
Mulberry Fork Races Scheduled for March 5 & 6

The Mulberry Fork Canoe and Kayak Races will be held on March 5 & 6 on the Mulberry Fork of the Warrior River, north of Birmingham. This year's Race Master is Jay Clark. He can be reached for more information on the

race at 205-987-8469 (H).

Pre-registration by mail is a requirement this year in order to have starting line-ups and classes arranged for early Saturday morning. Payment deadline for registration fees is midnight Friday, March 4. The Race Registrar is Kathy Lide. Kathy's address is:

750 Highway 33
Pelham, AL 35124



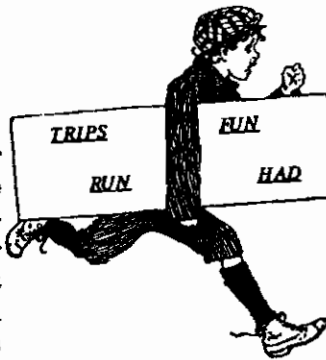
Okefenokee Swamp, Trail 11

by Roger Thomas

December 9-11, 1993. Early December has proven to be an excellent time to canoe and camp in the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge (ONWR). Typically, the weather is mild, insects are minimal, and we have yet to see a cottonmouth (although that is a definite possibility). The four previous trips that I have coordinated have been overnight. Trail 11 is a 2-night, 3-day trip of 24 miles. This year's group included Irwin Bernstein, Amy Galloway, Paul Geduldig, Mark Schmidt, Rufus Sessions, Jay Silverman, Mark Wilson, Cheryl and Gordon Young, and me. The Okefenokee "veterans" among us agreed that trail 11 was the best ever for diversity of swamp terrain and abundance of animals.

After camping at Laura Walker State Park near Waycross, we arrived at the East Entrance near Folkston, GA, at 8:00 a.m. and rented five of their 17 foot canoes. We loaded and launched by 9:30 for the 12 mile paddle to a camping platform known as Round Top. The first eight miles are relatively easy, being in the old Suwannee canal, a pre-ONWR, private enterprise effort to drain the swamp for commercial purposes in the early part of this century. In the canal, the water is relatively deep, wide, and free of water lilies, stumps, and tree limbs. There is a rest stop with shelter, table, and chemical toilet at about 5.5 miles, and the table and toilet are well separated (to paraphrase the Dillard's, a bluegrass band... a 100 yards to the outhouse in winter is too far and in summer, too close...).

When you leave the canal and enter Mizell's Prairie, paddling is harder due to the water lilies. However, we were helped a bit by a ranger's air boat that entered the prairie about the time we did and went ahead of us on the same trail. All trails are well marked, and one should not fear getting lost, although a compass and flashlight per canoe are mandated by ONWR rules. Since we did not know how well our group of 10 which included some novice paddlers might fare and since darkness arrived at



5:30, we set a steady pace and reached Round Top at 3:30. There was plenty of time before dark to set up tents, for Jay to do some serious bird watching, and for Gordon to hook a couple of blue gills.

The platforms are 20 x 28 feet with a roof over half. ONWR literature says the platforms can accommodate 20, but 10 is a more comfortable number. Round Top easily accommodated five two-person tents with room to spare for cooking and socializing. The toilet was too near and the weather a bit too warm, but some hardship is needed to contrast with all the pleasure. After dinner which ranged from delicious looking hamburgers (Mark and Mark) to equally delicious looking stir fried vegetables (Paul), I started the evening's entertainment by reading from an essay from The Georgia Review about grave robbers in England during the 18th and 19th centuries who were in cahoots with the medical establishment to supply cadavers for instructional dissection. Rufus read selections from Get Thee to a Punnery, Cheryl read a Woody Allen short story, and Paul brought a small Menorah and educated the gentiles about its symbolism.

We awoke the next morning to an overcast sky. After breakfast, we broke camp and the first canoe (Amy and Irwin) launched about 9:15. Today's would be the shortest paddle, about five miles to Floyd's Island. By now all the new tandem teams were paddling well together, and there was little need to be concerned about time. Most canoes set out at their own pace and took side trips as desired in pursuit of seeing more birds and different terrain. It began drizzling rain by 10:00 and the rain continued the rest of the day. However, the temperature was mild and everyone had good rain gear, so we simply enjoyed the rain as another aspect of paddling the swamp.

We knew two things in advance about Floyd's Island, that it required a "short portage" and that it had a cabin. The portage was about a quarter of a mile, but there is a homemade cart and a wheelbarrow to assist in moving canoes and gear. I will not describe the cabin, because it will be more enjoyable for future paddlers to discover for

themselves.

The last paddlers straggled in about 2:00, and everyone proceeded to make a late lunch. Needless to say with the constant rain, most of us settled in for the day in the cabin. Rufus, however, donned his rain gear and explored part of the island. He and others completed the portage with the canoes, and soon darkness had returned. A highlight of the evening's entertainment was "construct a story," where each in turn added a sentence at a time in round robin fashion. After several rounds, we had a complex mystery going with all sorts of weird and sordid characters and events, but it was expanding so much that hardly anyone could keep up with all the details. Rufus delivered the coup de grace to everyone's relief.

The next morning's weather was clear and becoming colder. Friends and families back in Athens would express concern upon our return about how we had fared in the cold, but the bitter cold that weekend did not arrive until we were out of the swamp and in a heated cottage at Stephen Foster State Park. The sky was blue and bright, and we saw the best and most birds of the trip as we paddled through Floyd's Prairie. The highlight for some of us was a bald eagle on the hunt. This final leg was 7 miles, and after a lunch stop at the day shelter at Minnie's Lake, we reached Billy's Lake at about 1:30. Here we had our hardest paddle, because we faced a stiff wind for the last mile on the lake. The water was choppy and given the well loaded canoes, there was reason for concern about possible capsizing. However, all arrived dry and in time to meet the shuttle back to East Entrance. Some stayed at Stephen Foster enjoying hot showers and the comforts of the well appointed cottage, while others had their showers delayed until personal vehicles were retrieved via the 145 mile round trip.

Not to be forgotten were the seven 'gators seen, including a couple of eight footers, as well as several trees loaded with vultures ('gator and vultures?). As we were driving away from the swamp, some of us had our last beautiful sight of animals, two red foxes running parallel to the road. Unfortunately, this memory was marred by seeing several hunters with hounds shortly thereafter. We can only hope that these two foxes got away. ✕



Lower Amicalola River

by Roger Nott

Saturday, December 11, 1993. Adrian Freeman was scheduled to coordinate this trip, but got Allen Hedden to fill in for him when a personal conflict arose. I pinch-paddled for Allen, who this blustery morning had assembled about 8 potential paddlers whom I found huddled together in the middle of Hwy. 53 Bridge when I arrived at 9:30 a.m. WFOX claimed the Atlanta wind-chill factor was 24 degrees with 15 to 20 mph winds from the northwest! In addition the river was low: 0.48.

A new sign at the Bridge terms 0.8 as the minimum for the Lower run. Otey and Sehlinger set their minimum at 0.6. The old GCA Guidebook, last printed in 1981, sets it at 0.4, when the flat-bottomed OCA paddled solo was the most frequently paddled craft on club trips. Most modern designs, usually having short, high rockered hulls with shallow arched bottoms, draw considerably more water than do the old, flat-bottomed canoes, and today's paddlers usually demand higher water levels.

I, of course, lived up to my reputation and asserted that 0.48 was fine; I had run it a few months earlier at 0.41 and had had a great time. Mine was the minority opinion, but I was able to persuade two newcomers to the Amicalola to join me, despite Bronwyn Fowlkes' ominous warning to the neophytes that the last time she had been on a trip on the Amicalola with me, in March 1977, I had led the group, in pouring rain, down the Old Kelley Bridge Road, where half the cars got stuck in the mud (not my '67 Opel). "No mea culpa," I cried. On that day, after we spent 3 or 4 hours in the mud and bunched together under the old Steele (covered) Bridge at Devil's Elbow, most of the group of about 15 went home without paddling. I got Wayne Drummond and Richard Lawrence to paddle the flooded Upper with me that day.

This day I was joined by Clay Noble in a Viper 11 (OC-1) and Mike Elovitz in a Matrix (K-1). I paddled an ME solo. Since I had four-wheel drive, we ran from Hwy. 53 to the north boundary of the Dawson County Forest, thereby keeping the wind at our backs all day and avoiding the flat water and head winds we would have encountered during the last 4 miles, had we run all the way to Kelley Bridge.

The take-out road we used gets steep as it nears the river, at the point where years ago there used to be a cable strung across the Amicalola with orange two-by-fours hanging down across the river, suspending signs telling paddlers to stay out of Lockheed's Nuclear Reserve (Do you think many boaters turned around and paddled back to Hwy. 53?). Clay and I ran shuttle, but he got his truck