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# Footprints & Paddledrips

Volume 2 Issue

Newsletter of the Georgia Nature-Based Tourism Association, November, 2000

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## OCTOBER MEETING

Those attending the meeting at Stephen C. Foster State Park were given a choice of educational tours of the area.

Jackie Clay, naturalist at the park, gave a boat tour of Billy's Lake and the lower portions of Minnie's Lake Run, with stories about some of the animals such as Alligator, Otter, and Black Bear. She took the group to a patch of floating peat covered with an assortment of plants. You could see why the undulations created when the mass is prodded or stepped upon led to this unique formation being known as *trembling earth* by the Creek Indians. Thus the mysterious swamp received its name of Okefenokee, *Land of the Trembling Earth*.

Jim Burkhart of the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge showed others the Suwanee River Sill, built at the outlet of the Suwanee River to retain water and prevent fire. He described the structure's deterioration, its failure to perform as expected, and the interest by the refuge in returning to a naturally-operating ecosystem has led to plans for modifications at the site if a current study warrants this action.

## SECOND ANNUAL FALL EXCURSION

On Sept. 30, the Georgia Nature-based Tourism Association hosted another successful Fall Excursion, organized by Jim Burkhart. This public event was designed to highlight efforts to conserve the state's river systems along with responsible public use.

Canoes and kayaks paddled a six-mile stretch of the Suwanee River above the Fargo bridge, an event sanctioned by the American Canoe Association.

Lending their services as guides were Chip Campbell (Okefenokee Adventures), Mary Davis (National Wildlife Federation), and Sheila Willis (Native American Naturalist Talks & Tours) plus Fargo School Principal Dennis Ellis. Other GNTA leaders coordinating the day's events included Jim Burkhart, Roger Wangsness (The Inn at Folkston Bed & Breakfast), and Fargo Mayor Patricia Oettmeier.

Canoes and shuttles were provided by state parks: Barbara Metz (Stephen C. Foster), Bob Boyne (Laura S. Walker), and Tim McRorie (Gen. Coffee).

On that beautiful Fall day, stately cypress were turning golden, and Ogeechee Lime were heavy with their orange-red fruits. Pileated

Woodpeckers called incessantly from the surrounding forest. A slow current helped the group move thru the ebony waters which flowed southward from the depths of the great Okefenokee Swamp.

After the leisurely trip, participants drove to Deer Haus, the home of the Oettmeiers. There the couple had arranged a barbeque luncheon for the crowd which enjoyed watching a flock of Wild Turkeys pay a visit to a wildlife feeding station.

The afternoon session featured guest speakers from agencies with ties to the Suwanee River. Jim Burkhart gave a brief history of the area and described a proposed Atlantic to the Gulf Greenway which would involve the St. Marys River, Okefenokee Swamp, and Suwanee River. This would not only enhance the public's enjoyment of these waterways, but help to protect them as well. The goal is to keep these areas as pristine as possible.

## SUWANEE RIVER STATE PARK AT FARGO

Patricia Oettmeier gave an update on the plans to create a new state park near Fargo along the Suwanee River. It would initially be formed from land donated by Superior Pine Products.

Tricia is the originator and guiding light of this project, which she hopes will bring employment and visitors to Fargo. The state legislature will be voting on funding for this project when it next meets. Supporters are urged to ask their state legislators to support the project.

*contd*

### NEXT MEETING

The next Association gathering will be on Tuesday, January 16, 2001 at the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge (Suwanee Canal) near Folkston.

### GNTA OFFICER CHANGES

At the October meeting the following individuals were elected as Association officers: Sheila Willis (President); Karen Arms (Vice-President); Joy Campbell (Treasurer). Karen will produce the newsletter.

The Executive Committee, together with the Public Relations Chair, made the unanimous decision in early October to contact the Georgia Southern University's Bureau of Business Research and Economic Development and decline the future services of their staff (Secretary, Newsletter Editor) due to repeated unsatisfactory performance of duties related to project management.

The office of Secretary is currently vacant. If you would like to volunteer for that position, please contact Sheila Willis (912-285-0419) as soon as possible before the January meeting.

Thank-yous go out to those who have served the Association over the past two years.

### GNTA CONTACTS

Correspondence and membership inquiries should be sent to the Association address or directly to Sheila Willis (326 Pineview Dr., Waycross, GA 31501).

Billing statements should be sent to Joy Campbell, Treasurer (Rt. 2, Box 3325, Folkston, GA 31537). Items for the newsletter should be sent to Karen by e-mail at [karms@tootsytours.com](mailto:karms@tootsytours.com).

### MISDIRECTED NEWSLETTERS

The October issue was sent using an incorrect member file. Apologies to those who did receive this last mailing. The January 2001 edition will contain all the updates received since September 2000.

### PROJECT UPDATES

We await an IRS ruling on our application for 501 (c)(3) status. The results of this application will then drive our funding efforts, as well as dispersal of the remainder of the funds from our start-up grant, some of which has already been issued. Connected to that will be the final development phase of the GNTA website which is on hold. We have been awarded a portion of our request for funds under the ICAPP grant program administered by Georgia Southern University. We will be using these funds to acquire a slide projector, related

equipment, and photographic supplies to be used in our educational outreach program.

### ASSOCIATION SCHEDULE

Association meetings are held on the third Tuesdays of selected months. The Annual meeting is in September.

The Association attempts to highlight different areas of the state by moving the meetings to a new location each time. Thanks to all who have generously offered to be hosts. If you would like to host a future meeting, please contact the current President no later than the 15th of the month preceding the appropriate gathering.

### 2001 (date/location/host)

**January 16** Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge, (Folkston)--Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge & Okefenokee Adventures

**March 20** General Coffee State Park (Douglas)--General Coffee State Park

**May 15** Woodbine Waterfront Pavilion (Woodbine)--Kingsland Convention & Visitors Bureau  
**Note:** All dates and locations are subject to change due to scheduling conflicts. Watch the newsletter for future details.

**Hosts needed:** There are vacancies for July, September, and November 2001.

### SUWANEE RIVER STATE PARK (CONTD)

The park would contain hiking trails, boardwalks, an eco-lodge for meetings, cottages, and camping areas for canoeists a

others. The directive for the project would be: "development in harmony with the land".

Mary Davis then spoke about the Upper Suwanee River Watershed Initiative, a collaborative of various agencies and private citizens which are working to improve and protect the natural and economic resources of the Upper Suwanee River Watershed in South Georgia. It focuses on problems such as water pollution and loss of wildlife habitat in order to keep the area a healthy place to live. Educational outreach programs are a key feature of the effort, and their saying is "we all live downstream."

The last speaker was Kirk Webster of the Suwanee River Management District in Florida. The areas of interest to this agency are protection of the natural systems of the Suwanee River floodplain, preventing contamination of surface and ground waters, and flood control. The method used to accomplish these objectives is by acquiring tracts of land along the river corridors and maintaining these lands in their natural state. It also works with local communities to provide opportunities for passive recreational activities, outdoor education programs, and formal research projects.

Presenters said they were encouraged by the proliferation of grassroots efforts to protect local and regional natural resources while promoting responsible nature-based tourism.

## ALTAMAHA RIVER

*-Lynn Carter, Director of the Baxley-Applying County Board of Tourism*

The Altamaha River has been the focus of much recent attention. Representatives from 11 counties along the river from Darien to Lumber City met with individuals from over eight different governmental, educational, and conservation entities. A research project was initiated to determine the potential for nature-based tourism on the Altamaha. Other meetings discussed the goals of group, which is in the planning stages for formal organization. Some of these goals are: to develop a marketable, central theme for the river, to promote and preserve the beauty of the river, and to provide maximum tourist use with a minimum impact to the river's ecosystem.

Two other projects revolve around the acquisition of land along the river near Baxley. The Nature Conservancy has signed an agreement to acquire what is known as the Moody Forest.

This scenic area contains some of the nation's last remaining old-growth longleaf pine forests and cypress-tupelo sloughs with trees over 600 years old. It is an area rich in rare wildlife as well.

Ten million dollars must be raised by February 2001 in order to protect this state treasure.

Donations may be made to: The Nature Conservancy, ATTN: Moody Project, P.O.Box 484, Darien, GA 31305.

Also attracting the attention of Georgians is the proposed Altamaha State Park which would be the first

of its kind along the Altamaha River. Not only would a portion of the natural beauty of the waterway be protected and showcased, but the rich history of the river would be presented via a local museum.

Supporters of this project should contact their legislators to encourage its funding.

The **Altamaha River Rat Run** held in October was a tremendous success with over 124 canoeists and kayakers participating in the 12-mile paddle from Carter Bight Landing to Upper Wayne County Landing.

People from several states to join in the fun, enjoy the rustic beauty of the river, and also help clean up the waterway as they went along.

Conservation and protection of the river's natural resources was a major theme of the event which was sponsored by the Baxley-Applying County and Jesup-Wayne County Boards of Tourism.

Outfitters and guides participating in the excursion were: Chip Campbell (Okefenokee Adventures), Kingfisher and Beyond Canoe Outpost, and Okefenokee Pastimes, all from Folkston; Old River Outfitters (Jesup); and Three Rivers Expeditions (Hazelhurst). Local historians also added interesting tales of the Altamaha River. spring 2001 paddle is also being planned.

Georgia Nature-Based Tourism Association  
Box 305  
Folkston, GA 31537

**GNTA MEMBER &  
RESOURCE DIRECTORY  
ATTACHMENT**

The following information should be attached to the September 2000 Directory edition:

Changes:

Suwanee Canal Recreation Area.

Listing is now:

Okefenokee Adventures, Rt. 2,  
Box 3325, Folkston, GA 31537

Contacts: Chip Campbell, Joy Campbell

912-496-7156

866-843-7926 toll-free

info@okefenokeeadventures.com

Primary: Okefenokee NWR  
cooperating partner (East

Entrance/Suwanee Canal Recreation Area); natural & cultural history pontoon & 12-passenger boat tours; watercraft & bike rentals; food service; gift shop; shuttles; special events

Rentals: motorboats, canoes, kayaks, bikes, camping equipment

Resources: Okefenokee NWR; South Georgia/North Florida rivers; coastal areas

**WELCOME NEW  
MEMBER**

\*Thompson, Laurilee

P.O.Box 307

Mims, FL 32754

Contacts: Laurilee Thompson

321-268-4239

321-268-3933 fax

mrrockdcr@aol.com

\*the complete listing was not available at presstime, but will be added when available.