway, and through Jackson County Area Tourism Association.





OUTFITTERS & LIVERIES

- The Watershed Kayak & Canoe Rental:** Enjoy a fun filled day on the Maquoketa River. 563-920-5347. 252 N River St, Manchester
- Hartwick Marina:** Only full service Lake Delhi Marina w/pontoon rentals, bait, & dock. 563-922-2772. 22140 261st St, Delhi
- Monticello Canoe Rental:** Offer canoes, kayaks, kids kayaks, & inner tubes. 319-465-3697. 21430 River Rd, Monticello
- Anderson's Canoe Rental:** Rent canoes, kayaks, or tubes on the Maquoketa River. 563-495-7241. 395 149th St, Monmouth
- Maquoketa River Rental:** Rent canoes, kayaks, tubes, & paddle boards. 563-357-4489. 309 West Grove, Maquoketa
- Backbone State Park:** 2,000-acre park for fishers, hikers, campers, & paddlers. 563-924-2527. 1347 129th St, Dundee

CAMPGROUNDS, VISITOR INFORMATION & LODGING FACILITIES

- Manchester State Trout Hatchery:** Fish or see & feed trout in raceways & ponds 563-927-3276. 22693 205th Ave, Manchester
- Lazy T Campground:** Quiet campground with water & electric at each site. 563-920-6775. 2249 205th Ave, Manchester
- Bailey's Ford Nature Center:** 170-acre park & nature center with trails, campsites, & playground. 563-927-3410. 379 Jefferson Rd, Manchester
- Turtle Creek Park:** A 200-acre park with RV camping & beach located next to Hartwick Lake. 563-927-3410. 2124 267th St, Manchester
- Big C's Campground:** Offers camping, fishing, kayaking & canoeing along the shores of Silver Lake. 563-920-6592. 2540 Pioneer Rd, Delhi
- Outback Campground:** RV campsites with beach access, fishing pond, & trails. 319-480-3211. 17652 Hardscrabble Rd, Monticello
- Jellystone Park:** Family-friendly camping with fishing pond, kids activities, pool, & beach. 319-465-4665. 22128 IA-38, Monticello
- The Blue Inn Campground:** 37 full hook-up RV campsites next to Kitty Creek. 319-462-0770. 250 N Main St, Monticello
- Camp Courageous:** Year-round recreational & respite care for people with special needs. 319-465-5916. 12007 190th St, Monticello
- Central Park:** 297-acre park & nature center with camp sites, beach, lake, & trails. 563-487-3541. 12515 Central Park Rd, Center Junction
- Maquoketa Cave State Park:** Camping w/ trail system that links caves, formations, & overlooks. 563-652-5833. 9688 Caves Rd, Maquoketa
- 6B's Campground:** Seasonal camping w/ playground, fishing, boating, hiking, & ATV trails. 563-221-2058. 6624 Caves Rd, Maquoketa
- Lakehurst Riverside Campground:** 6 camp sites with electricity & various primitive sites. 319-480-3965. 4397 173rd Ave, Maquoketa
- Horseshoe Pond Campground:** 22 electrical sites & 5 primitive sites w/ fishing pond. 563-652-2484. 905 S Main St, Maquoketa
- SureStay Hotel by Best Western Manchester:** Call for best rooms & rates. 563-927-2533. 1020 W Main St, Manchester
- Days Inn by Wyndham Manchester:** Call for best rooms & rates. 563-927-1011. 1220 W Marion St, Manchester
- Lakes End Cabin Resort:** 4 individually decorated cabins on Lake Delhi. 319-329-7892. 20105 247th St, Manchester
- Last Beach Resort:** Campground w/ bar & grill & boat ramp on Lake Delhi. 319-480-1925. 22392 255th Street, Delhi
- Cobblestone Inn & Suites:** Offers comfort & convenience with 32 rooms & suites. 319-465-3036. 218 Welter Drive, Monticello
- Decker Hotel:** 1875 historic hotel w/ 17 rooms & suites w/ classic restaurant. 563-652-1875. 128 N Main St, Maquoketa
- AmericInn by Wyndham Maquoketa:** Call for best rooms & rates. 563-652-0222. 1910 Nairn Dr, Maquoketa
- Econo Lodge:** Call for best rooms & rates. 563-652-6888. 1019 N Platt St, Maquoketa
- Baymont by Wyndham Bellevue:** Hospitality & scenic views of the Mississippi River. 563-872-5000. 29921 395th Ave, Bellevue
- Delaware County Tourism & Manchester Chamber:** We can make your adventure happen! 563-929-6637. 200 E. Main St, Manchester
- Jones County Tourism:** Let us help you plan your next trip! 319-462-4101. 213 E Main St, Anamosa
- Hursthur Interpretive Center:** Explore natural resources through exhibits. 563-652-3783. 18670 63rd St, Maquoketa
- Maquoketa Chamber of Commerce:** We are here to help you plan your trip! 563-652-4602. 124 S Main St #2, Maquoketa
- Bellevue Chamber of Commerce:** Visit us for your riverfront experience! 563-872-5830. 210 Riverview, Bellevue

MAQUOKETA RIVER PADDLING TRIPS AND ITINERARIES

A FISHING HOTSPOTS

The diversity of the Maquoketa River creates conditions in which a variety of fish species can flourish. Multiple dams and man-made lakes, excellent water quality, varying river bottom substrates, coldwater stream tributaries, and connectedness with the Mississippi all make the Maquoketa River a sought after fishery. From its headwaters near Arlington to Backbone State Park, the river is primarily a trout fishery with catchable trout stocked weekly during the fishing season. Anglers can expect to catch rainbow, brown and brook trout in this section. After its departure from the Backbone Dam, the river is host to multiple river species including smallmouth bass and walleye. The Maquoketa River is most well-known for its smallmouth bass fishing having the most bass per mile as well as some of the highest percentages of mature bass in Iowa. Bass can be found from Backbone Dam to the Mississippi and are most abundant from Dundee to Pictured Rocks where the river bottom is dominated by large boulders and rocks. Fish species diversity increases even more near its confluence at the Mississippi where large river fish species travel upstream into the Maquoketa River. In addition to smallmouth bass at the lower end, the river is also host to walleye, northern pike, largemouth bass, white bass, channel catfish, drum, crappie, bluegill, sunfish, sturgeon, sauger, and flathead catfish.

B GEOLIGIC ACTIVITIES

The high limestone cliffs and rock outcroppings along the Maquoketa River Channel are some of the most memorable aspects of the river's scenery. These beautiful exposed bluffs also make Eastern Iowa one of the most popular areas in the State for rock climbing. Pictured Rocks County Park near Monticello offers around 80 climbing routes of varying difficulty with short powerful 30 foot climbs or 60-70 ft walls. Climbers also enjoy the 80-foot cliffs of rugged dolomite limestone along the Backbone Trail in Backbone State Park southeast of Strawberry Point. For other geological fun, visit one of Iowa's most unique state parks, Maquoketa Caves State Park to explore one of the site's 13 caves and numerous limestone formations. For the best bluff-viewing river float, paddle the river near Canton Access. This reach of the river is well known for its beautiful steep bluffs and remote 'wild' feel. River goers can even complete a short hike to the top of Buzzard Ridge to witness a spectacular view of the Maquoketa River Valley, or search for prehistoric fossils on the river bank.

C TOP BIRD WATCHING AREAS

The hardwood forests, prairies, grasses, wetlands, lakes, and other natural characteristics of the river corridor make it a bird haven for more than 300 bird species. Popular river locations for birding include Indian Bluffs and Pictured Rocks County Park, where both have been designated as a Bird Conservation Area by the Iowa DNR after identifying 243 species, including 79 Iowa species of greatest concern. Other notable birding hotspots include Backbone State Park, Turtle Creek Park, Brayton Forest, Ozark WMA, and Buzzard Ridge. Bird species reported from Iowa's Birding Atlas for each of these areas are noted on the map above. Downstream of the Lakehurst Dam, you will enter a part of the Mississippi River Flyway, near a Globally Important Birding Area, through which hundreds of species migrate in the spring and fall annually. One highlight trip is Green Island WMA, where a mix of wetlands and woodlands host more than 250 species of birds. Check out bba.iowabirds.org, iowadnr.gov, and iowaadubon.org to learn more about local birding opportunities.

D FUN FAMILY IDEAS

From its upper to lower reaches, the Maquoketa River will provide paddlers with beautiful scenery, a glimpse at native wildlife, and unplugged family bonding time. The trip segments highlighted in this guide are family friendly floats, where the current is usually mild, and the river is not too deep. Human-made and natural sites found in the communities in and along the river provide outstanding experiences for families before and after their float. While on the water, the landscape is beautiful Iowa forest and towering rock bluffs. Between scenic stretches, sandbars offer a perfect place to stop for a picnic or take a dip in the river to cool off. If you prefer a beach, plan a stop at Backbone State Park, Outback Campground, Jellystone Park, or Lake Delhi (Turtle Creek Cove and Lost Beach). For family members who want to play in the water, spend an afternoon at the Manchester Whitewater Park where kids can rent a tube and spend the day shooting down the white-water rapids next to Tirrill Park.