

TRAIL GUIDE

to the DELTA COUNTRY



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Trail Guide to the Delta Country

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A Quarter Century of Trail Guides

by John Sevenair

The Delta Chapter of the Sierra Club was in its infancy when, almost 25 years ago, Byron Almquist put together some mimeographed sheets and leaflets in envelopes. The New Orleans Group sold this under the name *Outings Kit*. A year later Fred Barry assembled this and more information into a small green booklet, also called the *Outings Kit*. The book began to approach its current form when your current editor put together the *Guide to Louisiana Wilderness Trails and the Delta Country*, which came out in 1975. The next major changes came with the publication of the *Trail Guide to the Delta Country* in 1980. Several printings (with minor revisions) came out in the 80's. The last major revision was the Sierra Club Centennial edition of 1992.

Not only the books but the areas have changed since 1972. If I were to summarize what has happened, I would say that we have better access and more public land, but more crowding and more pollution.

The rivers show the problems and the opportunities well. When I first got involved with putting together trail guides, the Tangipahoa River was just about the only one with a canoe rental on it. Now there are a dozen outfitters on almost as many rivers, with more opening (and closing) all the time.

On the other hand, we don't have as many good rivers as we used to. Bayou Trepagnier, a state scenic river, reeks of refinery pollution from oil company stupidity and selfishness. Now we know that several beautiful canoeing streams north of Lake Pontchartrain have been polluted by dairy farming wastes and municipal sewage. That particular problem has probably existed all along; we just know about it now. Solutions is on the way, in fact; the Tangipahoa (among others) is coming back.

With such areas as Jean Lafitte National

Park's Barataria Preserve; Bogue Chitto, Big Branch, and Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuges; and the Louisiana Nature Conservancy's purchases, there are more marshes and swamps available for you to go and see in canoes. On the other hand, we've dropped areas from the book because they were too congested with powerboat traffic for good canoeing.

Cycling is growing more and more popular throughout the area. There are still plenty of fine back roads with light traffic for bicycle trips in southern Louisiana. They're a little farther away from the urban centers of New Orleans and Baton Rouge now. People have been moving out of the city, seeking the peace and quiet of the countryside—and bringing the cars, shopping centers, and congestion of their cities with them.

When the 1975 edition of this book went to press there were very few places to hike and backpack in the area, unless you were ready to go cross-country with map and compass. Once you had covered the Tuxachanie Trail and Percy Quin State Park, well, that was about it for trails.

Now we have new trails in Kisatchie, Homochitto, and De Soto National Forests. Horn and Petit Bois Islands and areas of De Soto and Kisatchie National Forests are wilderness, as they weren't a quarter century ago. Jean Lafitte National Park, the Tammany Trace, and the Louisiana Nature and Science Center didn't exist back then either. More than half of the hiking trails in this book were built in the last decade.

On the whole, things could be better and things could be worse. That they aren't worse is due in large part to hard work by the Sierra Club, other environmental organizations, and the concerned citizens of the area. We are becoming more and more aware of the threats to our wildlands and wilderness and more able to combat those threats. Keep up the good work! ■

Acknowledgements

Almost all authors get a lot of help from their friends. When you are an editor-in-chief rather than a sole author, the debts mount even higher. Jeanne de la Houssaye and Jackie Tamas rate special thanks. Jeanne designed the cover and the graphics that introduce the sections, redrafted all the book's maps, and served as editor and chief writer for the canoeing sections. Jackie has provided and collected trail writeups from the Baton Rouge Group of the Sierra Club for several editions now.

In the canoeing section, Byron Almquist (of Canoe and Trail Adventures), Mel Bellar, Jeanne de la Houssaye, Dan Earle, Kenny Lindsly, Bryan McDaniel, Leonard Naquin, and Cornell and Jan Tramontana wrote articles on the rivers and streams in the New Orleans and Baton Rouge areas. Information to update older writeups was provided by Tom Lowenburg, Terry Vinson, Black Creek Canoe Rental, and De Soto National Forest.

Articles on marsh and swamp canoeing were contributed by Byron Almquist, Charlie Fryling, James Guilbeau, Tom Hertwig, C. C. Lockwood, Melissa Lutz, Chris Resweber, David Rousmaniere, Jim Whelan, and Vernon Wright. Further information came from David Muth and rangers at the Barataria Preserve Unit of Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve. Denis Dwyer (of Adventure Sports) wrote up the sea kayaking trip to Horn Island.

As far as the Cycling section is concerned, authors of sections include Mark Clark, N. B. Day, Joey Donnelly, Mitchell Lopez, Greg Reynolds, and Al Troy. Phyllis Baudoin Griffard was also a section author, and updated several

sections from the previous edition. Most of the maps in this section were adapted from excellent maps provided by the Crescent City Cyclists and the Baton Rouge Bicycle Club.

The Hiking section grew and changed substantially for this edition. Chris Resweber wrote up several new outings, as did your editor-in-chief. Other authors of articles include Byron Almquist, George Barry, Susan Egnew, James Guilbeau, Thomas Junk, Bruce McCoy, Stuart Phillips, Adele Plauche, Jackie Tamas, Bob Thomas, and Vernon Wright. Further information came from James Guilbeau, Lydia Guillot, David Muth, Jim Nanninga, the Louisiana Nature and Science Center, the National Park Service (Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve), and the National Forest Service (De Soto, Homochitto, and Kisatchie National Forests).

When it came to producing the book, most authors sent in their writeups on computer disks rather than on paper this time. Mary Carol McNamara keyed the few sections that were submitted on hard copy, or that I couldn't translate using my computer, into her Macintosh. Jeanne de la Houssaye and James Guilbeau worked with printers. Successive Delta Chapter chairs Bob Hastings and Barbara Vincent, along with other officers and members of the chapter, provided help and encouragement within the Sierra Club and with financial matters.

Without the help of all of these volunteers, this new edition of Trail Guide to the Delta Country would never have come into existence. If it has any excellencies, they are due to the efforts of these wonderful people. The editor is, as always, responsible for any deficiencies. ■

John Severain

The Sierra Club

John Muir founded the Sierra Club over a hundred years ago, in 1892. He did this because he wanted others to share his love of the earth and all of nature. He knew that if people learned how to explore, enjoy, and value the wildlands that are their heritage, they would also work together to preserve this legacy.

Today the Sierra Club has grown to become the nation's largest and strongest group dedicated to preserving wilderness. But it is much more—its horizons now extend to protecting all the environment around us, whether in the inner city or the most remote wildlands. The Club's goal is a world which will allow all life to prosper, and in which we as people act responsibly to protect the planet that is the natural home of all living things.

The Delta Chapter of the Sierra Club is now more than a quarter century old. As the Sierra Club has fought on the national level to protect the environment, its Delta Chapter has been heavily involved with issues such as wilderness (for example, on the Gulf Islands and in Kisatchie National Forest), wetlands preservation (Coastal Zone Management, the Atchafalaya Basin), and pollution (including mercury pollution of our waterways).

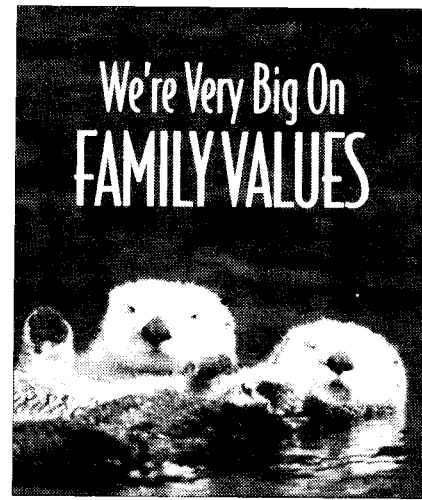
The Chapter now has five local groups scattered all across the state. People in and near New Orleans, Baton Rouge, Slidell and Covington (Honey Island Group), Lafayette (Acadian Group), and Shreveport (Kisatchie Group) can attend meetings, participate in conservation work, and go on our outings.

For more information, please get in touch with:

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Introducing the Delta Country

The lands and waters of southern Louisiana and Mississippi are fascinating, challenging, and in many ways unique. The fertility of the Mississippi Delta makes possible wildlife concentrations hard to find anywhere else in the USA. Unless you insist on rock climbing or cross-country skiing, most of the self-propelled outdoor pursuits you can think of are available. Local branches of the Sierra Club have been exploring, enjoying and fighting to preserve and protect the natural beauties and values of the area for more than two decades. This book is among both the tools and the fruits of that effort.

Geological History—Traces of four and a half billion years of the life of our planet are to be found in our area. The ends of the Appalachians lie buried miles below the surface, for example. For all practical purposes, though, what you see on the surface is the result of the interaction of the Mississippi River and the Gulf of Mexico over the last seventy million years.

During this time the gulf has often intruded far inland, and the rocks and sediments that comprise the hills of southern Mississippi and the Florida Parishes of Louisiana were laid down then. This explains the fact that you can find shark's teeth, oyster shells, and other marine remains near the Leaf River, over a hundred miles from the sea.

Barrier islands, including Grand Isle, Ship Island, and Horn Island, build up where the Gulf washes against a sandy shore. About five thousand years ago such an island appeared in the vicinity of Lake Pontchartrain. Shortly afterwards the Mississippi Delta began to achieve its present form in the area.

Old Man River has shifted his course through the Delta many times in the course of the past few thousand years. When the river flooded and spread out over the broad flood plains, the water dropped some of its burden of silt. When the channels shifts these natural levee ridges stop growing. Then they slowly subsided along with the rest of the area. The natural subsidence rate is about 0.4 feet per century in the New Orleans area.

The river began its most recent delta shift south

of New Orleans around 9,800 years ago, abandoning earlier channels in what is now St. Bernard Parish. Within the last century the river has made the beginnings of a more radical shift to the Atchafalaya Basin, but the Corps of Engineers has so far managed to prevent this from happening. These efforts are designed to protect the economic pattern of the area, which has grown around the present course of the river.

Alluvial Ridges, Swamps, Marshes and Barrier Islands—These are the natural features that have grown up from the delta processes described above. The life of each area has evolved to fit a delicate balance of conditions, including flooding, soil type, elevation and salinity.

The alluvial ridges, because they are elevated above sea level and have reasonably stable soil, have been where agriculture and development have taken place in the area. Only small fragments remain of the magnificent hardwoods that grew on the banks of the Mississippi. Harvesting of the oaks, magnolias and other trees was a factor in the economy of Louisiana. Most such forests disappeared, and only a few small areas and some regenerating patches are left.

There are still cypress, tupelo, and palmetto swamps closer to sea level in many areas, though almost all of them are second growth. These swamps and marshes are tremendously productive of life. The nutrients and detritus produced here form the base of the food chain for a large part of the Gulf of Mexico. They support tourism, fishing, hunting, and allied industries worth billions of dollars. Despite this our wetlands still are not treated with the respect they deserve.

Drained swamps and marshes have been used for residential and urban development, especially in Jefferson and Orleans Parishes. In a natural state the productive soils of the swamps and marshes are very high in organic content. Unfortunately this same productivity creates hazardous conditions for homeowners who live in these areas. After the soil is drained it subsides at a fantastic rate, as it dries

and the organic matter in it oxidizes. Homes built on pilings often require thousands of dollars of maintenance as the land sinks away from their slabs. Roads and foundations buckle, water and sewer lines rupture, and a terrible burden is placed on area residents and taxpayers.

This is doubly tragic, as the marshes and swamps are not only vital parts of our life-support system but possess a beauty incredible to behold. Such areas as Alligator Bayou, the Barataria unit of Jean Lafitte National Park, and the Honey Island Swamp do not provide challenging canoeing or hiking, but will open your eyes (if they are not already open).

Tidal marshes, lakes, and bays stretch from the swamp to the sea. The water here is often covered by floating plants, and apparent islands can disappear into the mud under the incautious foot. Here fishermen can bring home the sort of catches that are only a memory elsewhere in the country. A large fraction of the continent's waterfowl and furbearing animals live here. *Spartina* grasses are the dominant plants of these coastal marshes.

The natural lives of marshes are not infinite. Natural subsidence eventually destroys them, and they are ephemeral in terms of geological time. In the natural order of things, however, marshes are generated in one place as they are being destroyed in another. Also, the destruction is naturally slowed by a yearly infusion of flood-borne nutrients.

The Mississippi River levee system walls off almost all of our wetlands from this renewal, and the dredging has accelerated the destruction of existing marsh tremendously. Oil exploration, navigation channels, pipeline canals, and their associated spoil banks all play a part in this destruction. The loss rate of land in south Louisiana is over fifty square miles per year, and much of the loss is careless and unnecessary. The problem is compounded by salt water intrusion into the marshes, accelerated by those man-made straight-line canals and channels.

The barrier islands have problems too, largely caused by development for recreational use. One island off the Mississippi Coast was developed. The dunes were leveled and stripped of their protective vegetation, and then the unprotected sand was washed

and blown into the Gulf. Only a sand bar is left. Two islands, Horn and Petit Bois, somehow remained nearly untouched. They are now protected as wilderness in the Gulf Islands National Seashore after campaigns lasting many years.

Rivers and Uplands—North of the swamps, Lake Pontchartrain, and the Mississippi Gulf Coast the land changes dramatically. The presence of highlands that do not flood is the cause, though many rivers, especially the Atchafalaya and the Pearl, have large swamp areas within their basins. Both of these great river basins, the focus of continuing conservation battles, have many access points and are well worth seeing.

The area's smaller rivers are the most popular for recreational canoeing. When they are pristine they are lined with natural communities that usually feature cypress or willow trees. Both of these trees are adapted to wet conditions. The cypresses have broad stable bases and knees, and the willows have the capacity to grow roots from their trunks and branches at flood stage.

Broad sand bars are pleasant for camping, but they're not always a part of the natural state of things. They often reflect misuse of land along the water's edge. Stripping river banks of their natural vegetative cover gives erosion a free hand. The finer particles and organic matter wash downstream, leaving heavy sand and gravel in a stream bed that is much wider than it was originally.

You can find a wide variety of natural communities away from the rivers. Pines and upland hardwoods form the basis for these communities, but as always the heavy hand of humanity is evident. In Louisiana and Mississippi it is often the tree farmer and not natural succession that selects the trees (and thus the animals, birds and other plant life).

This has been a brief and oversimplified introduction to the natural heritage of the Delta Country. We hope that you will be able to explore and enjoy it for many years to come. ■

Walk Softly

This book gives you the opportunity to explore and enjoy some of the most beautiful parts of one of the unique regions of the United States. We hope that you will not take advantage of the opportunities without accepting the responsibilities. We have just this one Earth, and our wilderness and wildlands are a most fragile part of it.

Those around you and those who come after you should not have their experience diminished because of what you do and what you leave behind. Some means to this end are:

The general rule about trash is, if you can bring something in with you, you can carry it back out again. Since your packages will be lighter after you've emptied them, you'll have room for other people's junk too, if you find any.

Avoid building fires as much as you can by using portable stoves for cooking. If you build a fire, keep it small, and use only dead, fallen wood. Dead wood will snap in two when you try to bend it; live, green wood will bend without breaking.

Unless your fire was built in a permanent fireplace, erase all traces of your fire (after you are sure that it's out). Scatter any stones that were blackened by the fire, turning sooty sides to the ground. Scatter charred wood away from the trail and campsite. After you break camp your campsite should look as if you had never

been there.

When necessary, dig a small personal latrine well away from camp and from any water supply. Burn toilet paper before covering the latrine hole. If paper cannot be burned, collect it in a plastic bag for proper disposal later. Don't leave tissue flowers scattered around the perimeter of your campsite, or along the trail, or anywhere else.

On steep trails, do not shortcut switchbacks, going either uphill or downhill. (A possible exception—if the trail ahead has been taken as its very own by a skunk, rattlesnake, bear, or other hazard).

Leave those disturbing items at home. Noisy audio gear, firearms, and pets are forbidden on Sierra Club outings, because any of them can destroy the wilderness experience of people far and wide. The place for firearms is at the firing range or, during open season, on legal and safe hunts.

The old ethic of the pioneer, that the world is a lawless and limitless place to be subdued and exploited, must give way. The new ethic is that of the spaceship earth; we must give thought to our fellow and future passengers, because if we don't there won't be enough to go around. We must keep this in mind in the wilderness and throughout our lives. ■



CANOEING

THE CREEKS

Canoeing

In that wet and rainy part of the world that includes the southern portions of Mississippi and Louisiana, the canoe is a very useful way to see the country. Both small channels in the marshes and swamps and broad flood plains in the river basins make for solitude. Trees muffle highway sounds, and swamps and marshes are hard to reach by land. Wilderness experiences are easier to find on the water in this area. Much of the land is intensely exploited, and hiking trail construction is not all it should be, though it's advancing.

The expertise and the equipment you need for the conditions varies with the type of water and the season of the year. Marshes and swamps usually have flat water and abundant wildlife, although the swamps of the great Pearl River and Atchafalaya River Basins have strong currents at times. The rivers north of the coast provide a variety of experiences, from leisurely summer tubing to some very dangerous canoeing at times of high water. There is almost no true white water in the area, though many streams have small drops and riffles that provide a good training ground.

For equipment in canoeing, you will need a canoe and paddles, and a life jacket for each person (both minimum common sense and the law require the latter). Fall, winter, and spring canoeing can be very cold, especially if you get wet and the weather changes. Cold rains can appear miles from the nearest shelter. Be prepared to combat hypothermia.

You'll need food and shelter for overnight trips. Equipment is available for sale or rent in most major cities, and a number of rivers have rentals nearby. Consult the Directory section of this book.

You say you've never done this before, and don't know where to start? That can be overcome too. If you are a Sierra Club member or guest, call the leaders of any trips you are interested in; they will give you an estimate of the skills needed. Many leaders of trips marked as suitable for beginners will give you some instruction. For more formal lessons, some outdoor stores provide courses in canoeing, as does the American Red Cross. Many also sell books on the subject. Consult the Directory. Know your own limitations, and don't go on trips likely to be dangerous to you.

A garbage bag is another important piece of equipment. As long as there were only a few people on the rivers, lazy canoers could leave biodegradable items behind. Now most rivers have a lot of traffic, and nothing degrades fast enough to be invisible to the group coming around the last bend. An empty container is lighter than a full one, an apple core is lighter than an apple; bring it *all* back. That old-timer who says "biodegradable" and throws things away is out of date.

The excitement of fast water, the peace of the forests, the fun of being with friends, the peace and contemplation of the wilderness: canoeing. Join us on the river! ■

Rivers Running

Many small streams and rivers have their origins north of the Louisiana and Mississippi Gulf coast. These streams flow under trees and across fields, join, and grow. At first they are narrow, and trees jam across them frequently, making canoeing extremely difficult or impossible.

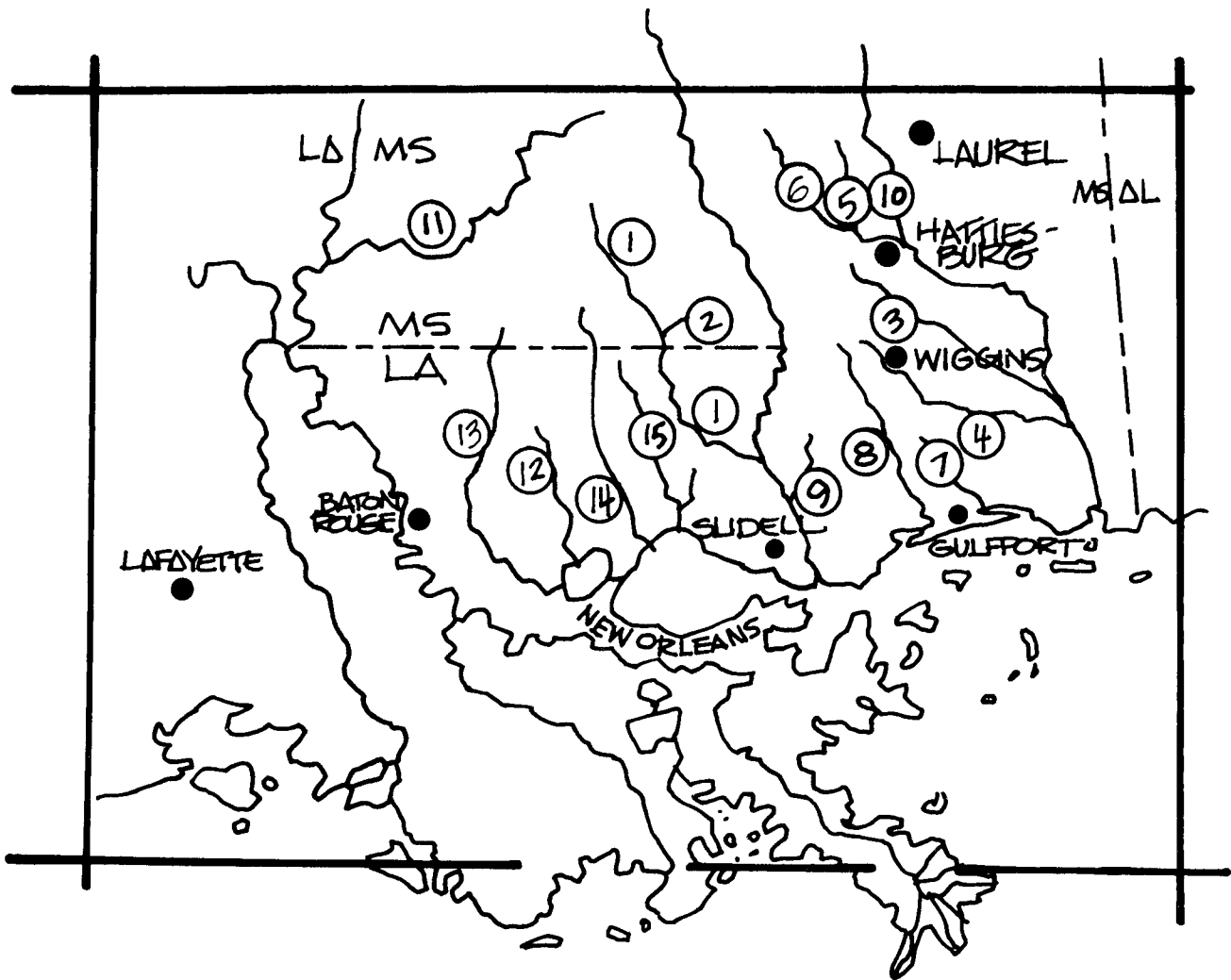
A few more streams join, and lightly laden canoes can pass, though there are still some jammed trees ("pulovers"). Then the creeks broaden and deepen to become rivers. Some are slow and easy, and some have chutes and drops and riffles through sand or clay banks. All have some branches and fallen trees as skill-sharpening obstacles. Most have wildlife on their banks. Finally, almost all of the rivers become too broad and slow for most canoers, and

power boats take over.

The personalities of our rivers change with the seasons. In spring the waters can be high and the currents fast. Sections with fallen trees and snags are dangerous under these conditions. Summer offers easy paddling (it's too hot to paddle hard) and the relief of swimming, splashing, and just lying around in the warm water. Fall is beautiful, but water levels are usually low. The winter has its own rewards and its own danger: cold (and resulting hypothermia).

Bring back all your trash and some of the trash left by other people (you'll probably find some). That way the streams will be cleaner and newer-looking when you return. You'll probably want to return. ■

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Canoe trails in the swamps and marshes of southern Louisiana have their own section in this book, immediately following this one.

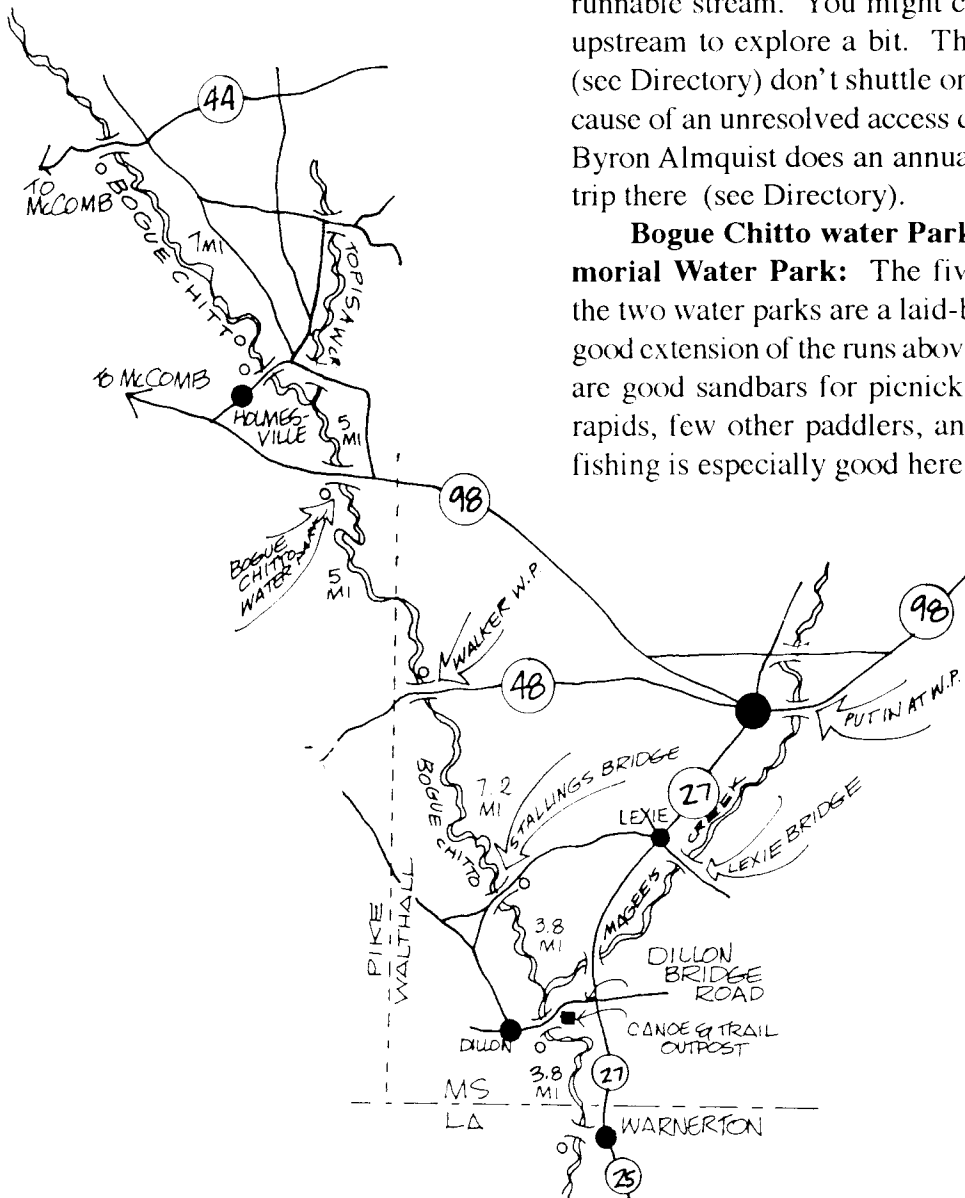
Bogue Chitto River

by Byron Almquist and Jeanne de la Houssaye

From narrow beginnings near Brookhaven to a broad and winding end in the magnificent swamps of the Pearl River Basin, the Bogue Chitto offers almost a hundred miles of year-round canoeing. There are some beautiful stretches above MS 44, but they can be full of snags and pullovers, strenuous at low to moderate water and dangerous at high. Below 44, the going is great, and there are outfitters (see the Directory) for rentals and shuttles.

MS 44 to Bogue Chitto Water Park: The access at the Hwy 44 bridge is steep, but the six miles below are a pleasant day trip, and the upper limit of year-round canoeing. Takeout is at the bridge at Holmesville. Another six river miles will take you to US 98, and just beyond that is the Bogue Chitto Water Park, an easy access with good parking, campsites and bathhouses. Fees are charged for all usages. The highlight of this second six miles is the confluence with Topisaw Creek, a sparkling green tributary, itself a runnable stream. You might consider paddling upstream to explore a bit. The local outfitters (see Directory) don't shuttle on the Topisaw because of an unresolved access dispute, however, Byron Almquist does an annual canoe camping trip there (see Directory).

Bogue Chitto water Park to Walker Memorial Water Park: The five miles between the two water parks are a laid-back day trip or a good extension of the runs above or below. There are good sandbars for picnicking, a nice small rapids, few other paddlers, and no tubers. The fishing is especially good here.

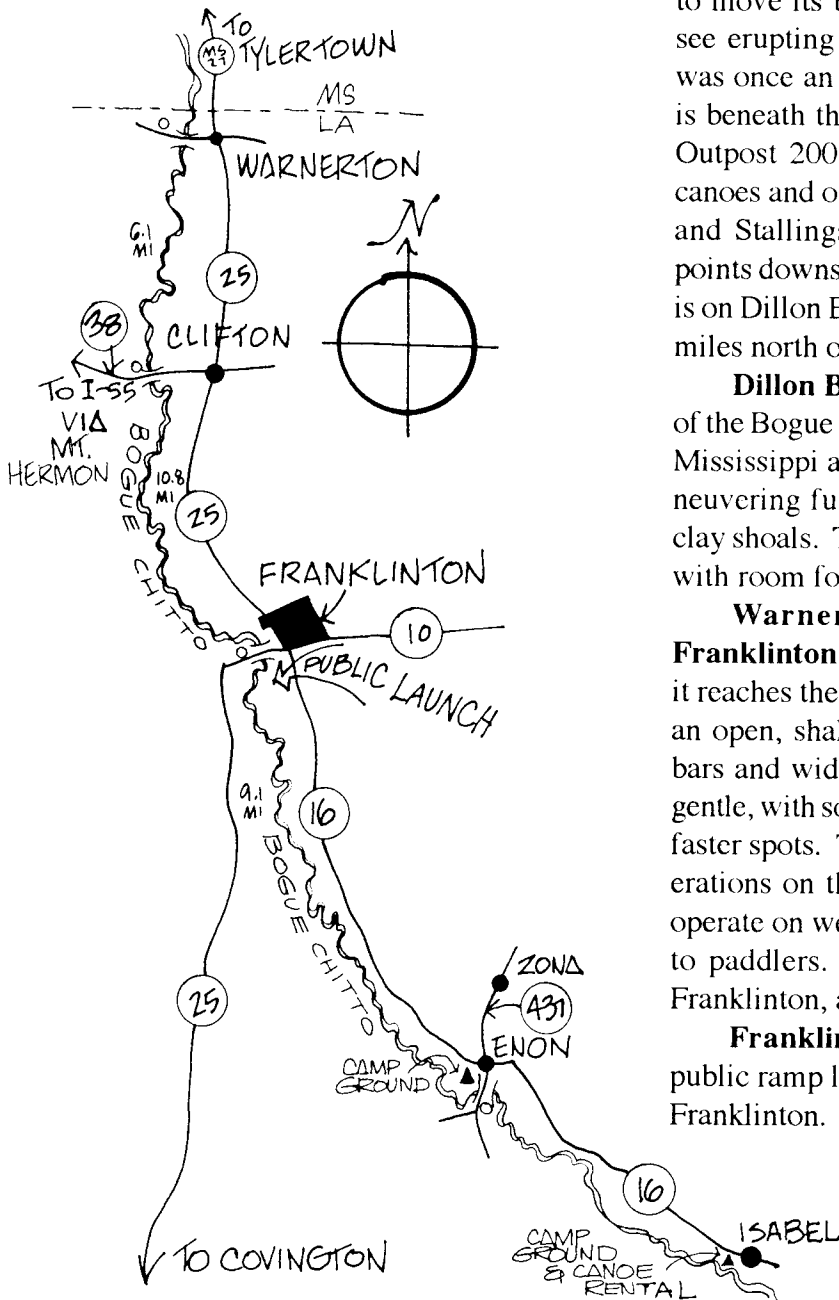


Walker Memorial Water Park to Dillon Bridge:

Walker Park, located 6.8 miles west of Tylertown, MS, on Hwy 48, is poorly maintained despite an attractive pavilion and good launch ramp, but there's lots of parking. Downstream the Bogue Chitto is wide and often shallow, with glorious sand beaches and great rock hunting. In several places the river has cut new channels, an interesting process to observe. Just above Stallings Bridge, 7.2 miles downriver, a soapstone shoal across the river has eroded into a swift, curving drop that is very easy, but lots of

fun, to paddle.

Stallings is an alternate take out, but the 3.2 miles between there and Dillon Bridge contain some of the most fun on the river, a huge shoal that runs diagonally across the river creating a small drop, and Bogue Chitto Falls, which once deserved its name, but is now just a pleasant little bump. Sandstone outcroppings on either side attest to the former height of the falls. The river widens just before Dillon Bridge as it is joined by Magee's creek, and flows along a bluff that it is steadily eroding as the river continues its drive to move its bed eastward. The "geyser" you'll see erupting from the river near the right bank was once an artesian well on dry land. Takeout is beneath the bridge, or at the Canoe and Trail Outpost 200 yards further. The Outpost rents canoes and offers private shuttles to both Walker and Stallings, and by special arrangement, to points downstream. It has a nice campground. It is on Dillon Bridge Road, a left turn off MS 27, 2 miles north of the state line.



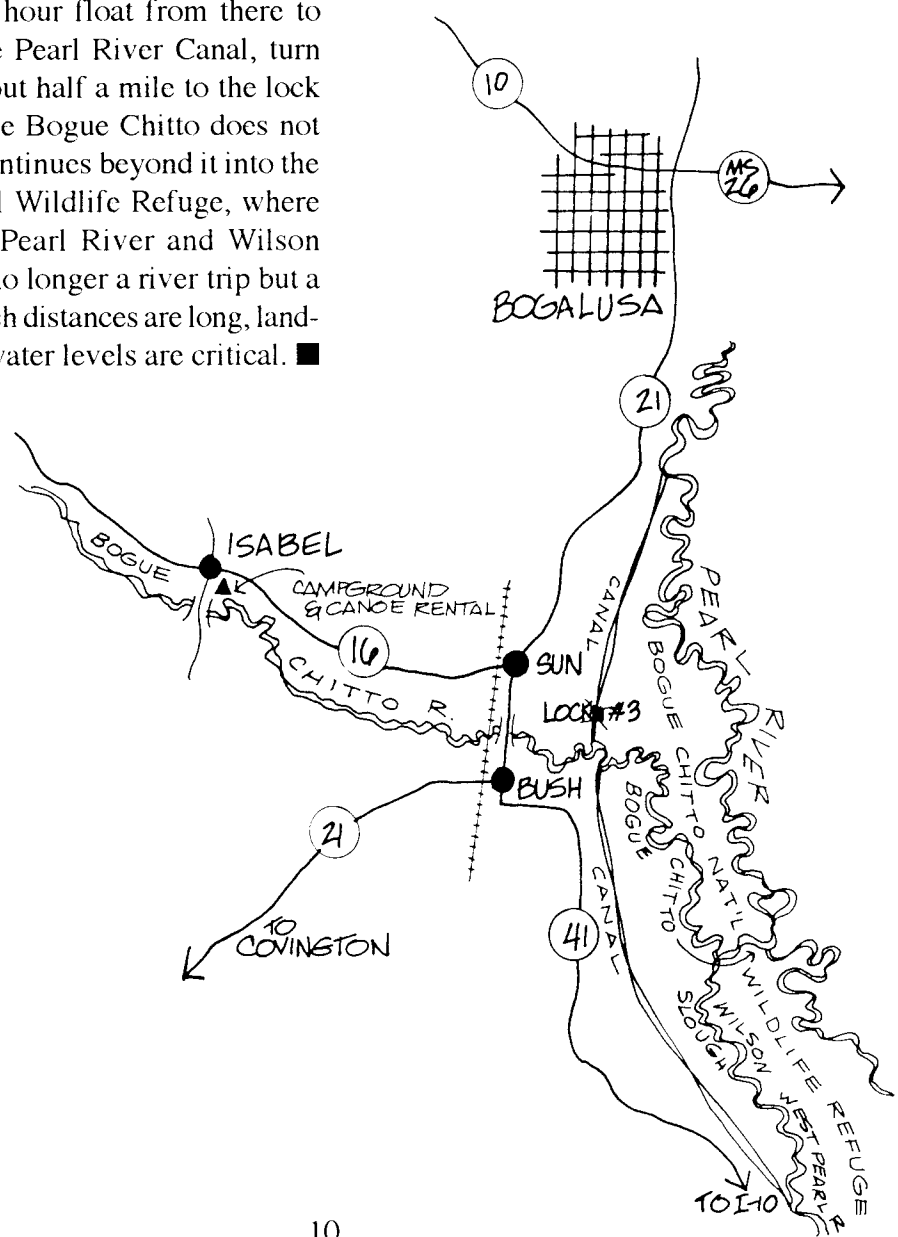
Dillon Bridge to Warnerton: This section of the Bogue Chitto crosses the state line between Mississippi and Louisiana, and offers some maneuvering fun in the way of deadfall and a few clay shoals. The take-out is steep but negotiable, with room for a few vehicles.

Warnerton to Clifton, Clifton to Franklinton: From here the Bogue Chitto, until it reaches the Pearl River Basin, consistently has an open, shallow river bed with frequent sandbars and wide, sweeping bends. The current is gentle, with some natural obstacles and occasional faster spots. There are some sand and gravel operations on these portions, but since they don't operate on weekends, they're seldom a nuisance to paddlers. Take out is below the bridge at Franklinton, at a public boat launch.

Franklinton to Enon: Launch from the public ramp located off LA 16 going south from Franklinton. This is the longest stretch between

access points on the Bogue Chitto, and is rather long for a day trip, but it has more wilderness character than the two sections above it. The canoe rental at Isabel (see Directory) arranges shuttles for this run. Just above the take out point there are a number of camps, and the campground above the Hwy 437 bridge is a good take out, with a fee for parking. You can also take out at the bridge.

Enon to Lock # 3: The campground at the 437 bridge can serve as a put in, and so can the bridge. There are bridges downstream at Isabel and Sun, and the outfitter at Isabel (see Directory) shuttles a 4 hour float from Enon to its own campground, and a 5 hour float from there to Sun. On reaching the Pearl River Canal, turn left (north) and go about half a mile to the lock and takeout point. The Bogue Chitto does not end at the canal, but continues beyond it into the Bogue Chitto National Wildlife Refuge, where it meets up with the Pearl River and Wilson Slough. By then, it's no longer a river trip but a swamp trip, one in which distances are long, landmarks are scarce and water levels are critical. ■



Magee's Creek

by Jeanne de la Houssaye and Kenny Lindsly

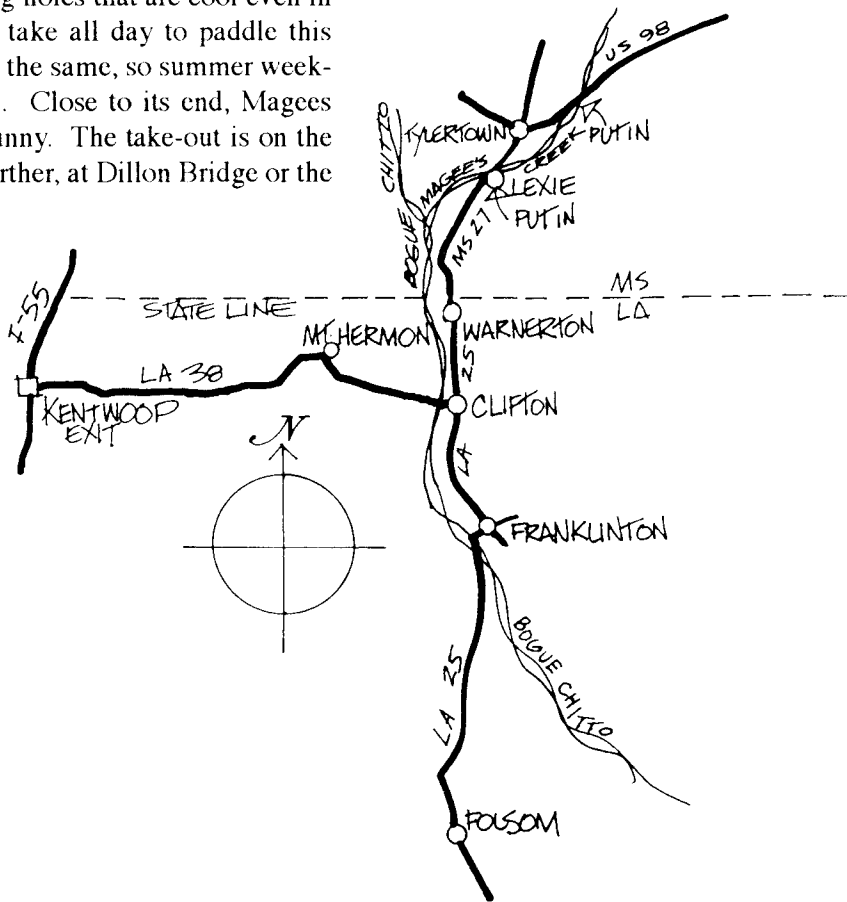
A tributary of the Bogue Chitto, Magee's Creek is runnable below the US 98 bridge at Tylertown. From US 98 the float to the confluence with the Bogue Chitto takes 5 or 6 hours, including a few stops for lunch and enjoying the sandbars and swimming holes. Putting in downstream at Lexie bridge shortens the trip by at least a third and avoids most of the challenges.

Just below Tylertown the creek is narrow and twisting, and some maneuvering skills are necessary to negotiate fallen trees. The creek has recently cut a new channel and is especially narrow and swift at that point. It meets up with its old bed at a very large clay shoal, where it drops a good five feet in gentle increments. There is often not enough water to float this drop, and canoes must be pulled over it. When there IS enough water, this is a rapids *guaranteed* to dump the inexperienced or the unwary!

Below Lexie there are few difficulties and many pleasures. Beaches both shady and sunny are spots to kick back, picnic, and look for fossils. Several large tributaries form swimming holes that are cool even in midsummer. We like to take all day to paddle this stretch. Lots of folks feel the same, so summer weekends can find it crowded. Close to its end, Magees widens out and is very sunny. The take-out is on the Bogue Chitto, 1/2 mile further, at Dillon Bridge or the Canoe and Trail Outpost.

Magee's is serviced by the Canoe and Trail Outpost, which rents and shuttles canoes to both put-ins and to several venues on the Bogue Chitto. They also shuttle private canoes. They have parking, showers, and a snack bar, as well as a shady, rustic campground with bath houses.

Getting there: To reach the Canoe and Trail Outpost, take Louisiana Hwy 25 north from Covington. The highway zig-zags through Franklinton, but if you bear left, you can stay with it. When you see the Washington Parish Fair Grounds you know you're on the right road. LA Hwy 25 becomes MS Hwy 27 at the State Line. Exactly two miles north of the State Line, turn left on Dillon Bridge Road at the Outpost sign. In a little less than a mile, you'll see the Bogue Chitto on your right, and then you'll cross a bridge over an old channel. The Outpost is on your immediate left, before you cross Dillon Bridge. ■



Black Creek

by Cornell and Jan Tramontana

One of Mississippi's prime canoeing streams, Black Creek flows, for much of its course, through DeSoto National Forest, providing paddlers with a true wilderness experience. The fossil-hunting is outstanding. Sand and gravel bars, clay shoals, and clear, tannin-colored water make this beautiful creek a mecca for canoeists and campers, so solitude is rare during warm weather, especially just above and below Brooklyn, where Black Creek Canoe Rental (see Directory) has its outpost on Old US 49. To reach the outpost, take US 49 north of Wiggins and watch for the signs at Brooklyn.

Hwy. 11 to Brown's Bridge, Brown's Bridge to Camp Dantzler Bridge: These two 5-mile sections lie outside the National Forest, and present more challenges than those that lie within. Above Brown's, the creek is narrow and twisting, and shallows and pullovers may be encountered at low water. Just below, a small shoal is fun for beginners, and riffles and gravel bars are numerous. There is adequate parking on the northeast side of the Hwy 11 Bridge, and plenty of parking at Brown's Bridge.

Camp Dantzler Bridge to Brooklyn (Old US 49 Bridge): Just below Camp Dantzler the banks are heavily wooded and sandbars are scarce. At low water some clay outcroppings provide excitement, and a large sandbar a mile and a half below the bridge is a good campsite. Eight miles down this thirteen-mile stretch, Black Creek enters DeSoto National Forest, and **Big Creek Landing** provides access and a picnic area. Here the creek begins to broaden and slow down, and sand beaches become frequent. Take-out is at Old US 49, across the creek from Black Creek Canoe Rental.

Brooklyn (Old US 49 Bridge) to Moody's Landing: There's a color-coded depth gauge at the bridge. Brown means you should canoe above Brooklyn only, green means optimum paddling conditions, yellow is for experienced canoeists only and orange means don't go. A call

to Black Creek Canoe Rental will get you the info you need. At low water the stretch down to Moody's is (literally) a drag. At a good water level it floats a canoe easily, and provides a fun-filled, 5-mile, 3 1/2-hour day trip with lots of obstacles and sunny beaches. Moody's Landing is an improved Forest Service site, and Black Creek Canoe Rental runs frequent shuttles.

Moody's Landing to Janice Landing: High banks and a towering hardwood forest give this ten-mile, 5-hour section the awesome aspect of a cathedral. From here to Fairly Bridge Black Creek is designated a National Wild and Scenic River. The take-out at the Hwy. 29 bridge at Janice is another improved Forest Service site.

Janice Landing to Fairly Bridge: This is an outstanding stretch of creek for canoe camping, providing a proliferation of sand beaches, a few easy riffles, and an established campground four miles downstream from Janice Landing. The Sierra Club favors this section to introduce beginners to canoe camping. The campground at Cypress Creek, an improved Forest Service site, is car-accessible, so a three-way shuttle can allow gear to be left in camp and paddlers to enjoy the creek unencumbered — and no one has to learn the hard way not to overload a canoe! The entire run is only 10 miles, allowing for lots of stops and plenty of time at the campground, where there is a neat rope swing. The take out at Fairly Bridge is another Forest Service development, and there Black Creek leaves the National Forest. Black Creek Canoe Rental Shuttles to all locations within the National Forest.

Below Fairly Bridge: River banks are largely private property from here to the creek's confluence with the Pascagoula, and the creek becomes slower and swampier. There are about 6 creek miles between Fairly Bridge and MS 26 (between White's Crossing and Benndale), but a good 20 miles from there to MS 57. There is no further public access to Black Creek. The next take out is many slow, swampy miles away, at Three Rivers on the Pascagoula. ■

