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Wiswall Dam

# Explore *the* LAMPREY RIVER

*Hiking trails, Paddling access, Historic sites*

## *Welcome to the Lamprey River Tour*

*The Lamprey flows from the hills in Northwood some 47 miles to Great Bay. It offers a remarkable diversity of habitat, from forests to open fields, from quiet backwaters to rushing rapids, and from wetlands to sandy river banks.*

*There are a variety of ways to enjoy the river, and this tour takes you to many stops that are significant to this river and highlight its many features. This guide will indicate how you can enjoy each site, provide access information and suggestions to preserve the site's integrity. In addition, there will also be information at many stops on the tour. Enjoy!*

*Prepared by the Lamprey River Advisory Committee* [www.lampreyriver.org](http://www.lampreyriver.org)

## How to See and Enjoy the Lamprey River

You can see the Lamprey River from a car, from a bicycle or from the river itself. You may visit the recommended sites in order (route listed on the map side), or individually. If you want to paddle the river, this guide will show you where you can access the water.


### By Automobile

If you want to drive as close to the river as the roads allow, the route is highlighted on the map on the back. Many of our stops described in the guide can be found on these roads.


### By Bicycle Route on Roads

The whole route could be followed by bicycle in a day with a few rest stops along the way. Another way may be to plan bike trips through a few towns, and allow time to explore the town centers or some of the walking trails. Note that most trails are closed to mountain bikes.

### Walking Trails


 If you are interested in some short walks on woods trails near the river then you could plan to visit two or three sites in the different towns to get a feel for the Lamprey and the way it changes as it drains into Great Bay on its way to the Atlantic Ocean.

### Paddling Trips


 There are many places to access the river for paddling, and this is a great way to see the river close up. The adventurous could run the whole length with careful planning and many portages.

Another way is to explore sections of the river in morning or afternoon trips, looking for signs of wildlife while soaking in the sunshine. The fall is a great time for this. There is a canoe race every spring from West Epping to the Rte. 87 Bridge.

### Historic Sites

 There are kiosks on the route that describe the history of use at different sites and also of the towns in general. These will take you through time from the Native Americans, to the early settlers and the remains of their mill buildings, to the present day. The town of Newmarket with its large mill buildings would be a good place to end your historical journey.

### Natural Features

 The Lamprey River is very scenic. There are many smaller rapids and falls in wooded areas that make great picnic spots. You can stop at sites that describe the workings of the floodplain forest and fish at some of the falls for trout. Walking through some areas you will see the trees and flowers that flourish in this river corridor.



Packers Falls

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## National Wild and Scenic River Program

The Lamprey River Advisory Committee is continuing to protect the river's natural features and historic sites, and to provide educational and recreational opportunities for all. In Epping, Lee, Durham and Newmarket, the river is a part of the *National Wild and Scenic River* program, and the part flowing through Lee and Durham is also protected by the New Hampshire Rivers Management program.

You can help by "treading lightly" on this special river and its corridor. Our guide will show appropriate use of each site. We urge you to stay on designated roads or trails, use designated access points, and contact land owners if you are accessing their land. Please help us preserve these special places and leave each site better than it was when you came.

### Tread Lightly

*The lands, trails and river features described in this guide are both publicly and privately owned. Please treat the areas described here with respect. Do not litter. Obey all rules as posted at each particular place. It is up to each of us to tread lightly so that everyone will continue to enjoy these special places. Thank you for doing your share!*

*Jack-in-the-Pulpit*



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# Sites Along the Lamprey River

## Epping, New Hampshire

This town was named after the Epping Forest in England because of its heavily forested land. Epping was founded in 1741 and is the only town to have given three Governors to New Hampshire. It is famous for its brickyards, as bricks made here were used in the construction of buildings and schools here and in nearby towns.



Lamprey River Canoe Race

The Hedding Campground is a religious community started in the 1860s that is a town in itself. Lying on the outskirts of Epping, they have large land holdings on the Lamprey and many unique buildings. The campground is private but opens up to the public during its Street Fair in the summer.

While recent development has changed parts of Epping, its character shows up on the tour route with many conserved woodlands and a few historic buildings. The annual canoe race is held on the last Saturday in April and is an exciting paddle from West Epping through the center of town.

### 1 MARY BLAIR PARK

**DESCRIPTION** This is the official start of the Lamprey Tour. The *National Wild and Scenic River* portion of the Lamprey begins at the dam here and ends at the confluence of the Piscassic River in Newmarket. This land was donated to the Town by a well known resident and school teacher, Mary Folsom Blair. The park fulfills her wishes for an area that children could enjoy with its picnic area and recreation fields.

Many area residents attend little league games at the park and this is where the canoe race begins. This 11-acre site once housed mill buildings and you can still see stone remnants of the old dam in the river. This is also the area where the Pawtuckaway River enters the Lamprey.

**DIRECTIONS** Off Rte. 27 near Rte. 101, Exit 6, in West Epping.

### 2 LAMPREY RIVER FOREST

**DESCRIPTION** The extensive frontage on the Lamprey River is highly scenic and undisturbed. The river provides key habitat for migrating birds, waterfowl, and fish. There are numerous vernal pools in the floodplain with evidence of very productive amphibian reproduction. Two streams cross the tract and empty into the Lamprey, and there is stonework remaining from a colonial period farm pond dam. The forestland has been managed in the past under the supervision of a consulting forester. LRAC worked with the owner, Society for the Protection of NH Forests, to conserve this 181-acre property.

**RECREATION** There is an existing, well planned woods road and trail system.

**DIRECTIONS** Off Prescott Road. From Rte. 27 take Blake Road.

**ACCESS** Visitors should respect the conservation values of the property. Two small fields are leased to a farmer. Please do not block access to and from the fields. Passive non-wheeled recreation is allowed. Horses are prohibited.

### 3 EPPING TOWN HALL

**DESCRIPTION** The center of Epping is, for the most part, residential. The Town Hall, situated right on the river, is the most prominent building. A park-type improvement is in the works along the riverfront with a sidewalk and benches planned. You can visit the library and the nearby historical society to get a feel for the town, and there are a few places to get a bite to eat.

**RECREATION** Behind the Town Hall is Town land that has access to the river for canoeing (a short carry from the parking area to the river) and fishing.

**DIRECTIONS** Rte. 125 to Rte. 27 to Main Street.



Epping Town Hall overlooking the river.

### 4 ROUTE 87 BRIDGE SITE

**DESCRIPTION** This is an ideal spot for a short walk along the river. There is a kiosk and trail guide with descriptions of natural features in this floodplain area. Early in the morning you may spot some of the wildlife that depend on the Lamprey River.

**RECREATION** There is a canoe launch here where you can paddle to

Wadleigh Falls in Lee. Keep in mind that there are some trees blown down into the river that you will need to carry around.

**DIRECTIONS** From Rte. 125 to Rte. 87. 1½ miles to bridge.

**ACCESS** Tread lightly as it is a sensitive area that may be wet in the spring. No mountain bikes.

## Lee, New Hampshire

The Town of Lee was founded in 1766, and was named after General Charles Lee who fought beside George Washington in the Revolutionary War. It was the last of 129 towns chartered by Governor Benning Wentworth. Colonists arrived and established sawmills, cider, medicine mills, a leatherboard factory, tanneries and brickyards beginning in 1668, with Robert Wadleigh's sawmill at Wadleigh Falls.

Native Americans came down from the Ossipee Mountains to summer on the river, growing gardens, fishing at the falls, and, once the colonists arrived, marketing their furs in Portsmouth.

Lee is a small town that preserves its rural character through farms, quiet roads, rolling hills, and plains.



Wiswall Dam



## 5 WADLEIGH FALLS VICINITY

**DESCRIPTION** The Wadleigh Falls area has been used by humans for 8,000 or more years. The river flow is very low during late summer. The falls are formed by a natural rock formation, but there have been dams used to power the several types of mills and factories there during the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries. The dam, now breached, had a drainage area of 154 square miles.



*Wadleigh Falls*

**DIRECTIONS** Located in the area of Rte. 152, Tuttle Road and Campground Road. *Note:* Located on sharp curve. Pedestrians should be careful. Traffic can be intense at times. Parking is on the roadside and is very limited.

**ACCESS** Public canoe/kayak access  $\frac{1}{8}$  mile west of the bridge on Rte. 152, small parking area, good also for passive viewing, skating, etc. **The Falls:** Privately owned, but public access has been allowed for many years for swimming, fishing, canoeing/kayaking. The Falls are located off Rte. 152, traveling east from Rte. 125, right after the bridge. **The Island:** Privately owned. No access allowed.

## 6 CAPT. REUBEN HILL BRIDGE (HOOK FALLS BRIDGE)

**DESCRIPTION** The bridge is named after Capt. Reuben Hill, one of the early mill owners on the river, who lived in the second house on the left after the bridge traveling east.

**RECREATION** There is a short trail along the west side of the river. Canoeing/Kayaking is possible in the spring through a few Class II rapids down to the Wiswall dam where a portage is necessary. Further down the river there are more rapids at Packers Falls.

**DIRECTIONS** Off Rte. 155 near the intersection of Lee Hook Road near the Grange. Parking is along the road only.

**ACCESS** There is a path at the bridge, on the northwest side of the bridge, that allows access to the water's edge. Care should be taken not to add to the erosion of the bank.

## 7 UNH ORGANIC DAIRY RESEARCH FARM AT THE BURLEIGH-DEMERITT FARM

**DESCRIPTION** The farm provides a glimpse of our evolving agricultural heritage along the Lamprey. Restoration of the farmhouse is being actively pursued.

**DIRECTIONS** From Lee Center, proceed east on Lee Hook Road. The Farm is on the right.

**ACCESS** Please follow instructions at the visitor's kiosk. An old road west of the farmhouse leads to the river, but use is limited from May to October.



*Bales of hay dot the landscape.*

## Durham, New Hampshire

Originally known as Oyster River Plantation, the Town of Durham was incorporated in 1732. Early commerce centered around ship-building in the Oyster River estuary. By the beginning of the 19th century much of the industry had shifted to mills on the Lamprey River at Wiswall and Packers Falls. A major fire in 1883 destroyed the large mill complex at Wiswall Falls and later, in 1900, a generator was installed that supplied several houses in the area with power for Durham's first electric lights.

In 1891, Durham resident Benjamin Thompson gave his farm and fortune to the state of NH to relocate The New Hampshire College of Agriculture and Mechanical Arts from Hanover to Durham, providing for its role as the present day home of the University of New Hampshire. The University conducts extensive research projects in the watersheds of Great Bay.

## 8 WISWALL DAM

**DESCRIPTION** This 3-acre site, owned by the Town, is made up of shoreline and woodlands and was a center of activity in the 1800s. Various mills and Durham's first electric power plant were built here. Although the mill buildings were destroyed by fire, visitors to the site can still see foundations. These remains were partially restored in 1999 by the LRAC and the Town, with funding from the *National Wild and Scenic River Program*. The site is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In 2000, the Boy Scouts, as part of an Eagle Scout project, placed picnic tables and signage at the site. The impoundment is one important source of drinking water for the Town.

**RECREATION** Walking, picnic tables. Boating limited to paddling and rowing. Launch upstream of dam.

**DIRECTIONS** On Wiswall Road between Packers Falls Road and Lee Hook Road.

## 9 PACKERS FALLS

**DESCRIPTION** Packers Falls, the "second falls" in Durham, just downstream from Wiswall, offers the visitor to this 3-acre site some impressive rapids. The *AMC River Guide* characterizes it as "one of the most challenging rapids in the Piscataqua Watershed," a "roaring Class III run in early spring, and... often run well into the summer as a Class II drop." This site, owned by the Town of Durham, has a historic mill site with foundation remains.

**RECREATION** Trail: 0.4 mile along Lamprey River and through woods. Boating limited to canoes, kayaks and rowboats; no ramp: launch downstream of falls. Tubing is also a popular pastime.

**DIRECTIONS** At the intersection of Packers Falls Road and Bennett Road. Parking is available off Bennett Road.

## 10 DOE FARM

**DESCRIPTION** Approximately 87 acres in size, the Doe Farm was bequeathed to the Town of Durham in 1909 by Olinthus N. Doe. Along the trail artifacts of the family homestead remain. You will also see the old cellar hole and family cemetery.

In the early 1920s the Durham Boy



*Seedlings from the 1920s now stand tall.*

*continued...*

Doe Farm continued...

Scouts planted thousands of red pine, white pine and Norway spruce seedlings in the open field areas of the Farm. These developed into the scenic plantation areas still visible today along the main woods and road trails in the western portion of the property. The hardwood and white pine canopy hosts a variety of wildlife, from birds and small mammals, to beaver and deer.

**RECREATION** Walking, birding, swimming (no beach or facilities).

**DIRECTIONS** Off Rte. 108. On Bennett Road, at the railroad bridge approximately 0.7 mi from the intersection with Packers Falls Road. Parking is available off Bennett Road.

## Newmarket, New Hampshire

Newmarket, fronting on the Lamprey River and Great Bay, offers boaters hours of voyaging through pristine navigable waterways leading to the Great Bay. Newmarket's clean and protected fresh and salt waters offer summer sailing, power boating, canoeing and kayaking, and winter ice skating and cross-country skiing, as well as year-round fishing of every kind.

Newmarket has numerous recreation parks and conservation areas throughout the town including boat launch areas and walking/jogging trails along the Lamprey River.

Newmarket was incorporated in 1727 and was called Lampreyville for a time. Textile mills were a prominent feature of Newmarket in the 1800s with dams built on the Lamprey to help the industries. Recently several buildings have been converted to apartments and business locations.



These mills in downtown Newmarket were once powered by the Lamprey River.

### II PISCASSIC PARK AND BOAT LAUNCH (SLIDING ROCK)

**DESCRIPTION** This 2.5 acre Town-owned wooded park at the confluence of the Piscassic and Lamprey Rivers provides access to great paddling in the impoundment above MaCallen Dam. Paddlers can travel upstream two miles to Doe Farm and beyond.

**RECREATION** Boat launching, fishing, trail and picnic tables.

**DIRECTIONS** Off Elm Street in downtown Newmarket. Turn onto Beech Street and then right onto Salmon. Bear left past bus stop to second right onto Piscassic Street. Park is at the end.

**ACCESS** Public

### 12 THE RICHARD SCHANDA CONSERVATION PARK – TOWN BOAT LANDING

**DESCRIPTION** This Town-owned park, located in downtown Newmarket, is below the MaCallen Dam and is the only part of the tour that brings you to the tidal portion of the River. This small .4 acre pocket park is the result of a recent effort to improve the waterfront area. All rivers ultimately reach the sea; therefore, this is a fitting end to the Lamprey River tour. While here, you can enjoy lunch in one of the many eateries in town.

**RECREATION** Boat launch for access to the tidal portion of the Lamprey River and a short trip to Great Bay.

**DIRECTIONS** At the end of Water Street. Off Rte. 108 in downtown Newmarket.

**ACCESS** Public

## Points of Interest

The following list includes additional points of interest to enhance your enjoyment of the Lamprey River. These are not official sites on the Tour, some are private homes you cannot stop at, while others are public lands you can enjoy.

### A FOLSOM CONSERVATION AREA – JOSHUA LANE · EPPING

**DESCRIPTION** Owned by the Town, this land was once slated for a housing development. It is connected to the Rockingham Recreation Trail – Portsmouth Branch that runs from Newfields to Manchester. The Epping Conservation Commission planted Red Pine seedlings to reclaim the woods along the sides of the main trail.

**DIRECTIONS** Off Rte. 27, ½ mile west of Mary Blair Park.

**ACCESS** Any non-motorized trail users are allowed. Snowmobiles are allowed in the winter.

### B PRESCOTT HOUSE · EPPING

**DESCRIPTION** The Benjamin Franklin Prescott House was the home of the 39th Governor of New Hampshire, and is a fine example of the Second Empire style built by Gilman C. Stone of Concord in 1875.

**DIRECTIONS** Going east on Prescott Road, house is on the left between Blake Road and the Lamprey River Forest.

**ACCESS** No public access – view from road only.

### C MIRIAM JACKSON PARK · EPPING

**DESCRIPTION** Small, historic riverside park near Epping Town Hall.

**DIRECTIONS** Rte. 27 at Mill St. Bridge.

### D GEORGE FALLS WOODS · EPPING

**DESCRIPTION** The 11-acre Town Forest recently had a selective cut done and a one-mile loop trail laid out. The trail runs through a pine grove with many mature trees. Nearby there is a seasonal farmstand.

**RECREATION** Walking, Fishing

**DIRECTIONS** Jacob Wells Road, Epping. Located on the west side of the road and noted by a sign.



KEVIN MARTIN

A quiet spot in West Epping.

## **E** FLAG HILL WINERY · LEE

**DESCRIPTION** A large tract of conservation land surrounds the Flag Hill Winery about 1.5 miles from Wadleigh Falls.

**RECREATION** Walking and fishing along the Lamprey River and the mouth of the North River at the back of the property; Snowmobile trail that connects with others leading to the Wadleigh Falls area, as well as cross-country skiing possibilities.

**DIRECTIONS** Off Route 125 to 155 East. Winery will be on right. Parking is available in the Winery parking lot.

**ACCESS** The owners have made the area available for several types of recreation.

## **F** VERRETTE PROPERTY · DURHAM

**DESCRIPTION** Conservation property

**DIRECTIONS** End of York Lane, near Wiswall Falls, at the intersection of Little Hook Road and Wiswall Road.

**ACCESS** No wheeled access. No dogs.

## **G** HIGHLAND HOUSE · DURHAM

**DESCRIPTION** Highland House at Packers Falls was a farmhouse turned destination resort. Families from Boston, New York and beyond, along with writers, actors and musicians from all over the world were guests from the 1890s on into the 1960s.

**DIRECTIONS** Going east on Bennett Road, the house is on your left, up on the hill.

**ACCESS** No public access – view from road only.



*Visitors to Highland House.*



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*The Lamprey River is a source of enjoyment year-round.*

## **H** LAMPREY RIVER PRESERVE · DURHAM

**DESCRIPTION** This 240 acre natural area, owned by The Nature Conservancy, is managed for wildlife habitat and does not have formally maintained hiking trails.

**RECREATION** Welcome foot travel, birding, wildlife viewing, hunting, fishing. Snowmobiles allowed on designated corridor trail to Lamprey River only. ATVs, dogs, horses, mountain bikes, camping, and fires are prohibited.

**DIRECTIONS** Located on Packers Falls Road in Durham.

## **I** WIGGIN FARM CONSERVATION AREA · NEWMARKET

**DESCRIPTION** Once owned by Red Sox catcher Carlton Fisk, this area includes a field and hill setting bordering on a swamp wetlands complex that drains into the Lamprey. LRAC helped fund this site.

**RECREATION** Great sledding hill; visitors can follow a trail describing the wildlife in the area.

**DIRECTIONS** Off Grant Road in Newmarket between Ash Swamp Road and Doe Farm Road.

## **For Further information**

Please visit our website at [www.lampreyriver.org](http://www.lampreyriver.org).

## **Thank you**

Thank you to the boards within the Towns of Epping, Lee, Durham and Newmarket, for helping make this tour guide a reality.

Thank you to Strafford Regional Planning Commission for providing maps.

## **Credits**

Photography by Dick Lord unless noted. Content by the LRAC Recreation Subcommittee. Graphic design by Cathy Arakelian.



*Mills at Wiswall Dam c. 1880*

DURHAM HISTORIC ASSOCIATION PHOTO



NH RIVERS  
MANAGEMENT &  
PROTECTION PROGRAM



NATIONAL  
WILD AND SCENIC  
RIVERS SYSTEM



LAMPREY RIVER ADVISORY COMMITTEE

[www.lampreyriver.org](http://www.lampreyriver.org)



# Driving Tour West to East – IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE LAMPREY RIVER TOUR MAP (PDF FILE)











DIRECTIONS ALSO IN SOME OF THE SITE DESCRIPTIONS.

1. The Lamprey River Road Tour begins on Rte. 27 in West Epping at the **Mary Blair Park**.
2. Take Rte. 27 East. Take a left on to Blake Road. Go 1.4 mi. Turn right onto Prescott Road and go the entire length. Look for pullover on right to **Lamprey River Forest**.
3. Continue to Main Street in Epping. Turn right past cemetery and continue over the bridge to **Epping Town Hall** on left.
4. Retrace your steps on Main Street and go north a short distance. Bear right onto Old Hedding Road. Cross Rte. 125 at the light. Go straight, continuing on Old Hedding Road. Turn right at end onto Rte. 87. Cross the River at the **Route 87 Bridge Site**.
5. Turn left onto Jacobs Well Road, and left again on Camp Lee Road, and follow to end. This is **Wadleigh Falls Vicinity**. Turn left on Rte. 152 for a very short distance. Cross the River on Rte. 152 at Wadleigh Falls, entering Lee. Bear left to the canoe access which is on the left, or to continue the tour, go right after the bridge onto Tuttle Road.
6. Continue north on Tuttle Road up to Rte. 155 and take a right onto Rte. 155. Go about ½ mi. to first right, which is a shortcut to Lee Hook Road. At stop, go right on Lee Hook Road to **Capt. Reuben Hill Bridge**.
7. Continue past the agricultural fields to **UNH Organic Dairy Research Farm at the Burleigh-DeMeritt Farm** on right.
8. Continue on Lee Hook Road and go left on Little Hook Road for ½ mi., and then right onto Wiswall Road. The tour again crosses the river at **Wiswall Dam** in Durham.
9. Take a right at the end of Wiswall Road and then take a left after 0.4 miles onto Bennett Road. Pull over on the right to view **Packers Falls**.
10. Continue on Bennett Road. After crossing the railroad tracks, immediately take the first right into **Doe Farm** (0.8 miles from Packers Falls Road.) Go back the way you came to Packers Falls. The tour goes left over the bridge onto Packers Falls Road.
11. The tour continues through a residential area and turns onto Elm Street at the cemetery. Cross the railroad tracks and take second left on Beech. Take right onto Salmon. Bear left past bus stop to second right onto Piscassic Street to **Piscassic Park and Boat Launch** at the end.
12. Retrace your steps, taking a right at stop sign. Follow one way, then turn left onto Elm Street. Go to end and turn right onto Rte. 108. Proceed 0.2 mi. and take left onto Water Street to the **Richard Schanda Conservation Park – Town Boat Landing**. The Lamprey River Road Tour ends here in the center of Newmarket.

## Sites

- 1 MARY BLAIR PARK   
- 2 LAMPREY RIVER FOREST   
- 3 EPPING TOWN HALL     
- 4 ROUTE 87 BRIDGE SITE  
- 5 WADLEIGH FALLS VICINITY   
- 6 CAPT. REUBEN HILL BRIDGE  
- 7 UNH ORGANIC DAIRY RESEARCH FARM AT THE BURLEIGH-DEMERITT FARM    
- 8 WISWALL DAM    
- 9 PACKERS FALLS    
- 10 DOE FARM    
- 11 PISCASSIC PARK – TOWN PARK AND BOAT LAUNCH   
- 12 RICHARD SCHANDA CONSERVATION PARK – TOWN BOAT LANDING    

## Points of Interest

- A FOLSOM CONSERVATION AREA – JOSHUA LANE   
- B PRESCOTT HOUSE  (No public access – view from road only.)
- C MIRIAM JACKSON PARK  
- D GEORGE FALLS WOODS   
- E FLAG HILL WINERY  
- F VERRETTE PROPERTY  
- G HIGHLAND HOUSE  (No public access – view from road only.)
- H LAMPREY RIVER PRESERVE   
- I WIGGIN FARM CONSERVATION AREA   