Suwannee River Wilderness Trail

PADDLING GUIDE

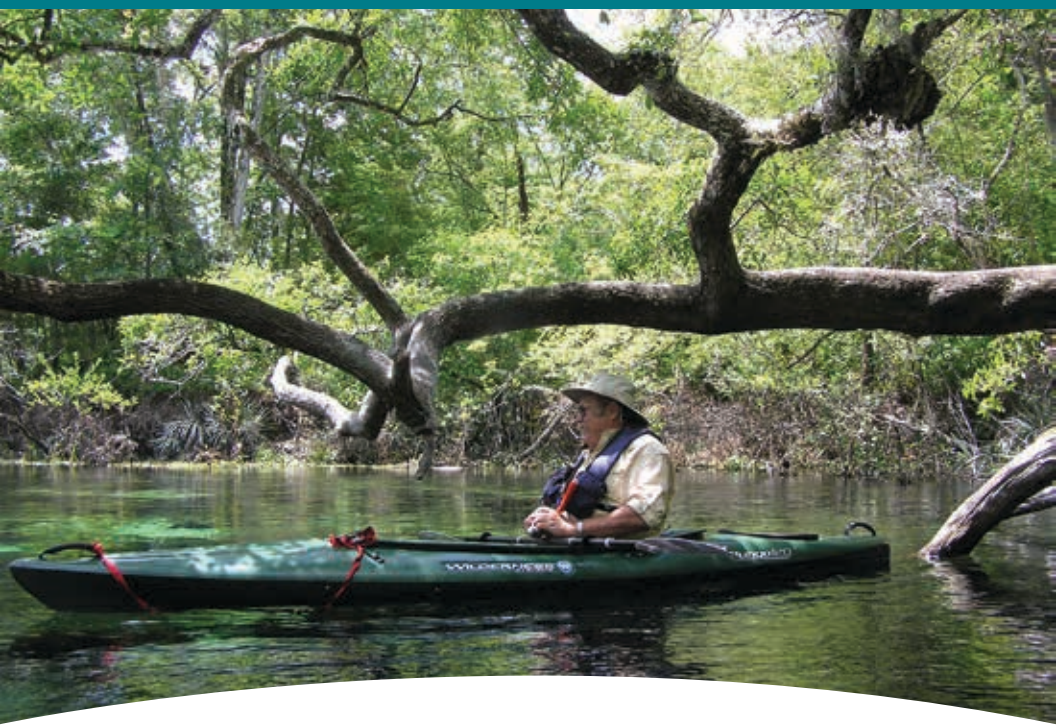
The Adventure Begins...

800.868.9914

www.SuwanneeRiver.com

REVISED 2015

INTRODUCTION



For those who know Florida only from postcard images of sunny beaches or the fairy tale worlds of theme parks, we have just one thing to say: N 30° 19.55 W 82° 44.33

Plug this number into your GPS, wave goodbye to the posh resorts and rollercoasters and let your car deliver you to the "real" Florida on the banks of the Suwannee River.

By some accounts, the Suwannee is Florida's best-known river. In the past, this fame came by way of a popular song. Today, however, as south Florida buckles under the weight of burgeoning population growth, it is the relative "wildness" of the Suwannee that makes it a natural wonder. Along its entire 235-mile length, only a handful of small communities overlook her waters; the largest having populations barely exceeding 1,000. Away from towns, homes are relatively scarce. In some places you can travel for miles without seeing any sign of civilization. There are also few campgrounds. It was this shortage of designated camping areas and facilities that inspired the formation of the Suwannee River Wilderness Trail (SRWT).

THE SUWANNEE RIVER WILDERNESS TRAIL

The Suwannee River Wilderness Trail (SRWT) is a partnership of private and public lands and facilities along the Suwannee River that have coordinated efforts to enhance the paddling and exploration of the river. The Trail starts at White Springs and follows the river for 171 miles to the Gulf of Mexico. This Paddling Guide is a product of the SRWT partnership.

Central to this system are eight "hubs," mostly state parks and towns that offer a variety of activities and services for SRWT users. While the trail is primarily geared toward paddlers, the hubs offer trail users the opportunity to expand their exploration of the area by bicycle, horseback, or on foot. In the hub towns of White Springs, Dowling Park, Branford, Fanning Springs and Suwannee, overnight accommodations can be found in hotels and inns. The park hubs, located at Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park, Suwannee River State Park, Lafayette Blue Springs State Park and Fanning Springs State Park, have vacation cabins that sleep six people and are furnished with gas fireplaces, kitchenette and screened porch. At the privately owned Spirit of the Suwannee Music Park, you can sleep in your tent, cabin or a tree house!


Holton Creek River Camp

Between hubs, in more remote areas along the river, "river camps" have been built to serve paddlers on the SRWT. These can be accessed by river only. The river camps all have the same components — five screened sleeping platforms with electricity and ceiling fans, restrooms with hot showers, potable water, picnic areas and fire rings. But, while they all have the same basic features, each river camp has its own personality. Whereas the platforms at Holton Creek river camp are situated in a deeply shaded stand of hardwoods, interspersed among sinkholes and swales, Adams River camp is high, dry and open — a reflection of the surrounding longleaf pine community.

TO MAKE RESERVATIONS:

- For cabins at any of the Florida state parks along the Suwannee River, call Reserve America at 800.326.3521 or (866) I CAMP FL or visit www.ReserveAmerica.com. Fees vary.
- For river camps, or to get information about additional lodging elsewhere along the trail, call 800.868.9914. Fees may apply.
- For lodging elsewhere along the SRWT, Visit the web site: www.SuwanneeRiver.com for a list of private campgrounds, cabins, motels and bed and breakfasts.

Before starting your trip, you should consider visiting the State of Florida's Suwannee River Wilderness Trail Headquarters, located at 4298 NW County Road 292, Mayo, FL (800.868.9914, 386.294.1120). The headquarters includes brochures and displays about the trail. You may also want to visit the Nature and Heritage Tourism Center operated by the Town of White Springs, located about a mile up the road from the launch site in White Springs (10499 Spring Street, White Springs, FL). This facility, operated by the Town, carries locally-produced arts and crafts as well as brochures, displays and visitor information about the area.

MANY FACES OF THE SUWANNEE RIVER

As might be expected of a 235-mile river, the Suwannee has many faces and a diversity of natural communities. In a single day of exploration, you can easily visit half a dozen unique habitats. On a broader scale, the Suwannee has three distinct sections — the upper, middle and lower. To better understand the river and help plan your trip, we'll compare and contrast these sections.

In the upper Suwannee, the area between the Okefenokee Swamp and the Withlacoochee River confluence, the Suwannee carves a meandering course over the Northern Highlands. This is a remote, sparsely populated area of pine plantations and scattered hardwoods. The soil here is light and sandy.

Fall on the Suwannee

Between White Springs and Suwannee Springs, the river descends a low ridge, or escarpment, called the Cody Scarp. This is the remains of an ancient shoreline, eroded by wave action when the world's sea levels were much higher than today. The Suwannee's passage over the Cody Scarp is marked by massive outcroppings and sheer rock faces of limestone. Many of these are beautifully sculpted by water and chemical erosion.

In periods of low water, the rocky riverbed develops many fun shoals and quick-water chutes for the thrill seeking paddler. However, in very low water, these shoals become a series of exhausting pull-overs. Be sure to check with a local outfitter if you're unsure of conditions.

Its descent through the Cody Scarp marks the Suwannee's passage from the Northern Highlands into the lower, more level area known as the Gulf Coastal Lowlands. This emergence into the Gulf Coastal Lowlands also marks the beginning of the lower Suwannee region. While still very rural, the middle Suwannee is the most populated section of the river. Farming and ranching are mainstays of the local economy. The river itself hosts a greater diversity of aquatic life than the upper section, nurtured by minerals from the springs and nutrients from runoff brought by the Withlacoochee and other feeder streams. Limestone is still a major component of the riverbanks, but is gradually replaced by sand as it flows toward the Gulf.

More than anything else, it is the abundance of cool, freshwater springs that defines the middle Suwannee. Of the 196 springs in the Suwannee basin, the vast majority are found in this section. Few rivers in the world can boast such a density of springs, making the popular sport of "spring hopping" a uniquely Suwannee experience. In low water, you may encounter several shoals, but the channel


Royal Springs

is deeper than those of the upper river and rarely require a pullover. Motor boats need to operate cautiously in this section during low water.

Near Fanning Springs you are in the lower Suwannee region. High banks have melted away and the river has become wild again — flanked by low bottomlands and floodplain forests. Those rare places where high ground abuts the river are usually topped by homes. Some aspects of the lower river make it less suited to paddling than other sections. Wide-open water (which means more chance of winds), along with changing tides, can make very difficult paddling conditions that should only be attempted by strong, experienced paddlers. Boat ramps and access roads are rare, so getting help in an emergency could be difficult. But, with careful planning and all due caution, you'll find that the lower Suwannee offers some of the finest paddling. Exploring some of the many side streams, you'll find a fantastic swampy world of bald cypress trees, pumpkin ash, tupelo, swamp dogwoods and others. This rich environment hosts a wonderful variety of birds and other animals.

HEADWATERS


Kayaking the lower Suwannee

One of the highlights of exploring a new river comes as you arrive at the launch site. You've laid out your route, planned meals and marked your map with possible campsites. All the while, you've unintentionally developed an image in your mind's eye of what the river looks like. Then you arrive, and all preconceived notions evaporate.

For those who plan to explore the Suwannee River Wilderness Trail from it's beginning, those magical first moments happen at the park alongside the US 41 Bridge. Walking down to the river's edge, the first thing you notice is that, while this is the beginning of the "Trail", the river itself is already in mid-life. Forty feet wide and entrenched between steep, 30-foot banks, the slow surge of tannin-brown water speaks of a river with history. It's a river that has known many environments and carved a watery lane through the home territories of countless animals. As you watch the debris of distant forests drift past — crimson maple leaves; pale red fruits that look like elongated

grapes (which your field guide reveals to be Ogeechee tupelo); bristly, round globes that appear to be some kind of seed vessel (you suspect sweetgum or perhaps buttonbush) uprooted aquatic vegetation; floating logs — you wonder about the forests from which they came. The darkness of the water, with its faint mustiness, hints at a swamp in the river's upper reaches. While your partners unload gear and carry boats to the river, their grumbled complaints go unheard as your mind drifts off on an imaginary voyage upstream — a quest to find the Suwannee's origins.

Moving upstream, (a direction of travel we recommend only for this imaginary tour) your first stop comes in five miles, where you find one of the State's geological wonders — Big Shoals. Here, the river passes through a rock-strewn terrace of limestone, creating an impressive and scenic shoal (a shallow area). In low water levels, this boulder field creates a series of relatively low drops. But, in medium flow, when levels are between 59 and 61 feet above mean sea level, it becomes a Class III rapid that even skilled paddlers should scout before running. Novices should avoid paddling through the Shoals by using the ¼ mile portage on the river's east bank.


Big Shoals

The west bank above the shoals is Big Shoals Public Lands. Exploring some of the trails in this 3,772-acre park, you'll find a good sampling of the kinds of forest that flank much of the upper Suwannee. The river trail, connecting the main parking lot to the Shoals, stays close to the river channel for most of its length, passing through a low, scrubby forest of small, twisting oaks, sparkleberry and saw palmetto. All together, the park has nearly 28 miles of trails that take you through a mix of pine and messic hardwood forests.

Continuing upstream from the Shoals, change comes slowly. Riverbanks remain steep-sided, but gradually become lower. Limestone along the banks is replaced by sand. Crossing into Georgia, 35 miles into your upstream journey (206 miles up from the Gulf), the river carries you past sandy, 5–6 foot banks, topped by open forests of longleaf pines and saw palmettos. Lower areas are forested with cypress, titi and laurel oaks. Most notable are the squat, troll-like Ogeechee tupelos that stand solemnly like steadfast sentries along the watery causeway. While these trees often seem ravaged by time and the elements, everything about their gnarly, multi-trunked appearance is a finely tuned adaptation for this environment.

After passing the small community of Fargo, (perhaps stopping in to visit the Suwannee River Visitor Center with its excellent interpretive displays and video) another 17 miles brings you to the Suwannee Sill. This 8 foot high, 4.6 mile long earthen dam, was originally built to hold back the waters of the Okefenokee Swamp. Inspired by

Gentle spill of a creek into the Suwannee

devastating wildfires in the early 1960's, it was hoped the Sill would prevent future fires by keeping the swamp consistently wet. In the decades following its construction, the Sill was found to be detrimental to the health of both the swamp and the Suwannee River that drains it. These days the floodgates are kept permanently in the open position, but the dam remains. It is hoped the dam will actually be breached some day, to allow boats to pass freely in and out of the swamp.

As you drag your imaginary boat over the Sill, you enter the great wet wilderness called the Okefenokee Swamp. But to call this simply a "swamp" is a gross understatement. Eight distinct wetland communities are found in the Okefenokee. Combined, they are home to at least 233 species of birds, 49 mammals, 64 reptiles and 39 species of fish. Underlying much of the swamp, an infirm layer of peat was the inspiration for the name "Okefenokee," a Seminole name meaning "trembling earth." The accumulation of peat is the result of the swamp's unique structure. Set in a basin, formed nearly 7,000 years ago as a depression in a shallow seabed, sediments and debris aren't carried away by the two primary drainage channels — the Suwannee and St. Mary's rivers. Instead, it has accumulated over the millennia to form layers 10–12 feet thick.

The importance of this vast wetland was recognized in 1939 with the establishment of the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge. Currently, the Refuge staff maintains nearly 110 miles of well-marked paddling trails in the swamp that can be accessed from four main entry points. Trip options range from simple, single-day outings to multi-day paddles requiring careful planning. Several excellent guidebooks and knowledgeable staff at the Refuge offices can help you plan your trip.

Having now indulged yourself in this fantasy tour of the upper river, it's a safe bet your boat is ready to go and your friends have either left you or are assailing you with high-pitched squeals. Either way, it's time to paddle.

SAFETY INFORMATION

Before you go make sure you're prepared. The following is a list of helpful information.

PERSONAL FLOTATION DEVICES (PFDS)

Wear a Coast Guard approved type III-V, properly adjusted lifejacket at all times when you are in or near the river.

FILE A FLOAT PLAN

Tell someone where you are going, when you expect to return, and where to call if you don't. A float plan is available online at www.floridastateparks.org/park/Suwannee-River-Wilderness-Trail or by calling 1-800-868-9914 for the Suwannee River Wilderness Trail headquarters.

PADDLE AT YOUR SKILL-LEVEL

Make sure that your water skills and experience are equal to the river and the conditions. During fall and winter, hunters are active on or near the river. Check before arriving for exact dates and seasons. In an emergency, stay with your canoe/kayak.

KNOW THE WATER LEVEL

Find out about river conditions – if the water is flooded, low, or normal. A flooded river is often dangerous and should be avoided. A low river may expose logs, stumps or rocks, requiring many liftovers, which make the trip slower and more difficult.

SHARING THE RIVER

Respect fisherman and landowners. Respect private property.

SECURE YOUR GEAR

Use a strap for eyeglasses and sunglasses. Carry gear and personal items in watertight containers or bags. Tie car keys to canoe or kayak or leave with outfitter

FISHING REGULATIONS

State fishing licenses in fresh and salt water are required, and species and size requirements are enforced.

FOOD

Do not leave food unattended. Store food in a secure compartment aboard a vessel or in a hard-sided cooler (not foam). Take food and water for one extra day.

PACK-IT-IN, PACK-IT-OUT

Bring trash bags for litter. Help keep our waterways beautiful!

HUMAN WASTE

Use toilets where provided. Bring a small plastic trowel for use at other times. Where there is no toilet, dig a hole at least six inches deep and cover it after use or, better yet, pack human waste and toilet paper to the nearest toilet (70 steps [200 ft.] from the bank of the river). Please wash dishes (and yourself) away from waterways and sprinkle the graywater over the ground to keep soap out of the river.

REMEMBER: SAFE USE OF RIVERS AND ANY DESIGNATED TRAILS, AT ANY TIME, IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY!

DON'T FEED THE ANIMALS

Do not approach wildlife so closely that it interrupts their natural behavior. Enjoy the diverse wildlife — but from a safe distance.

IMPORTANT SUPPLIES

Carry fresh water (1 gallon / 4 liters per person per day), compass, maps, anchor, sunscreen, sunglasses, rain gear, insect repellent, and tent (with insect netting).

ENCOUNTERING MOTORBOATS

Canoeists will encounter motorboats. Angle into the wake of a boat to minimize the chance of overturning.

IF YOU ARE IN TROUBLE

Stay with your vessel near a landmark or campsite. Set anchor or tie up immediately. Call 911. Try to attract the attention of other boaters.

WINDS AND WEATHER

Thunderstorms occur frequently in summer. Hurricane season is June through November. Prepare for sudden wind and weather changes at any time. Anchor or tie your boat securely.

WEAR SHOES

Old gym shoes or shoes with tops and sides offer the most protection. Avoid sandals. Use a sun hat on bright warm days. Take along a windbreaker or rain gear.

SIGNALING DEVICES

Carry at least one signaling device on every trip – a flashlight, strobe, three flares, horn/whistle, cell phone, VHF radio, bright flag or a mirror are some key items to have along.

CONTACT US BEFORE YOU LEAVE

Call the Suwannee River Water Management District for river levels, land restrictions, access or special conditions.
386.362.1001, 800.226.1066 (FL only)
www.mysuwanneeriver.com or email recreation@srwmd.org

FROM THE RIVER'S PAST...

PREHISTORIC INDIANS

When the first humans arrived, nearly 12,000 years ago, Florida was a much drier place than it is today. At that time, many of today's flowing springs were non-flowing karst windows (see Karst Topography). In the dry environment, these sources of healthy, fresh water were important oases. Relatively few campsites of these nomadic Paleoindians have ever been found.

NARVAEZ

The first Europeans to gaze upon the Suwannee were Spanish soldiers led by Panfilo de Narvaez. They crossed somewhere in this area in the spring of 1528, during an ill-fated exploration of Florida. Unfortunately, they also suffered the first recorded drowning in the Suwannee when an over-eager conquistador steered his horse into the river, thinking he could cross. He and the horse drowned. This was just the beginning of a series of misfortunes that ended in total disaster. Only three men survived to tell the story — Narvaez wasn't one of them.

A FAMOUS CROSSROAD

At Charles Spring the watery path of the SRWT intersects one of the oldest and most important overland trails in the State. For centuries before Europeans set foot in Florida, indigenous tribes used it for travel and trade. In 1539, explorer Hernando De Soto and his army followed the trail through north Florida and crossed the Suwannee here at Charles Spring. In the following century, as Spanish authorities secured control of Florida by converting the Indians to Christianity, they established a chain of missions stretching from St. Augustine to the Tallahassee area. At this crossing they built the mission San Juan de Guacara. This chapter in the trails history earned it the label it carried for centuries — the Mission Trail. When it was improved for wagons in the early 1820s, it was renamed Bellamy Road in honor of its builder and became the first federal road in the newly acquired U.S. Territory of Florida. Travelers on Bellamy Road crossed the river by ferry. The steep-walled driveways down to this boat ramp and at Ezell Landing across the river mark the ferry landings.

DESOTO'S EXPEDITION

Eleven years after Narvaez' failed expedition, Hernando DeSoto led another army through Florida. In true conquistador fashion, the Spaniards killed any native who stood in their way and captured others for use as guides. By the time they reached the Suwannee valley (from their landing in Tampa Bay) they had riled the Indians so much that, for protection, they kidnapped a Chief and his daughter from the village at Ichetucknee. Later, near today's town of Live Oak, they engaged in one of the bloodiest massacres in early Florida history, killing hundreds of Timucua, including eight chiefs. From that bloody battleground they came to the banks of the Suwannee and crossed at Charles Spring. Over the next couple of years they went on to explore much of the southern U.S., eventually "discovering" the Mississippi River. Like his predecessor, Desoto did not survive to tell his tale.

MISSION SAN JUAN DE GUACARA

In the late 1650s, following the bloody Timucuan Rebellion, a Spanish mission called San Juan de Guacara was established on the high ground alongside Charles Spring. From this mission, the monks oversaw the ferry operation, most likely operated by Indians using canoes. This mission outpost lasted for over twenty years until 1691, when Yamassee Indians attacked and razed it.

THE VILLAGE OF TALAHASOCHTE

In the mid 1700s, following the extermination of indigenous Timucua tribes through disease and warfare with European colonists, Creek Indians from Georgia moved into north Florida. Soon they were being referred to as Seminoles, possibly a derivation of "cimarron" meaning "breakaways," referring to their having left their ancestral homeland. One of the earliest known Seminole villages was Talahasochte, located near New Clay Landing. According to William Bartram, Talahasochte consisted of nearly thirty dwellings.

WILLIAM BARTRAM

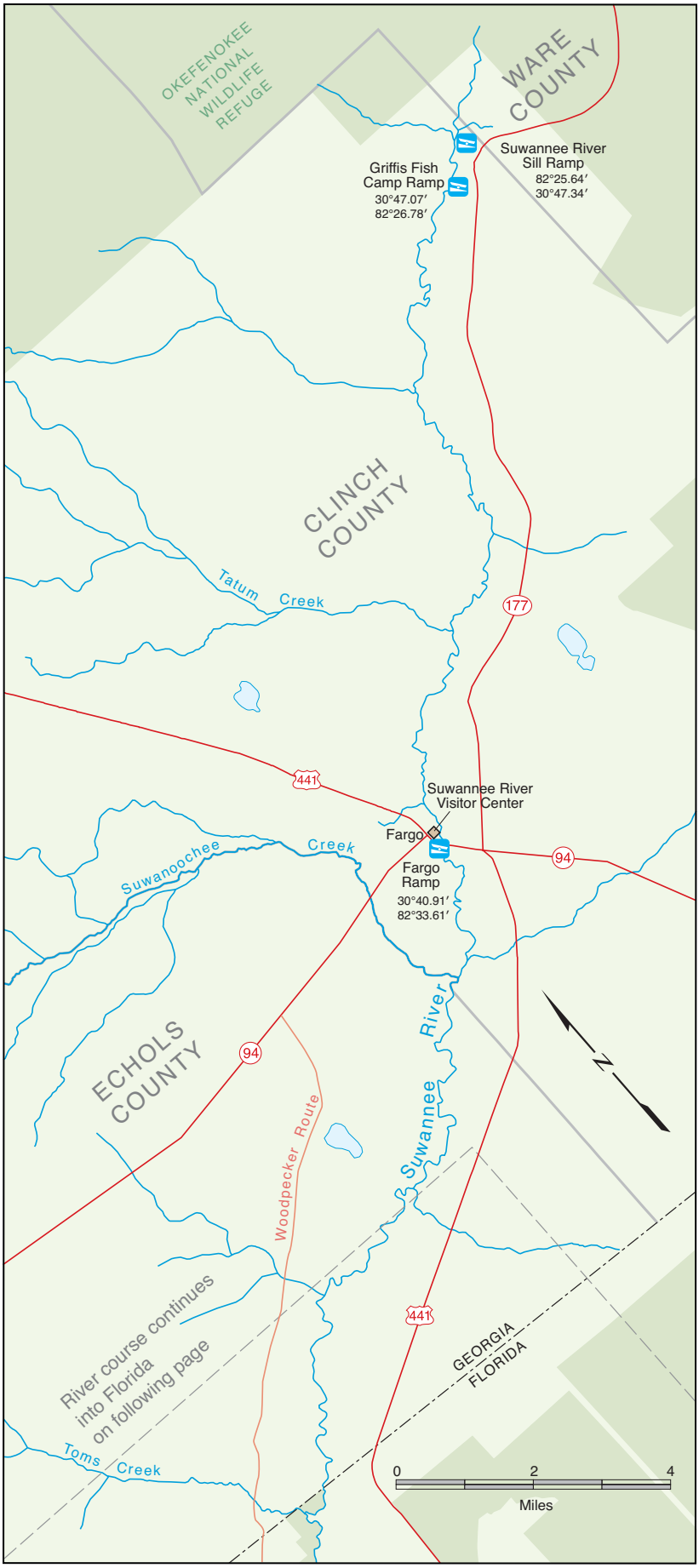
In 1774, explorer/naturalist William Bartram visited Talahasochte. In his book "Travels" Bartram gave an excellent, first-hand description of the village and the Seminoles living there, as well as the local plants and animals he encountered. He was the first to use the name Manate (sic) Springs, not because the animals like this spring, but because of a recently butchered manatee he saw on the springs bank.

A TALE OF NO CITIES – THE TERRITORIAL CAPITAL STORY

Had it not been for a strange twist of fate, the high banks along this stretch of the Suwannee would today be a roaring metropolis. In 1823, shortly after Florida became a Territory of the U.S., two men were chosen to find a site for the capitol. One of them, a Dr. Simmons, passed here on his way to meet the other, John Lee Williams, at St. Marks. At St. Marks, Simmons told Williams he had found a suitable site on the Suwannee, so the two men hired a boat and set off to see the site. Unfortunately, the guide couldn't find the entrance to the river among the many islands at the mouth, so they returned to St. Marks. With time running short, they finally settled on a location a bit north of that town, an abandoned Indian settlement called Tallahassee.

CHARLES FERRY

In 1824, three years after the United States bought Florida from Spain, a young trader named Rubin Charles and his wife Rebecca established a trading post alongside the beautiful little spring that still bears their name. It was an ideal site, overlooking the intersection of two important routes, the Suwannee River and the old Mission Trail. The Charles' were among the areas first pioneers. Ruben died around 1840, but Rebecca stayed on. Legend holds that the Charles' were friends with local Indians, who told them to always wear red scarves to identify themselves and so go unharmed when traveling. One day Rebecca forgot to put on her scarf when going to the spring for water and was mistakenly killed by Indians. Their graves, the oldest in the Suwannee valley, are located in a quiet family plot in the nearby forest.


OKEFENOKEE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE
WARE COUNTY
Griffis Fish Camp Ramp
30°47.07′
82°26.78′
Suwannee River Sill Ramp
82°25.64′
30°47.34′
CLINCH COUNTY
Tatum Creek
177
441
Suwannee River Visitor Center
Fargo
Fargo Ramp
30°40.91′
82°33.61′
94
Suwanoochee Creek
ECHOLS COUNTY
Suwannee River
Woodpecker Route
N
River course continues into Florida on following page
Toms Creek
GEORGIA
FLORIDA
0
2
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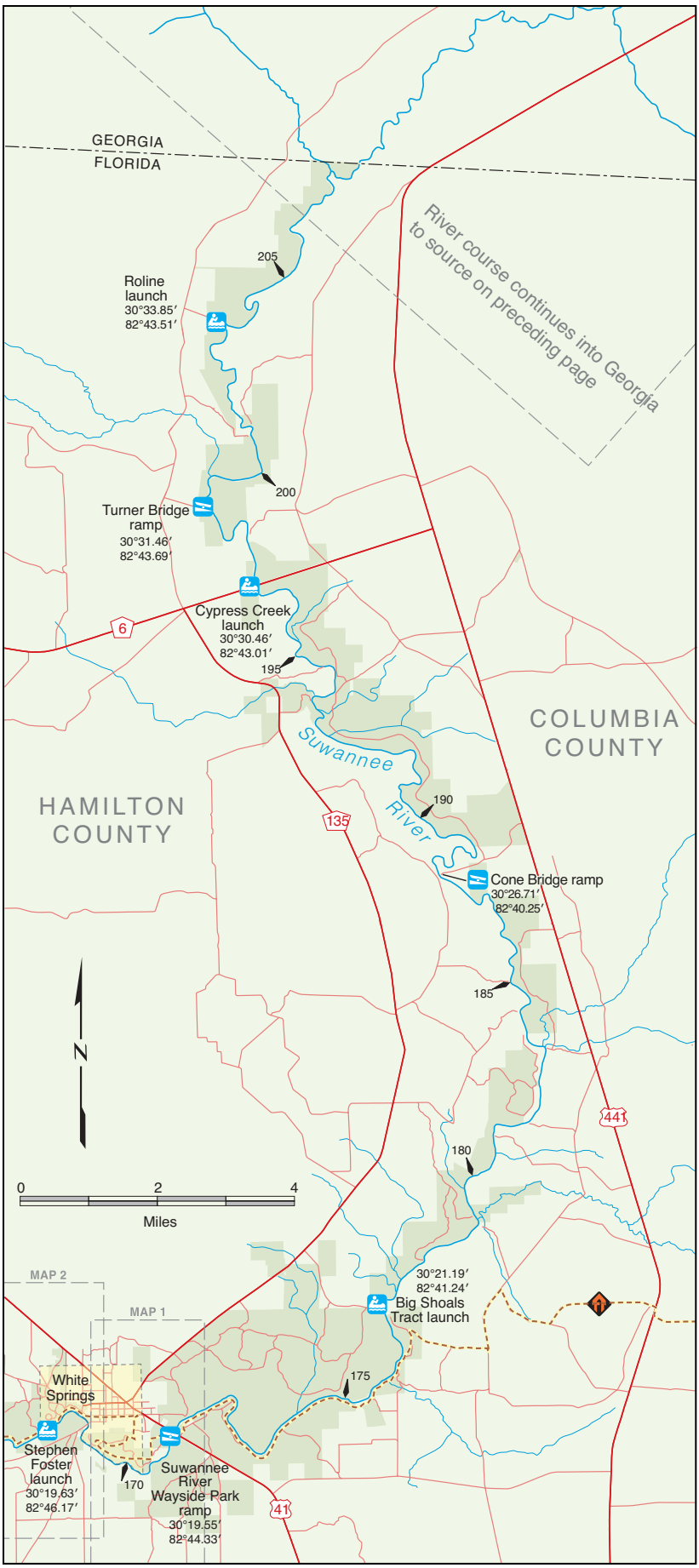
Miles


GEORGIA
FLORIDA
River course continues into Georgia to source on preceding page
205
Roline launch
30°33.85′
82°43.51′
200
Turner Bridge ramp
30°31.46′
82°43.69′
6
Cypress Creek launch
30°30.46′
82°43.01′
195
COLUMBIA COUNTY
HAMILTON COUNTY
Suwannee River
190
135
Cone Bridge ramp
30°26.71′
82°40.25′
185
N
441
180
0 2 4
Miles
MAP 2
MAP 1
30°21.19′
82°41.24′
Big Shoals Tract launch
White Springs
175
Stephen Foster launch
30°19.63′
82°46.17′
170
Suwannee River Wayside Park ramp
30°19.55′
82°44.33′
41

USING THE GUIDE

This guide follows the Suwannee River Wilderness Trail in the downstream direction, based on the assumption that most paddlers prefer to paddle downstream, going with the current. Following the river in the downstream direction does present one possible bit of confusion. Mileage on the Suwannee (and most other rivers) is designated with mile "0" at the rivers mouth and going up as you move upstream. This allows boaters to know how far they are from the river's mouth. So, as you paddle in the downstream direction on the SRWT, the mile marks will get smaller on your map (don't look for mile markers on the river, there are none). In short, map #1 of this guide begins at mile 171 (at White Springs) and map #56 ends at mile 0 (at the Gulf of Mexico).

In keeping with convention, the terms "river right" and "river left" refer to those sides of the river as seen when facing downstream. So, if you're paddling downstream, "river left" is on the left side and "river right" is on the right.

The coloring of the map designates management responsibility and, therefore, allowable usage.

Dark green designates public conservation lands. While these are all open to public usage, restrictions and seasonal issues may apply so be sure to check with the appropriate agency (see contact information).

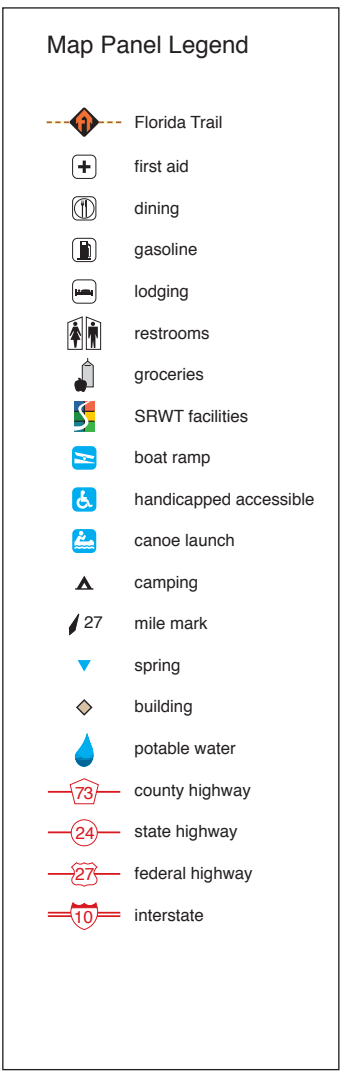
Light green areas are private property. These lands are off limits to users of the Suwannee River Wilderness Trail. Please respect these boundaries.

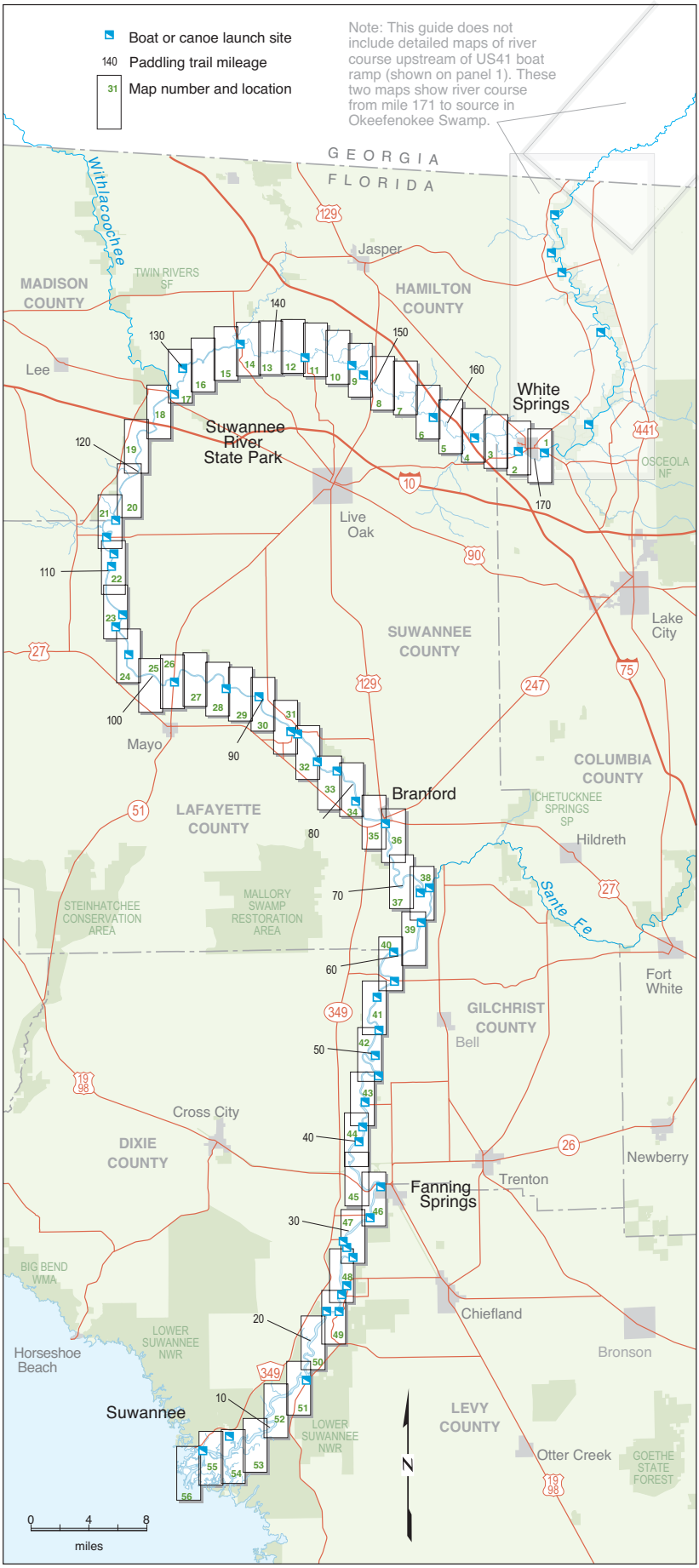
Light yellow areas are within city limits.

Brown areas are Private SRWT Partnership Hubs

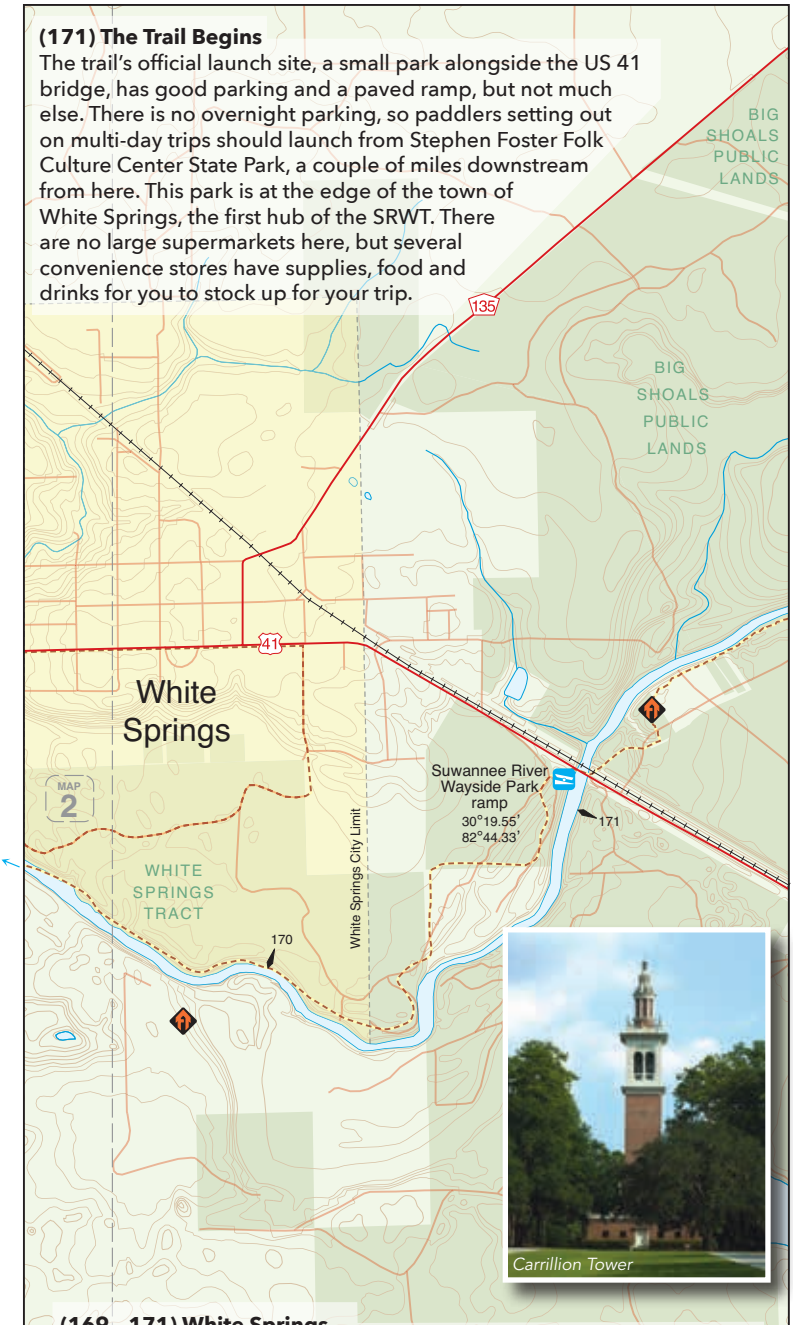
Blue arrows — Small blue arrows at the edge of each map indicate the direction the river is flowing.

"Rest stops" — while there are countless, inviting sand bars along the river in low water, during higher periods, rest areas are limited. Areas marked on the map as "rest stops" are public places that are accessible at all water levels except extreme flooding.

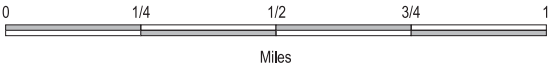



Boat or canoe launch site
140 Paddling trail mileage
31 Map number and location
Note: This guide does not include detailed maps of river course upstream of US41 boat ramp (shown on panel 1). These two maps show river course from mile 171 to source in Okeefenokee Swamp.
GEORGIA
FLORIDA
Withlacoochee
Jasper
TWIN RIVERS SF
MADISON COUNTY
HAMILTON COUNTY
Lee
White Springs
Suwannee River State Park
OSCEOLA NF
Live Oak
SUWANNEE COUNTY
Lake City
Mayo
COLUMBIA COUNTY
Branford
ICHETUCKNEE SPRINGS SP
Hildreth
LAFAYETTE COUNTY
STEINHATCHEE CONSERVATION AREA
MALLORY SWAMP RESTORATION AREA
Santa Fe
Fort White
GILCHRIST COUNTY
Bell
Cross City
DIXIE COUNTY
Newberry
Trenton
Fanning Springs
BIG BEND WMA
Chiefland
LOWER SUWANNEE NWR
Horseshoe Beach
Bronson
Suwannee
LEVY COUNTY
Otter Creek
GOETHE STATE FOREST
0 4 8
miles
N

(171) The Trail Begins
The trail's official launch site, a small park alongside the US 41 bridge, has good parking and a paved ramp, but not much else. There is no overnight parking, so paddlers setting out on multi-day trips should launch from Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park, a couple of miles downstream from here. This park is at the edge of the town of White Springs, the first hub of the SRWT. There are no large supermarkets here, but several convenience stores have supplies, food and drinks for you to stock up for your trip.



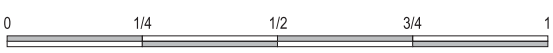
(169 - 171) White Springs
When Bryant Sheffield started a plantation on the Suwannee in 1835, he became owner of a fabled spring, long considered sacred by the Indians. Sheffield promoted the health-giving spring as a fountain of youth. As business grew, he built a hotel and springhouse alongside the spring. Later owners replaced the log springhouse with a larger concrete and coquina structure, the remains of which still enclose the meager spring. In its heyday, late in the 1800s the town had 14 hotels, a cotton gin, several mills and stores. Soon the waning health spa fad, coupled with a devastating fire in 1911, brought an end to White Springs' growth. To learn about some of the town's older homes and buildings, stop by one of its newer buildings – the Nature and Heritage Tourism Center at the intersection of SR 136 and US 41. There, in addition to self-guided tour pamphlets, you'll find shelves loaded with information about Florida's historic sites, parks and attractions.



Ancient manatees
In 1982, college students found the skull and partial skeleton of an extinct manatee on the riverbank near White Springs. These creatures lived in the shallow sea that covered this area 20 million years ago, during the Miocene era. (see section about "Limestone"). Paleontologists soon uncovered three more specimens. Of the four, one belonged to a previously unknown genus, one was the first skull of its genus and one was the best preserved specimen of its species ever found. Two of the animals were from a subfamily of sea cows previously unknown in the New World. Interestingly, all appear to have co-existed in what must have been the Age of Manatees!


Cabin at Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park

(165.5 – 168) Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park
If you're on this part of the river any day at 10:00 AM, noon, 2 or 4 PM, you'll be treated to the bells of the Carillon Tower at Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park. Soon after acquiring the land for the Folk Center in the 1950s, the park started the annual Florida Folk Festival to showcase the State's music, history and local traditions. This festival is held every Memorial Day weekend. The park also offers vacation cabins and campsites to accommodate you during your visit. Call ahead for dates of park events such as arts and crafts demonstrations and workshops.

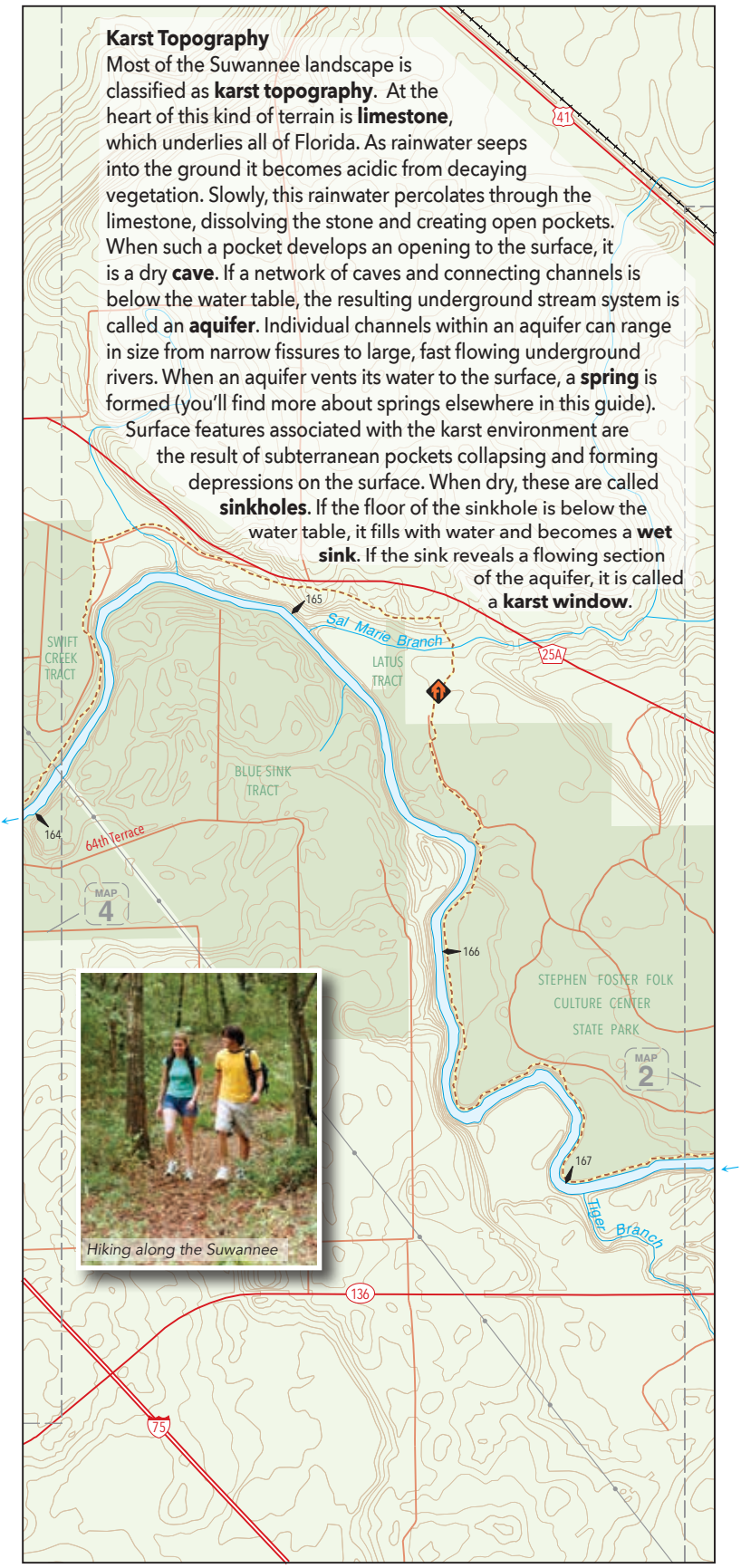


Karst Topography

Most of the Suwannee landscape is classified as **karst topography**. At the heart of this kind of terrain is **limestone**, which underlies all of Florida. As rainwater seeps into the ground it becomes acidic from decaying vegetation. Slowly, this rainwater percolates through the limestone, dissolving the stone and creating open pockets. When such a pocket develops an opening to the surface, it is a dry **cave**. If a network of caves and connecting channels is below the water table, the resulting underground stream system is called an **aquifer**. Individual channels within an aquifer can range in size from narrow fissures to large, fast flowing underground rivers. When an aquifer vents its water to the surface, a **spring** is formed (you'll find more about springs elsewhere in this guide).

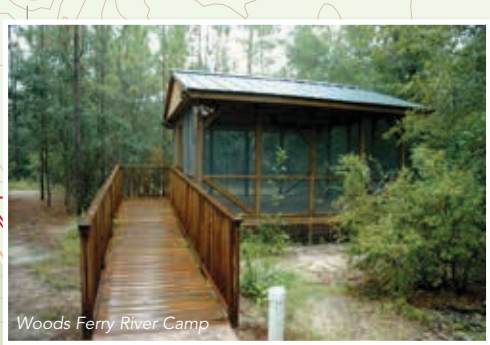
Surface features associated with the karst environment are the result of subterranean pockets collapsing and forming depressions on the surface. When dry, these are called **sinkholes**. If the floor of the sinkhole is below the water table, it fills with water and becomes a **wet sink**. If the sink reveals a flowing section of the aquifer, it is called a **karst window**.

Hiking along the Suwannee




Point Bar

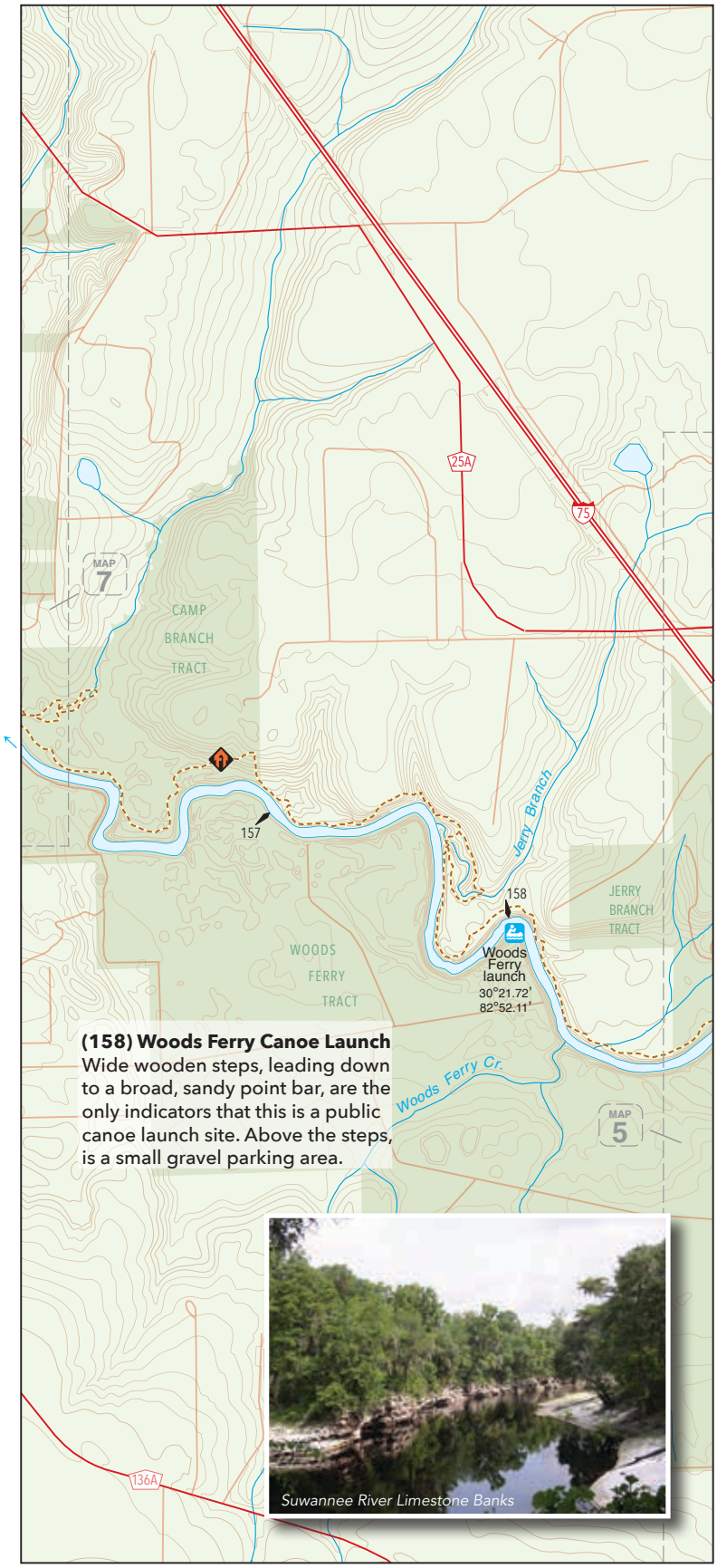
Point Bars
On just about any sharp bend in the upper river, you're likely to find a sandy, white beach on the point. This "point bar" is formed by sand being continuously deposited as the water slows going around the inside of the bend. Growing conditions are harsh on the point; plants are slow to take hold. When they do, a predictable succession forms, starting with tough, low herbs and grasses, followed by shrubs and finally trees. Black willow commonly tops the bar.


Woods Ferry River Camp

25A
134th Avenue
75
JERRY BRANCH TRACT
159
Woods Ferry River Camp
30°21.23'
82°51.33'
160
WOODS FERRY TRACT
MAP 6
MAP 4
JERRY BRANCH TRACT
161
Rocky Creek rest stop
57th Drive
62nd Street
ROCKY CREEK TRACT
136A

(159.3) Woods Ferry River Camp
To set up camp at Woods Ferry River Camp is to continue a tradition that dates back nearly 12,000 years. Archaeological evidence suggests that people from all prehistoric cultures used this high bluff, including the first Floridians, nomadic Paleoindian hunters whose diet included such exotic Suwannee fare as mammoths, mastodons, giant ground sloth and early ancestors of camels and horses. While some may have lived here for extended periods, this was primarily a hunter's camp. Today's campers will find accommodations a bit more comfortable than their earlier counterparts, with five screened camping platforms, bathrooms, warm showers, potable water and picnic tables. There is no vehicle access to this river camp.

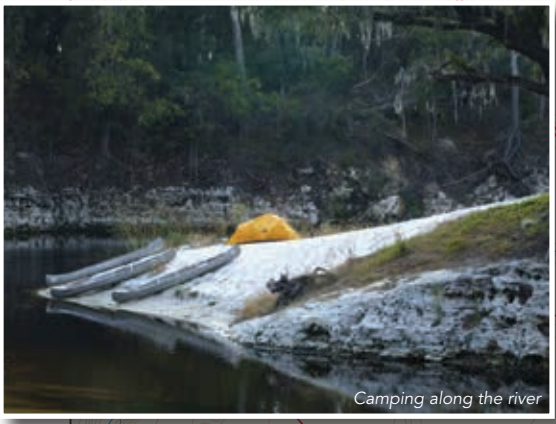
0 1/4 1/2 3/4 1
Miles



(158) Woods Ferry Canoe Launch
Wide wooden steps, leading down to a broad, sandy point bar, are the only indicators that this is a public canoe launch site. Above the steps, is a small gravel parking area.

Suwannee River Limestone Banks

0 1/4 1/2 3/4 1
Miles


Camping along the river

75
132
25A
SE 123rd Ave
SUGAR CREEK TRACT
un-named spring
154
153
152
rest stop
MAP 8
MATTAIR SPRINGS TRACT
155
Mattair spring
MAP 6
156

(155) Mattair Springs
Tucked into a narrow, 100 ft. ravine and obscured by dog fennel and low shrubs, Mattair Springs is easily missed in low water levels. Like many others along the river, this spring only flows during wetter periods. The spring was named for Maj. Louis H. Mattair, a French army officer, who moved from France and settled near the spring. He later became a prominent pioneer and planter.

0 1/4 1/2 3/4 1
Miles

(150.2) Suwannee Springs
If you think bottled water is a new phenomenon, think again. In the 19th century, Suwannee Springs bottled water could be found on store shelves as far away as New York City. Touted for its curative properties, the springs drew many tourists who came to imbibe and frolic in the famous water. In the 1850s a hotel and spa were built to accommodate visitors. The resort expanded after the Civil War, adding a stately garden, cabins and a water bottling plant. Little remains of these structures, except a stone enclosure around the spring. An interesting kiosk display tells the spring's history, including photos of the large hotel. Today, Suwannee Springs remains a popular recreation area, but swimmers prefer the nearby sandy, white beach to the sulfurous (odorous) spring pool.

Suwannee Springs

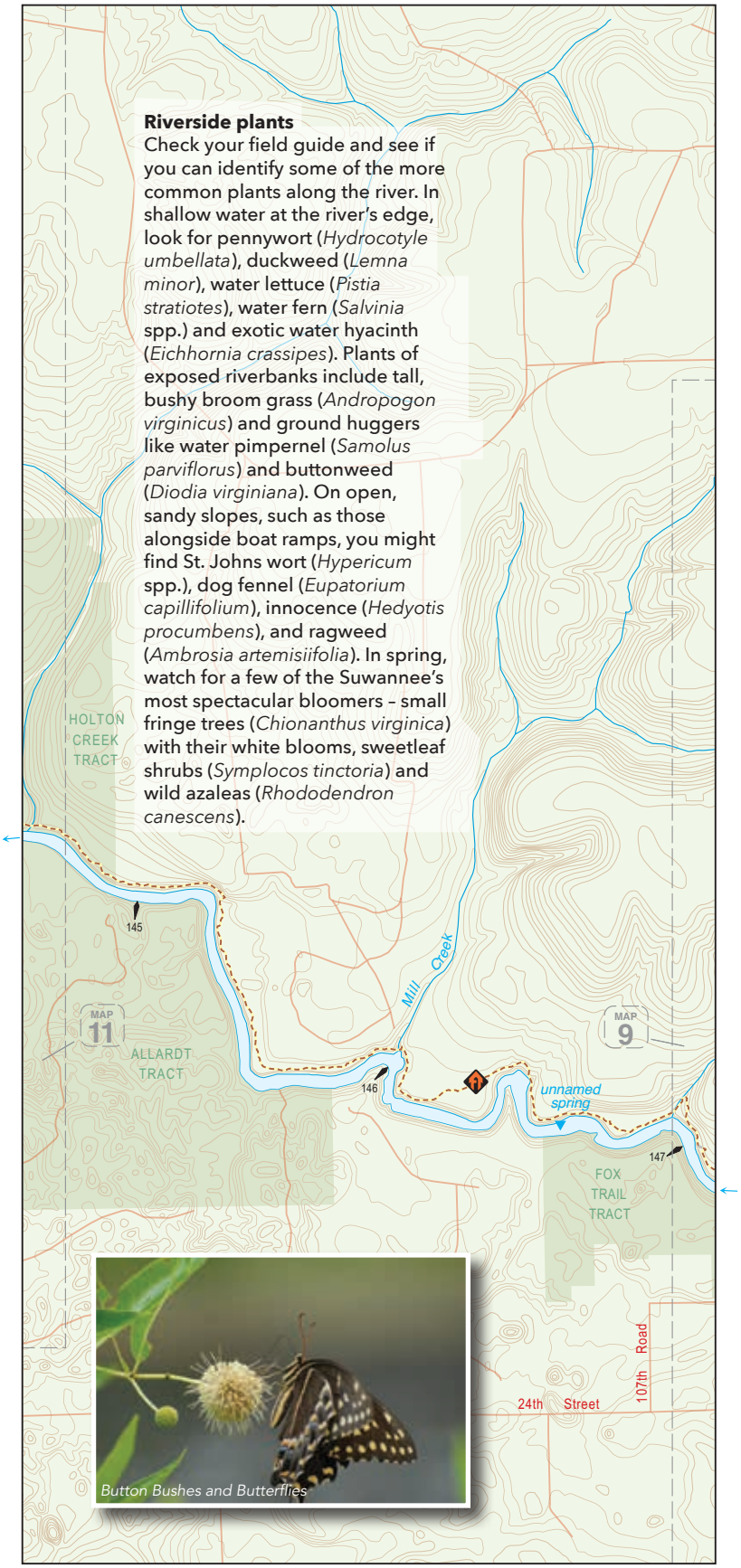
Horseback Riding at Spirit of Suwannee Music Park

(148.5) Spirit of the Suwannee Music Park
This 700-acre campground is primarily laid out for RV's and tents. Cabins are also available, but for a unique sleepover, inquire about their luxury tree house. The park hosts many large music events each year as well as other events including trail rides and "Old Tyme Farm Days." They also have one of the largest bat houses in the country. Rental canoes are available.

MAP 10
147
Ratliff Creek
Deese Howard ramp
30°24.81'
82°57.40'
FOX TRAIL TRACT
148
abandoned railroad bridge pilings
30°06.06'
83°06.85'
Spirit of the Suwannee ramp
30°24.36'
82°56.95'
103rd Road
SW 97th Terrace
149
95th Drive
MAP 8
SPIRIT OF THE SUWANNEE
132

0 1/4 1/2 3/4 1
Miles

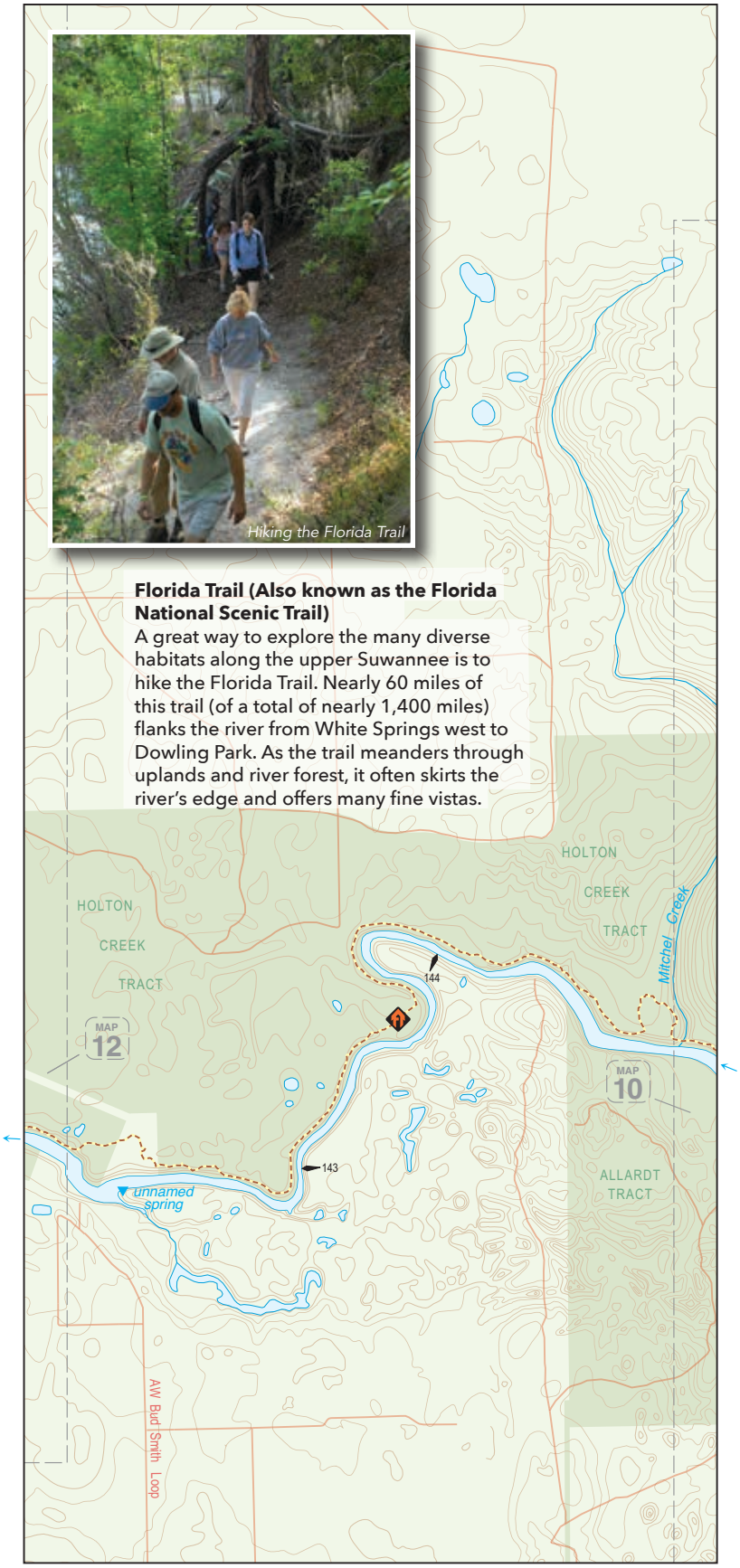
Riverside plants
Check your field guide and see if you can identify some of the more common plants along the river. In shallow water at the river's edge, look for pennywort (*Hydrocotyle umbellata*), duckweed (*Lemna minor*), water lettuce (*Pistia stratiotes*), water fern (*Salvinia* spp.) and exotic water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*). Plants of exposed riverbanks include tall, bushy broom grass (*Andropogon virginicus*) and ground huggers like water pimpernel (*Samolus parviflorus*) and buttonweed (*Diodia virginiana*). On open, sandy slopes, such as those alongside boat ramps, you might find St. Johns wort (*Hypericum* spp.), dog fennel (*Eupatorium capillifolium*), innocence (*Hedyotis procumbens*), and ragweed (*Ambrosia artemisiifolia*). In spring, watch for a few of the Suwannee's most spectacular bloomers – small fringe trees (*Chionanthus virginica*) with their white blooms, sweetleaf shrubs (*Symplocos tinctoria*) and wild azaleas (*Rhododendron canescens*).



Button Bushes and Butterflies

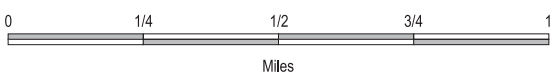
Hiking the Florida Trail

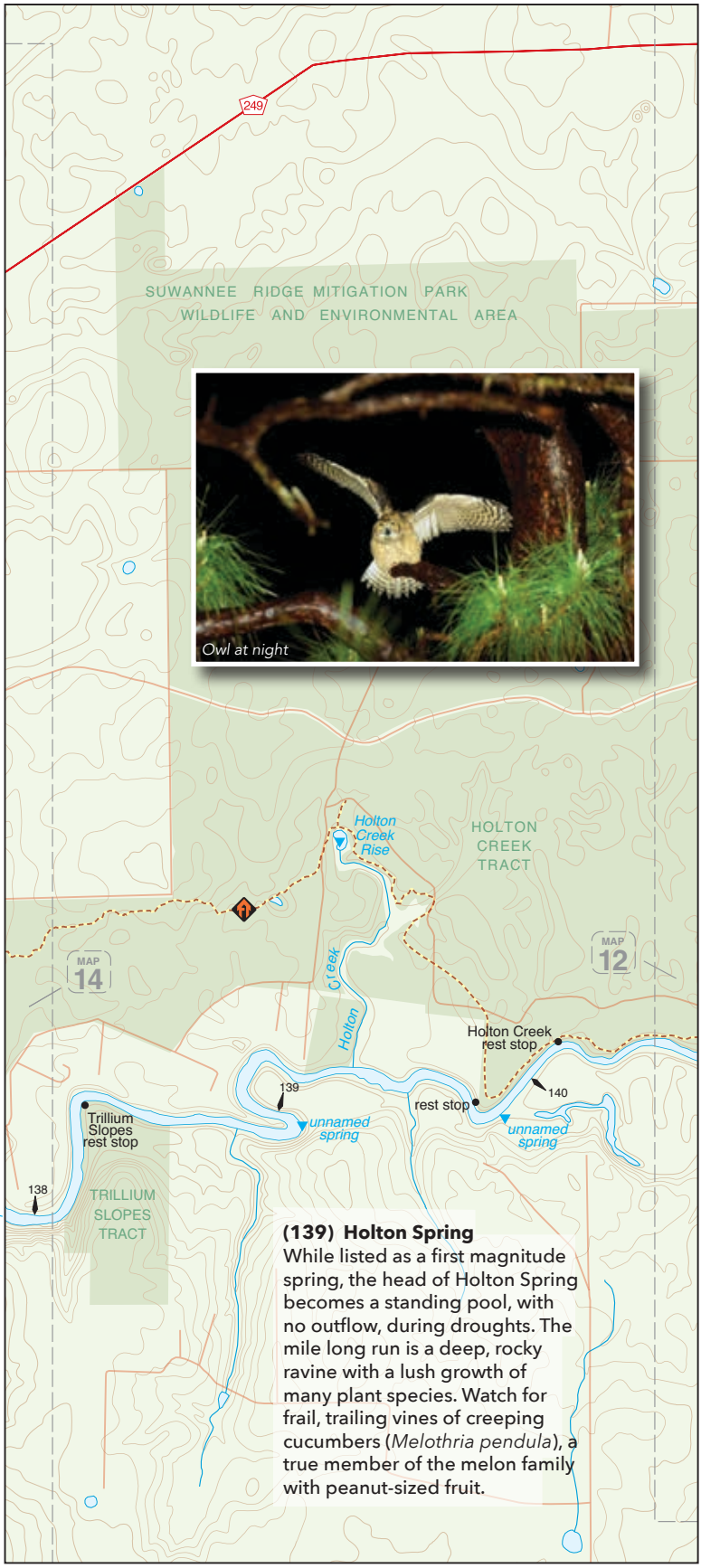
Florida Trail (Also known as the Florida National Scenic Trail)
A great way to explore the many diverse habitats along the upper Suwannee is to hike the Florida Trail. Nearly 60 miles of this trail (of a total of nearly 1,400 miles) flanks the river from White Springs west to Dowling Park. As the trail meanders through uplands and river forest, it often skirts the river's edge and offers many fine vistas.



Relaxing at Holton Creek River Camp

(140.9) Holton Creek River Camp
This river camp is an excellent base from which to extend your Suwannee exploration into off-river habitats. The Florida Trail runs through this site and will take you miles in either direction. Heading upstream, it traces the river for several miles, weaving past an interesting moonscape of sinkholes, swales and sloughs. Downstream, it leads to Holton Spring Run. The five screened sleeping platforms are set in a shady stand of mature hickories, laurel oaks, water oaks, sweet gums, American hollies and magnolias. Hunting is permitted at Holton Creek during certain times of the year. For information on hunting season dates, call (386) 758-0525 or go to MyFWC.com. There is no vehicle access to this river camp.

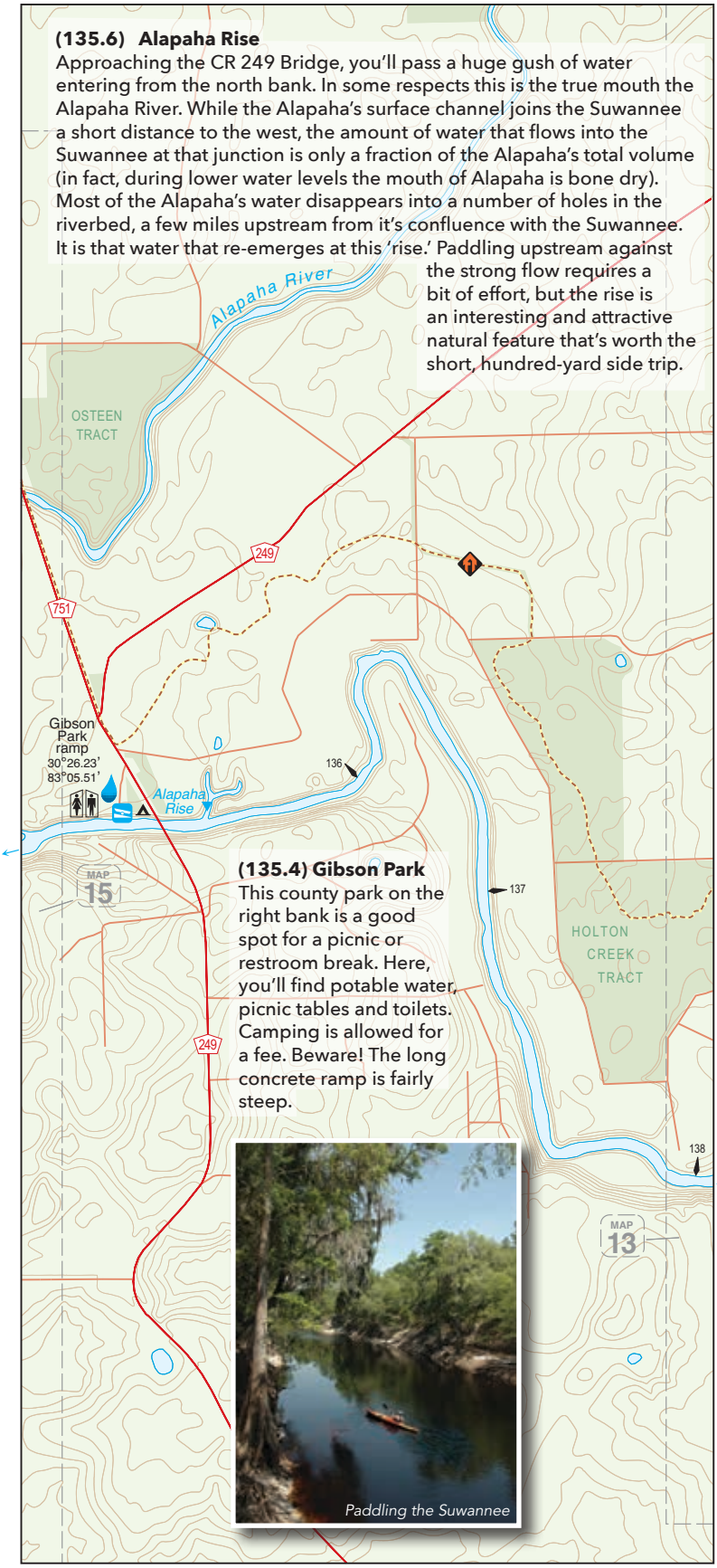




(139) Holton Spring
While listed as a first magnitude spring, the head of Holton Spring becomes a standing pool, with no outflow, during droughts. The mile long run is a deep, rocky ravine with a lush growth of many plant species. Watch for frail, trailing vines of creeping cucumbers (*Melothria pendula*), a true member of the melon family with peanut-sized fruit.

0 1/4 1/2 3/4 1
Miles

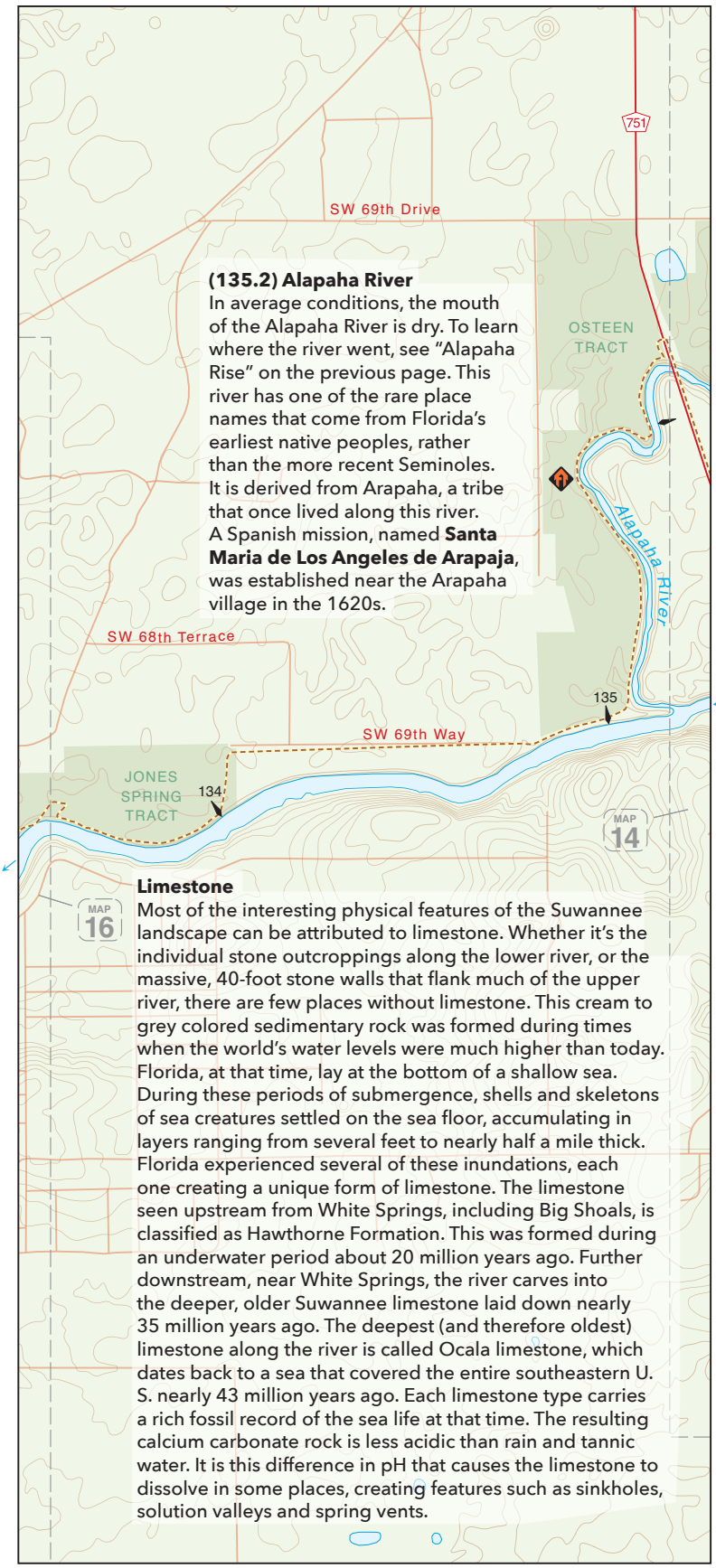
(135.6) Alapaha Rise
Approaching the CR 249 Bridge, you'll pass a huge gush of water entering from the north bank. In some respects this is the true mouth the Alapaha River. While the Alapaha's surface channel joins the Suwannee a short distance to the west, the amount of water that flows into the Suwannee at that junction is only a fraction of the Alapaha's total volume (in fact, during lower water levels the mouth of Alapaha is bone dry). Most of the Alapaha's water disappears into a number of holes in the riverbed, a few miles upstream from it's confluence with the Suwannee. It is that water that re-emerges at this 'rise.' Paddling upstream against the strong flow requires a bit of effort, but the rise is an interesting and attractive natural feature that's worth the short, hundred-yard side trip.



(135.4) Gibson Park
This county park on the right bank is a good spot for a picnic or restroom break. Here, you'll find potable water, picnic tables and toilets. Camping is allowed for a fee. Beware! The long concrete ramp is fairly steep.

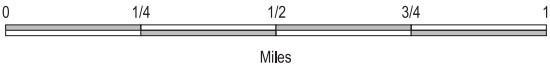
Paddling the Suwannee

0 1/4 1/2 3/4 1
Miles



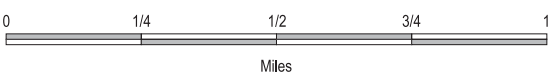
(135.2) Alapaha River
In average conditions, the mouth of the Alapaha River is dry. To learn where the river went, see "Alapaha Rise" on the previous page. This river has one of the rare place names that come from Florida's earliest native peoples, rather than the more recent Seminoles. It is derived from Arapaha, a tribe that once lived along this river. A Spanish mission, named **Santa Maria de Los Angeles de Arapaja**, was established near the Arapaha village in the 1620s.

Limestone
Most of the interesting physical features of the Suwannee landscape can be attributed to limestone. Whether it's the individual stone outcroppings along the lower river, or the massive, 40-foot stone walls that flank much of the upper river, there are few places without limestone. This cream to grey colored sedimentary rock was formed during times when the world's water levels were much higher than today. Florida, at that time, lay at the bottom of a shallow sea. During these periods of submergence, shells and skeletons of sea creatures settled on the sea floor, accumulating in layers ranging from several feet to nearly half a mile thick. Florida experienced several of these inundations, each one creating a unique form of limestone. The limestone seen upstream from White Springs, including Big Shoals, is classified as Hawthorne Formation. This was formed during an underwater period about 20 million years ago. Further downstream, near White Springs, the river carves into the deeper, older Suwannee limestone laid down nearly 35 million years ago. The deepest (and therefore oldest) limestone along the river is called Ocala limestone, which dates back to a sea that covered the entire southeastern U. S. nearly 43 million years ago. Each limestone type carries a rich fossil record of the sea life at that time. The resulting calcium carbonate rock is less acidic than rain and tannic water. It is this difference in pH that causes the limestone to dissolve in some places, creating features such as sinkholes, solution valleys and spring vents.

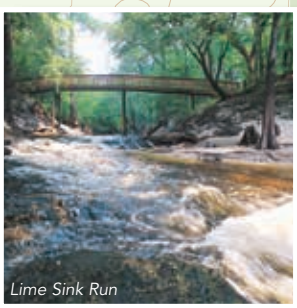


Civil War on the Upper Suwannee
By the onset of the Civil War, Columbus was a riverboat landing and a railroad town. With the only rail-bridge spanning the river, Columbus became an important asset for the Confederacy, bringing supplies northward to the front lines. As the war progressed and supply lines from the West were severed, this rail connection became increasingly critical to the Confederacy. In 1864, Union General Truman Seymour was ordered to march his troops west from Jacksonville and take the bridge. Confederate troops sent to guard the bridge dug a large earthwork 'fort' overlooking the river. At the outset, Seymour's force far outnumbered the Rebel defenders sent to intercept them. However, their advance was slow, giving the Rebels time to bring in additional soldiers from other states. On February 20, 1864, the two forces met about 45 miles east of Columbus near Ocean Pond. The Battle of Olustee would prove to be the largest in Florida, with a horrific casualty rate approaching 50% on both sides. The Union army was forced to retreat and the bridge was spared. For the remainder of the war a steady flow of trains, loaded with supplies and ammunition, rumbled across the bridge headed north to the front lines. After the war, one of the more notable pieces of cargo to roll across this bridge was the body of recently executed Lewis Powell (aka Paine) – one of the conspirators in Lincoln's assassination. Powell's home was just south of here in Live Oak.

Withlacoochee River *(shown on following page)*
The Withlacoochee River is an important part of the Suwannee system, not only for its volume (nearly equal to that of the Suwannee), but also for its composition. Most of its water is alluvial, carrying surface runoff from a 2,360-square mile watershed – mostly in Georgia. Rich in nutrients and less acidic than the upper Suwannee, changes brought by the Withlacoochee are reflected by a significant increase in species diversity below the confluence. In appearance, the Withlacoochee is much like the upper Suwannee. The upper Withlacoochee has a slow, easy flow through relatively low forests, while springs and high limestone bluffs highlight the lower section. The largest spring on the Withlacoochee is Madison Blue Spring, located eleven miles upstream from the confluence. Madison Blue Springs State Park has excellent swimming. Below Madison Blue Spring, low water levels reveal several shoals – fun for paddlers, dreaded by motorboats. The largest, (called "Nick's Shoal" by the locals) is located about 2 miles above the confluence. In lower water levels, this one should be scouted carefully or portaged around. The best course is to right of center. Like the Suwannee, some of the Withlacoochee's shoals require a short portage in very low water. Be sure to inquire about water levels with a local outfitter before paddling.



(127 – 132) Suwannee River State Park
This park is one of the hubs of the SRWT. Each of the five vacation cabins sleeps six people and has a dishwasher, fireplace and screened porch. Pets are not allowed in cabins. The park also has a newly renovated 30-site campground with full electrical and sewer hookups. Eighteen miles of hiking trails traverse some of the finest woodlands along the Suwannee. The trail to Columbus cemetery showcases a relatively mature longleaf pine forest, once the dominant forest in Florida. Today, many parks are preserving and restoring these increasingly rare forests. Hiking the Lime Sink trail is a study in karst topography at its finest, with solution swales, sinks and interesting rocky grottos. The loop trail out to "balance rock" (a naturally-sculpted limestone feature you may have seen from the river) is a study in the trees of a mesic hardwood hammock – American holly, beech, haw, sweetgum, hickory, and several oak species. Sparkleberry shrubs are common.


Lime Sink Run

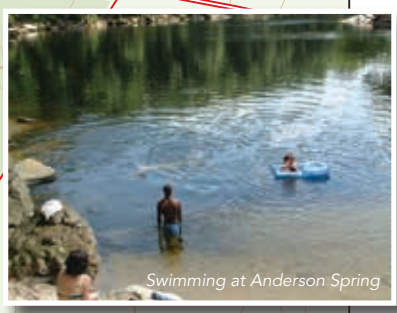
SUWANNEE RIVER STATE PARK
SW 74Th Way
SW 44Th Lane
131
Unnamed Spring
Suwannee Road
CR 141 ramp
30°24.84'
83°09.53'
130
MAP 16
SUWANNEE RIVER STATE PARK
129
SUWANNEE RIVER STATE PARK
MAP 18
Lime Spring
Withlacoochee R.
128
Dry Run Sink
Suwanna-coochee Springs
Lime Run Spring
cabins
Suwannee River State Park ramp
30°23.25'
83°10.14'
Ellaville Springs
90
132

Three kinds of water
The confluence of Withlacoochee and Suwannee River offers a unique opportunity to see examples of Florida's three main kinds of river. The Suwannee's clear, tea-brown water is characteristic of Florida's most common river-type, a blackwater stream. The Withlacoochee is largely alluvial, carrying sediments washed from surface sands and clay. While springs along the river lessen its alluvial character, it often has the muddy, nutrient rich look of an alluvial stream, especially during floods. The third river type, a spring run, is represented here by the small Suwannacoochee Spring, which issues from the Withlacoochee's west bank near the confluence.

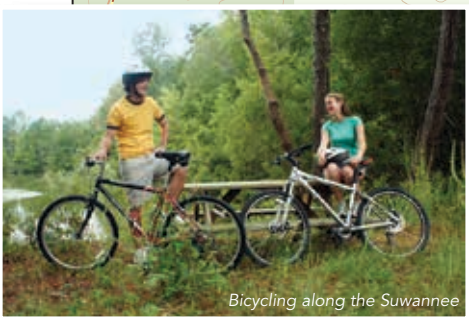
0 1/4 1/2 3/4 1
Miles

(115.5 - 127.5) Twin Rivers State Forest
Beginning at the Withlacoochee confluence and extending 12 miles downstream, this State Forest is comprised of 5 individual tracts totaling over 9,000 acres. These parcels, located on both sides of the river, contain a mix of bottomland hardwoods, upland hardwoods and pine – a diversity that makes it a haven for wildlife. This popular birding area (a site on the Great Florida Birding Trail) can be explored by hiking the portion of the Florida Scenic Trail along the river's right bank. Bicyclists and equestrians also enjoy regulated access to these lands. Hunters use these lands in designated seasons, so be sure to check with Division of Forestry when making plans. Camping is allowed by permit during non-hunting seasons.

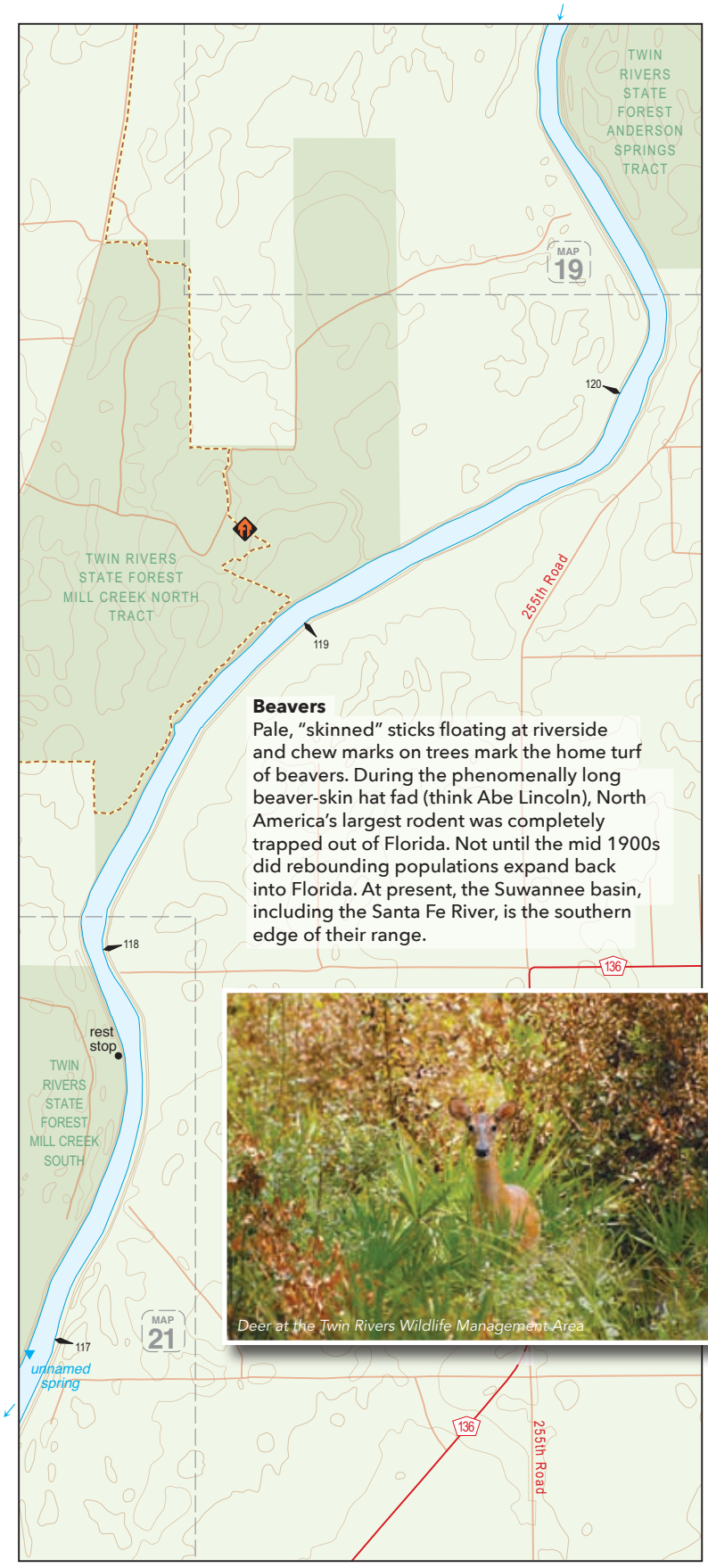
(124) Anderson Spring
The main vent of this spring is in the riverbed, just in front of a small observation deck. An interesting series of sinks leads 50 – 60 yards into the woods. During wet periods, the head sink forms a darkwater pool. When dry, vents in the floor of the sink breathe out warm, damp air that speaks of an unseen world of underground caves. If you like big trees, treat yourself to an exploration of the 4.4 mile "Trailwalker Trail" or the longer, 6.4 mile bike trail (maps on kiosk). Large American hollies, swamp chestnut oaks, live oaks, maples and hickories line the way as the trail dips and rises with the undulating Karst landscape.


Swimming at Anderson Spring

0 1/4 1/2 3/4 1
Miles



Bicycling along the Suwannee



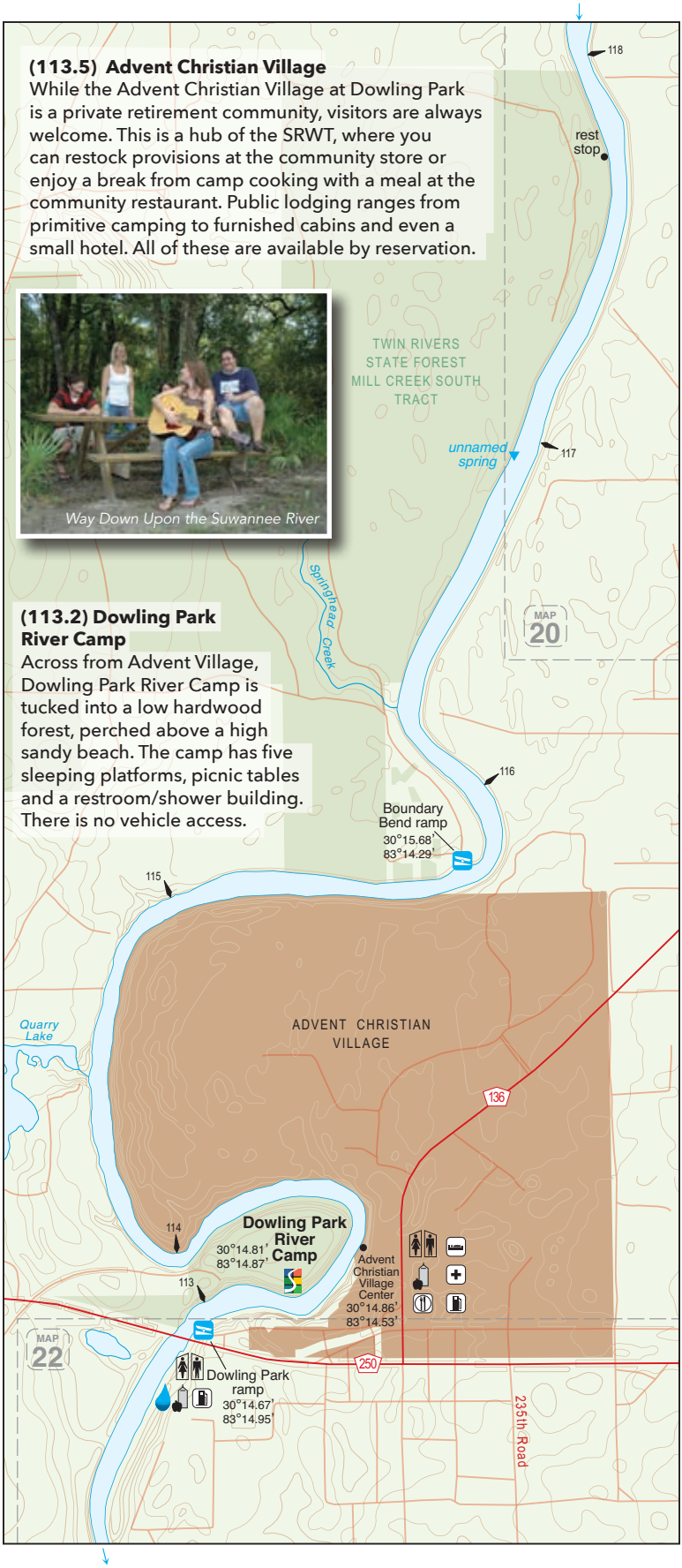
Beavers
Pale, "skinned" sticks floating at riverside and chew marks on trees mark the home turf of beavers. During the phenomenally long beaver-skin hat fad (think Abe Lincoln), North America's largest rodent was completely trapped out of Florida. Not until the mid 1900s did rebounding populations expand back into Florida. At present, the Suwannee basin, including the Santa Fe River, is the southern edge of their range.

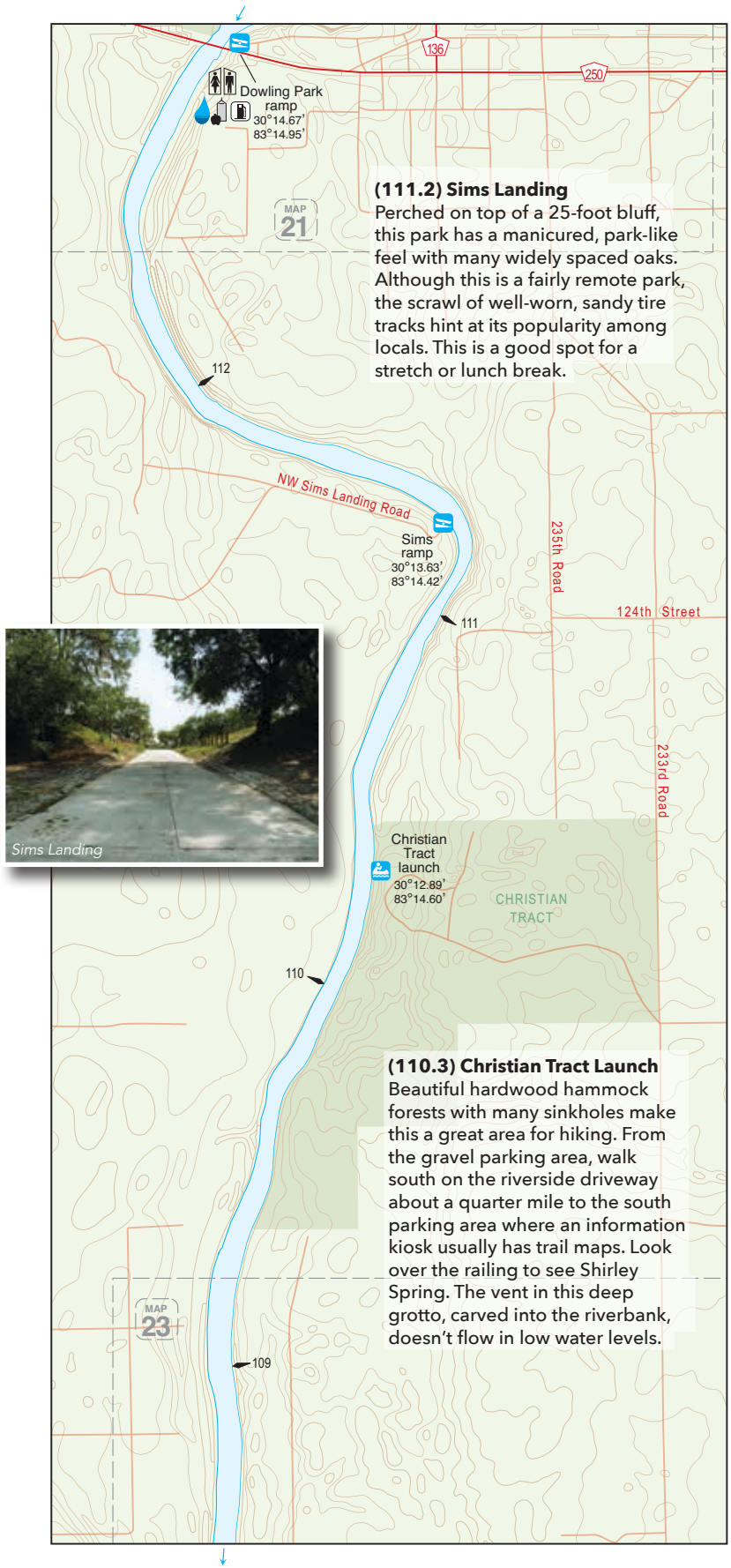
Deer at the Twin Rivers Wildlife Management Area

(113.5) Advent Christian Village
While the Advent Christian Village at Dowling Park is a private retirement community, visitors are always welcome. This is a hub of the SRWT, where you can restock provisions at the community store or enjoy a break from camp cooking with a meal at the community restaurant. Public lodging ranges from primitive camping to furnished cabins and even a small hotel. All of these are available by reservation.

Way Down Upon the Suwannee River

(113.2) Dowling Park River Camp
Across from Advent Village, Dowling Park River Camp is tucked into a low hardwood forest, perched above a high sandy beach. The camp has five sleeping platforms, picnic tables and a restroom/shower building. There is no vehicle access.

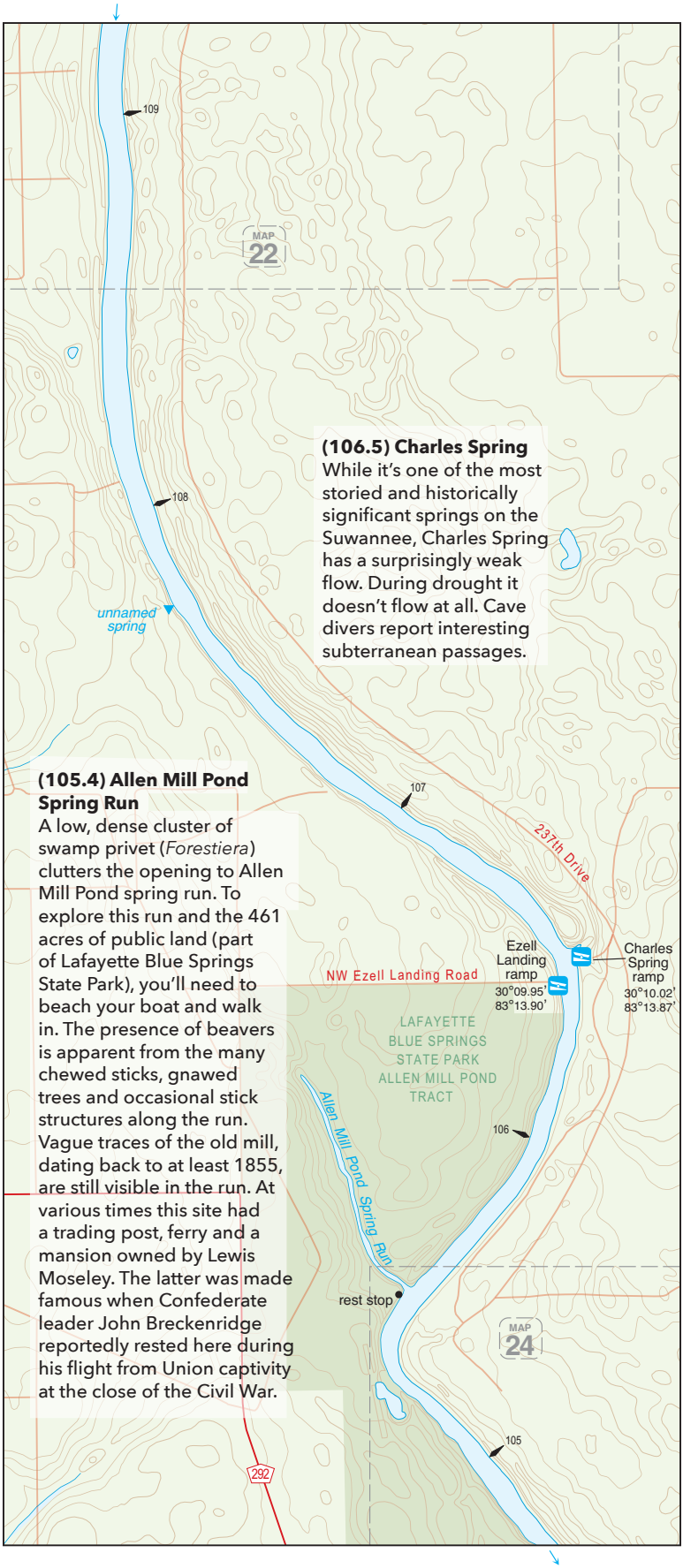




Sims Landing

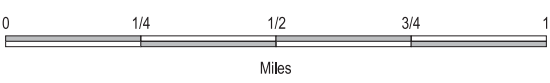
(111.2) Sims Landing
Perched on top of a 25-foot bluff, this park has a manicured, park-like feel with many widely spaced oaks. Although this is a fairly remote park, the scrawl of well-worn, sandy tire tracks hint at its popularity among locals. This is a good spot for a stretch or lunch break.

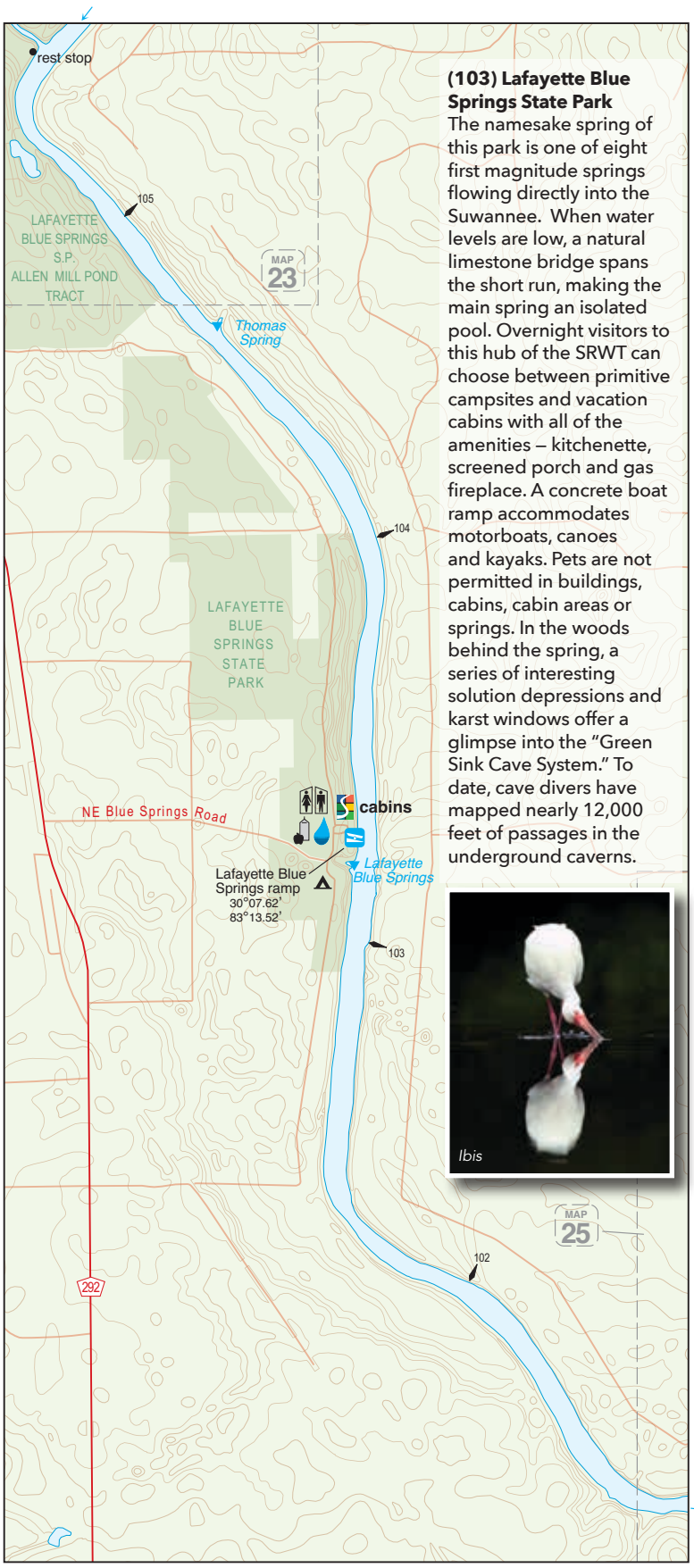
(110.3) Christian Tract Launch
Beautiful hardwood hammock forests with many sinkholes make this a great area for hiking. From the gravel parking area, walk south on the riverside driveway about a quarter mile to the south parking area where an information kiosk usually has trail maps. Look over the railing to see Shirley Spring. The vent in this deep grotto, carved into the riverbank, doesn't flow in low water levels.



(106.5) Charles Spring
While it's one of the most storied and historically significant springs on the Suwannee, Charles Spring has a surprisingly weak flow. During drought it doesn't flow at all. Cave divers report interesting subterranean passages.

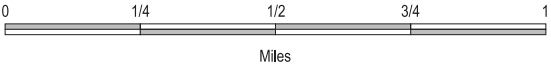
(105.4) Allen Mill Pond Spring Run
A low, dense cluster of swamp privet (*Forestiera*) clutters the opening to Allen Mill Pond spring run. To explore this run and the 461 acres of public land (part of Lafayette Blue Springs State Park), you'll need to beach your boat and walk in. The presence of beavers is apparent from the many chewed sticks, gnawed trees and occasional stick structures along the run. Vague traces of the old mill, dating back to at least 1855, are still visible in the run. At various times this site had a trading post, ferry and a mansion owned by Lewis Moseley. The latter was made famous when Confederate leader John Breckenridge reportedly rested here during his flight from Union captivity at the close of the Civil War.



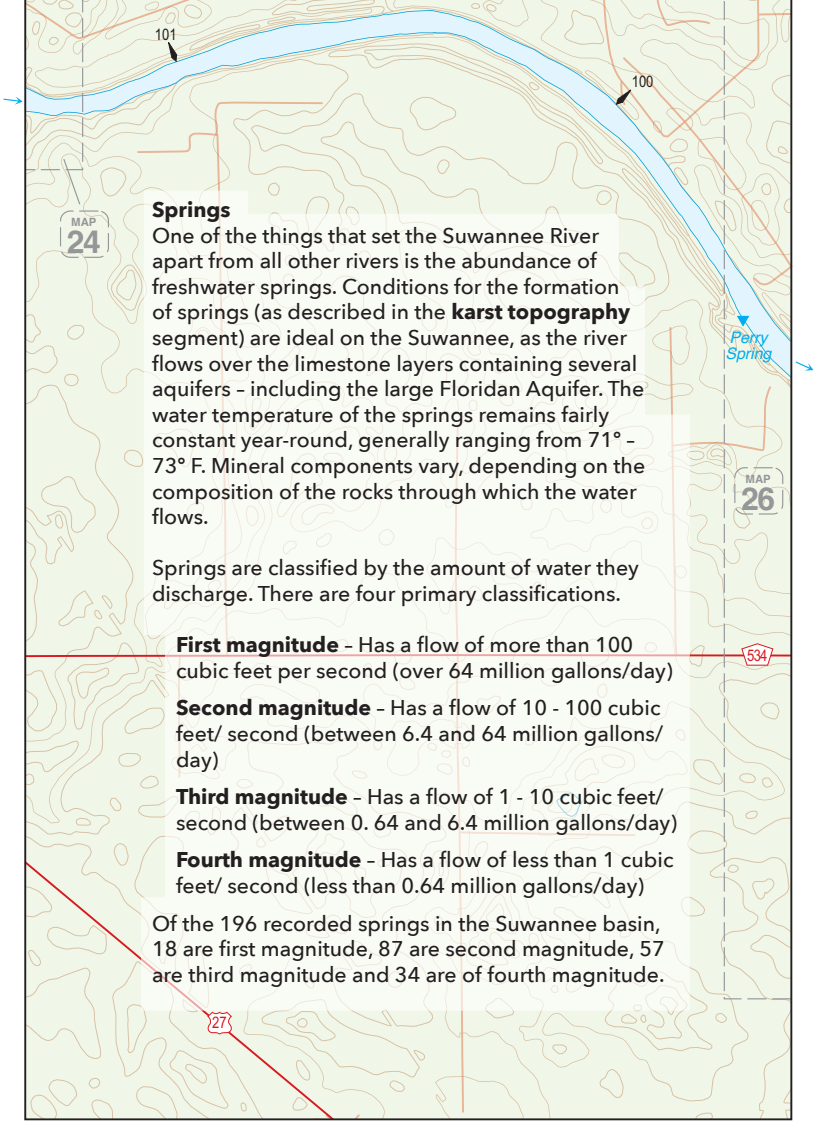


(103) Lafayette Blue Springs State Park
The namesake spring of this park is one of eight first magnitude springs flowing directly into the Suwannee. When water levels are low, a natural limestone bridge spans the short run, making the main spring an isolated pool. Overnight visitors to this hub of the SRWT can choose between primitive campsites and vacation cabins with all of the amenities – kitchenette, screened porch and gas fireplace. A concrete boat ramp accommodates motorboats, canoes and kayaks. Pets are not permitted in buildings, cabins, cabin areas or springs. In the woods behind the spring, a series of interesting solution depressions and karst windows offer a glimpse into the "Green Sink Cave System." To date, cave divers have mapped nearly 12,000 feet of passages in the underground caverns.

Ibis



Blooms on the Suwannee
Spring comes early to the Suwannee. While the red flowers and developing seeds (samara) of red maples are often seen as early as December, it's usually February before the real spring show begins. Scan the high bluffs for thickets of wild azaleas (*Rhododendron canescens*). Unremarkable at other seasons, these shrubs enjoy brief stardom in March and April with fragrant pink blooms. Another shrub whose blooms are as fragrant as they are beautiful is sweetleaf (*Symplocos tinctoria*). Fringe trees (*Chionanthus virginica*), are usually loners, seen as widely scattered individuals. Their frilly white blooms give these small trees the appearance of a puff of white smoke. Walking the forest trails, brilliant yellow, tubular blooms laying on the ground tell you yellow Jessamine (*Gelsemium sempervirens*) is blooming in the canopy overhead. More color is added to the spring-time forest by the pink blooms of redbuds (*Cercis canadensis*), small, bell-shaped blooms of sparkleberry (*Vaccinium arboretum*), and small white flowers of large shrubs (small trees) of Walter viburnum (*Viburnum obovatum*), haw (*Crataegus* spp.) and hog plum (*Prunus umbellata*).



Springs
One of the things that set the Suwannee River apart from all other rivers is the abundance of freshwater springs. Conditions for the formation of springs (as described in the **karst topography** segment) are ideal on the Suwannee, as the river flows over the limestone layers containing several aquifers – including the large Floridan Aquifer. The water temperature of the springs remains fairly constant year-round, generally ranging from 71° – 73° F. Mineral components vary, depending on the composition of the rocks through which the water flows.

Springs are classified by the amount of water they discharge. There are four primary classifications.

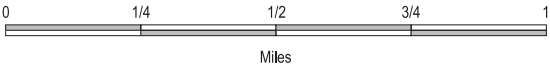
First magnitude – Has a flow of more than 100 cubic feet per second (over 64 million gallons/day)

Second magnitude – Has a flow of 10 - 100 cubic feet/ second (between 6.4 and 64 million gallons/ day)

Third magnitude – Has a flow of 1 - 10 cubic feet/ second (between 0. 64 and 6.4 million gallons/day)

Fourth magnitude – Has a flow of less than 1 cubic feet/ second (less than 0.64 million gallons/day)

Of the 196 recorded springs in the Suwannee basin, 18 are first magnitude, 87 are second magnitude, 57 are third magnitude and 34 are of fourth magnitude.

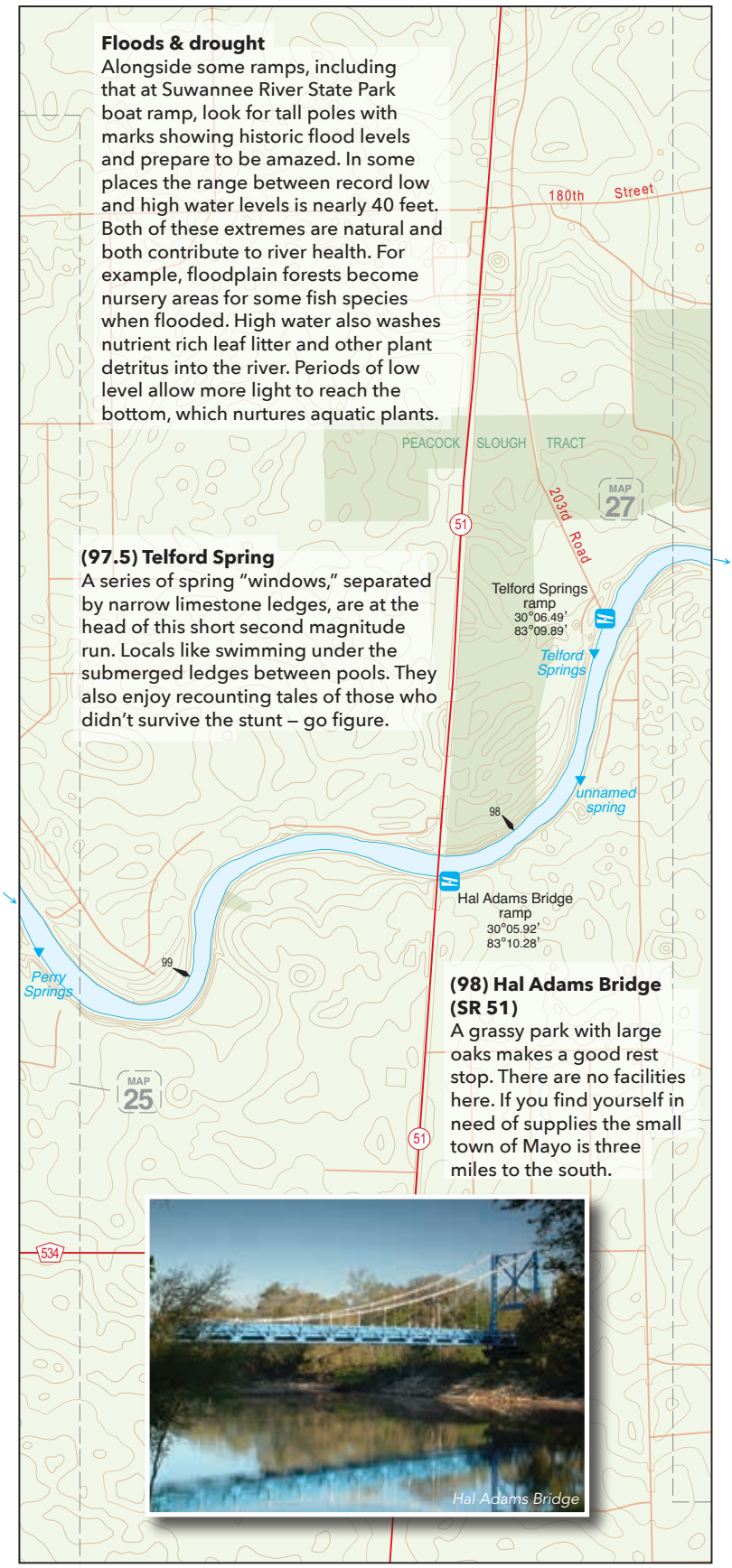


Floods & drought
Alongside some ramps, including that at Suwannee River State Park boat ramp, look for tall poles with marks showing historic flood levels and prepare to be amazed. In some places the range between record low and high water levels is nearly 40 feet. Both of these extremes are natural and both contribute to river health. For example, floodplain forests become nursery areas for some fish species when flooded. High water also washes nutrient rich leaf litter and other plant detritus into the river. Periods of low level allow more light to reach the bottom, which nurtures aquatic plants.

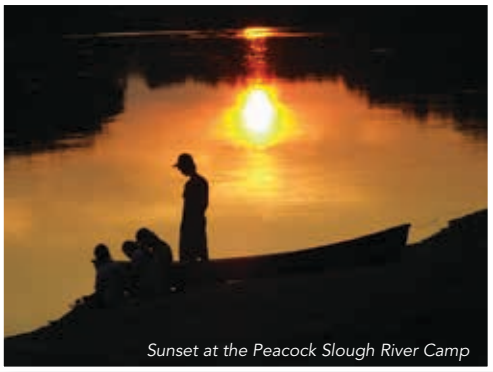
(97.5) Telford Spring
A series of spring "windows," separated by narrow limestone ledges, are at the head of this short second magnitude run. Locals like swimming under the submerged ledges between pools. They also enjoy recounting tales of those who didn't survive the stunt – go figure.

(98) Hal Adams Bridge (SR 51)
A grassy park with large oaks makes a good rest stop. There are no facilities here. If you find yourself in need of supplies the small town of Mayo is three miles to the south.

Hal Adams Bridge



0 1/4 1/2 3/4 1
Miles


Sunset at the Peacock Slough River Camp

PEACOCK SPRINGS STATE PARK

PEACOCK SLOUGH TRACT

(95.6) Peacock Slough River Camp
This SRWT River Camp is perched on the high ground above the mouth of Peacock Slough, the drainage channel for Peacock and Bonnet Springs. Like other river camps, this site has five screened in sleeping platforms, a picnic area, rest rooms and showers. There is no vehicle access to this river camp.

97

MAP 26

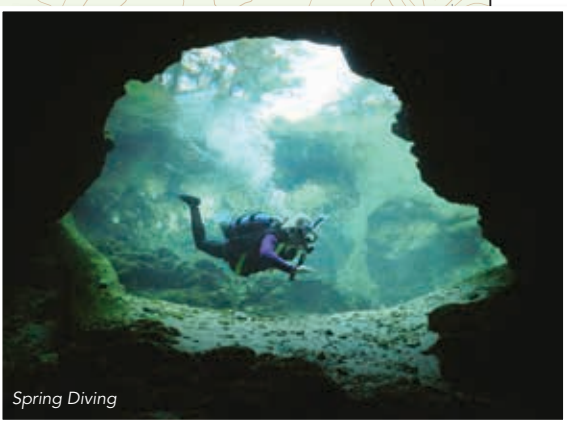
96

MAP 28

Peacock Slough river camp
30°06.14'
83°08.28'

(95.6) Peacock Springs State Park
Peacock Springs State Park, located about a mile north of the river, contains a cluster of springs scattered throughout 1 square mile area of dense hardwood forest. The park's main recreation area is at Peacock Spring – an attractive swimming and picnicking spot. Some springs in the group are often covered by duckweed – interesting, tiny plants, but hardly inviting to the casual swimmer. Cave divers, on the other hand, know these pools to be entranceways to an incredible world of underground caves and caverns. Nearly 33,000 ft. of passageways have been mapped, making this one of the longest known aquatic caves in the U.S.

NOTE: Peacock Slough passes through private property before reaching the river. Therefore, Peacock Springs State Park cannot be directly accessed from the river or Peacock Slough River Camp.


Spring Diving

0 1/4 1/2 3/4 1
Miles

(94) Running Springs
There are two springs here. One is an interesting natural pool – essentially a karst window – that gushes from the base of a 30 ft. depression. After a brief 90- foot run, the spring water meets a low, limestone ledge at the river's edge. An opening at the base of this ledge, below water level, vents the water into the river. Only at high levels does water spill over the top. The other spring flows from the base of another limestone bluff alongside the river. A small pool and short, swift run make this a great swim stop. This spring is surrounded by private property.

PEACOCK SLOUGH TRACT

Running Spring

94

old railroad bridge
30°06.06'
83°06.85'

95

MAP 29

MAP 27

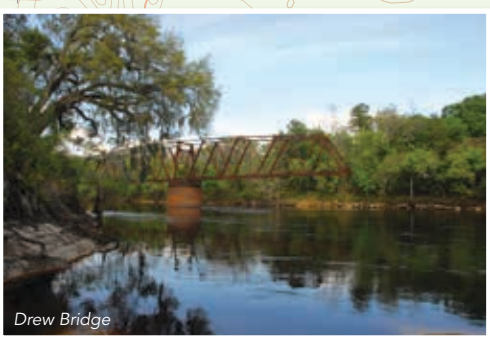
93

Hardenbergh ramp
30°05.46'
83°06.74'

(93.6) Drew Bridge
As you round the bend near mile 94, the hulking steel remains of the Drew Bridge loom into view. This "turn bridge," built in the opening years of the 1900s, was manually operated by two men using a huge handle. In the "closed" position, the span carried trains of the Florida Railroad across the river. The "open" position, in which it now stands, allowed large boats to pass. It has rested solemnly in this position since being deactivated in the 1920s.

(92.8) Hardenbergh Boat Ramp
Flanked on both sides by homes, this site is good for launching. Across the road a vacant field with scattered live oaks makes a good picnic spot.

354B


Drew Bridge

0 1/4 1/2 3/4 1
Miles

Springs on the Suwannee

(91.8) Convict Spring
This small, third magnitude spring is completely surrounded by a paved, pool-like deck. Suwannee River Rendezvous Resort and Campground offers lodging, RV sites, tent sites and free WiFi. Food, drink, ice and other supplies are available at the main lodge overlooking the spring. Rental canoes and kayaks are also available.

MAP 28

Bathtub Spring

92

Convict Spring

Suwannee River Rendezvous ramp

83°5.67'
30°5.21'

91

MAP 30

354

Convict Lease System
This spring's name harkens back to a dark chapter in Florida history – the convict lease system. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, convicts were leased to private companies for hard labor. In this area, most were used for the grueling work of collecting and processing turpentine from pine trees. When the public learned that convicts were being badly abused by cruel overseers, the lease system was stopped.

0 1/4 1/2 3/4 1
Miles

(90.4) Royal Spring Run
Viewed from the river, the narrow, shrubby mouth of Royal Spring Run gives no hint that in the forest behind lies one of the finest gems of the Middle Suwannee. The size of the main pool–nearly 100 ft. x 200 ft.–is deceiving, as this spring has a very low flow. During low water periods, it doesn't flow at all. The large, deep basin, rimmed by naturally carved limestone slabs and boulders, make this an idyllic spot to sunbathe and picnic. It's a rare paddler that can resist stopping at this Suwannee County Park. The concrete boat ramp just beyond the run is a good landmark.

Hugh Byron Hollingsworth Sr. ramp
30°04.98'
83°04.49'

MAP 29

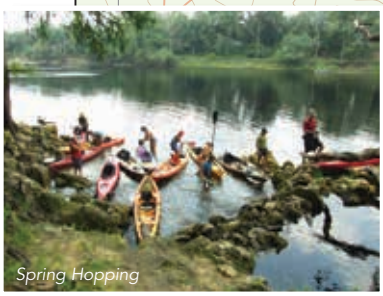
Royal Spring Run

HUGH BYRON HOLLINGSWORTH SR. COUNTY PARK

349

Suwannee Blue Springs

90


Spring Hopping

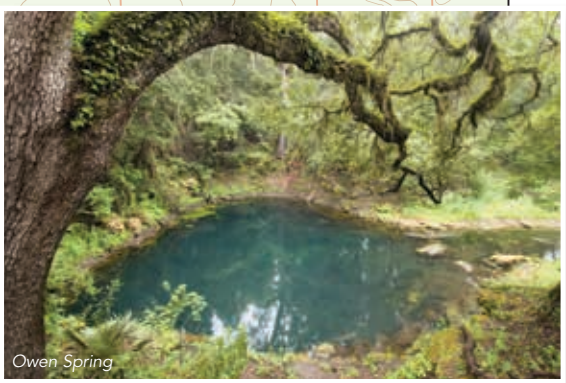
MAP 31

89

Shoals & Pools
Just as limestone at the river's edge is pocked and irregular, the submerged river bottom varies dramatically. Each feature of the river's bottom plays a unique role in it's ecology. Shoals (shallow areas), in addition to being a fun ride for paddlers, oxygenate the water and create ideal living conditions for many invertebrates. These small creatures are an important part of the river's food web. In other places, deep pools are formed – usually by the scouring action of water rounding sharp bends or by solution pockets carved into the limestone. These are havens for larger river inhabitants and, like shoals, are thought to serve as nurseries for certain fish species.

0 1/4 1/2 3/4 1
Miles

Levees & Swales
When hiking atop the high bluffs along the Suwannee, you'll often see high dune-like embankments along the bluffs. These are levees, formed during floods. As water overflows the bank, it quickly loses speed and power. Sand and sediments being carried in the floodwaters settle to the bottom. The resulting levees act like retention walls, holding floodwaters and rain runoff in ephemeral sloughs that remain wet longer than they would without levees.


Owen Spring

210th Terrace

88

MAP 30

349

87

MAP 32

Owens Springs

Ft. Macomb ramp
30°02.77'
83°02.02'

(86.7) Owens Spring
Owens Spring rarely flows to the river. At its driest, the headspring area is a series of interesting wet sinks. During wetter times, it's a karst window, emerging from a 30–40 ft. deep vent and then falling below ground again after a brief 80 ft. run. Be careful when walking along the 300 ft. solution valley that marks the path of the underground channel because it is pocked with many deep, steep-sided sinkholes. To explore this spring system it's better to land at Ft. Macomb Ramp and walk in.

(86.6) Ft. Macomb Ramp
Approaching from upstream, this ramp is well camouflaged by a cluster of swamp privet bushes, so stay alert. Stay on the right of the low island as you approach the left-curving bend in the river.

OWENS SPRINGS TRACT

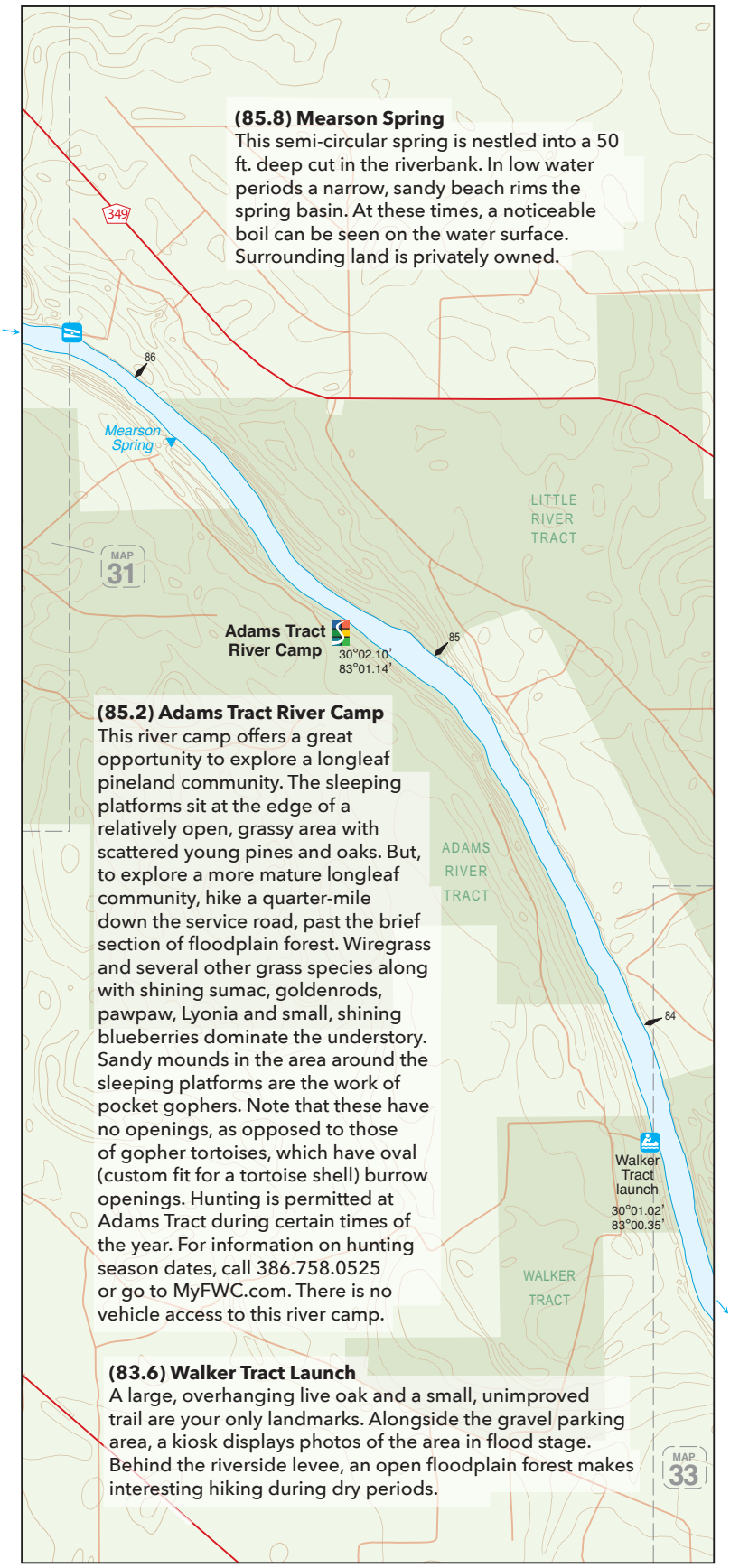
251

251

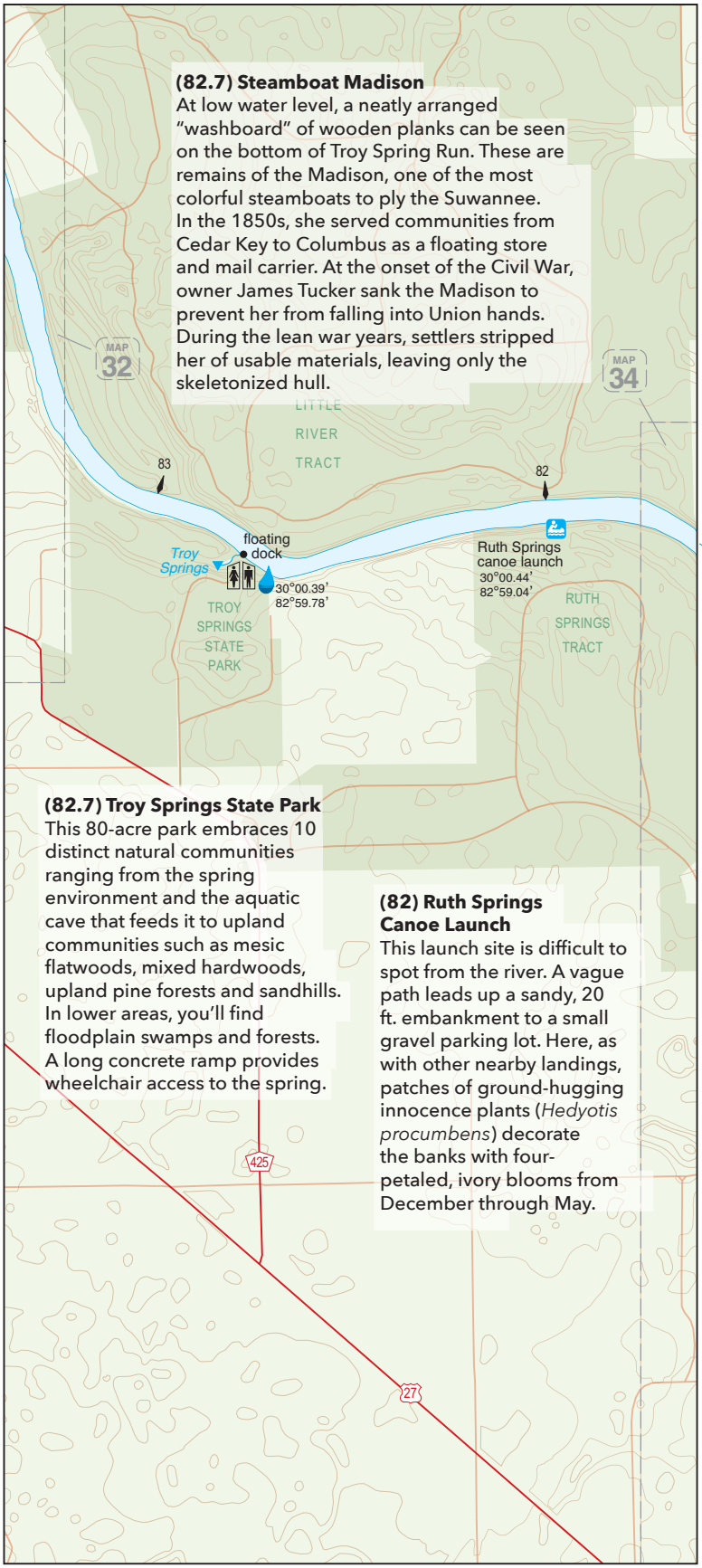
251

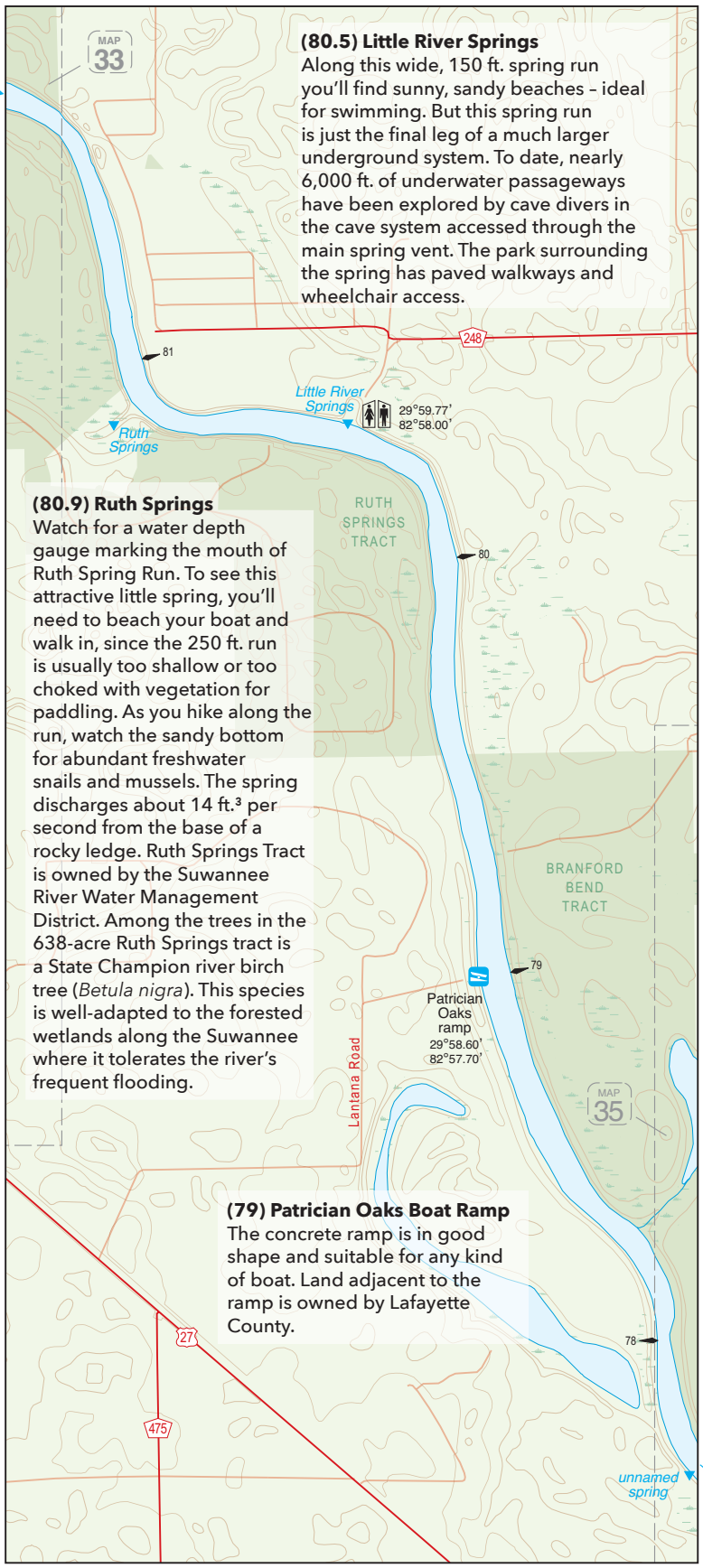
ADAMS TRACT

0 1/4 1/2 3/4 1
Miles



0 1/4 1/2 3/4 1
Miles


(82.7) Steamboat Madison
At low water level, a neatly arranged "washboard" of wooden planks can be seen on the bottom of Troy Spring Run. These are remains of the Madison, one of the most colorful steamboats to ply the Suwannee. In the 1850s, she served communities from Cedar Key to Columbus as a floating store and mail carrier. At the onset of the Civil War, owner James Tucker sank the Madison to prevent her from falling into Union hands. During the lean war years, settlers stripped her of usable materials, leaving only the skeletonized hull.
MAP 32
MAP 34
LITTLE RIVER TRACT
83
82
floating dock
Troy Springs
30°00.39'
82°59.78'
Ruth Springs canoe launch
30°00.44'
82°59.04'
TROY SPRINGS STATE PARK
RUTH SPRINGS TRACT
(82.7) Troy Springs State Park
This 80-acre park embraces 10 distinct natural communities ranging from the spring environment and the aquatic cave that feeds it to upland communities such as mesic flatwoods, mixed hardwoods, upland pine forests and sandhills. In lower areas, you'll find floodplain swamps and forests. A long concrete ramp provides wheelchair access to the spring.
(82) Ruth Springs Canoe Launch
This launch site is difficult to spot from the river. A vague path leads up a sandy, 20 ft. embankment to a small gravel parking lot. Here, as with other nearby landings, patches of ground-hugging innocence plants (Hedyotis procumbens) decorate the banks with four-petaled, ivory blooms from December through May.
425
27
0
1/4
1/2
3/4
1
Miles


MAP 33
(80.5) Little River Springs
Along this wide, 150 ft. spring run you'll find sunny, sandy beaches – ideal for swimming. But this spring run is just the final leg of a much larger underground system. To date, nearly 6,000 ft. of underwater passageways have been explored by cave divers in the cave system accessed through the main spring vent. The park surrounding the spring has paved walkways and wheelchair access.
248
81
Little River Springs
29°59.77'
82°58.00'
Ruth Springs
(80.9) Ruth Springs
Watch for a water depth gauge marking the mouth of Ruth Spring Run. To see this attractive little spring, you'll need to beach your boat and walk in, since the 250 ft. run is usually too shallow or too choked with vegetation for paddling. As you hike along the run, watch the sandy bottom for abundant freshwater snails and mussels. The spring discharges about 14 ft.³ per second from the base of a rocky ledge. Ruth Springs Tract is owned by the Suwannee River Water Management District. Among the trees in the 638-acre Ruth Springs tract is a State Champion river birch tree (Betula nigra). This species is well-adapted to the forested wetlands along the Suwannee where it tolerates the river's frequent flooding.
RUTH SPRINGS TRACT
80
BRANFORD BEND TRACT
79
Patrician Oaks ramp
29°58.60'
82°57.70'
Lantana Road
MAP 35
(79) Patrician Oaks Boat Ramp
The concrete ramp is in good shape and suitable for any kind of boat. Land adjacent to the ramp is owned by Lafayette County.
27
78
475
unnamed spring
0
1/4
1/2
3/4
1
Miles


Cypress Tree

SUWANNEE RIVER GREENWAY AT BRANFORD

Branford

129

MAP 34

78

BRANFORD BEND TRACT

Branford City Limits

247

unnamed spring

77

76

Branford Spring

Ivey Memorial Park ramp
29°57.25'
82°55.71'

27

MAP 36

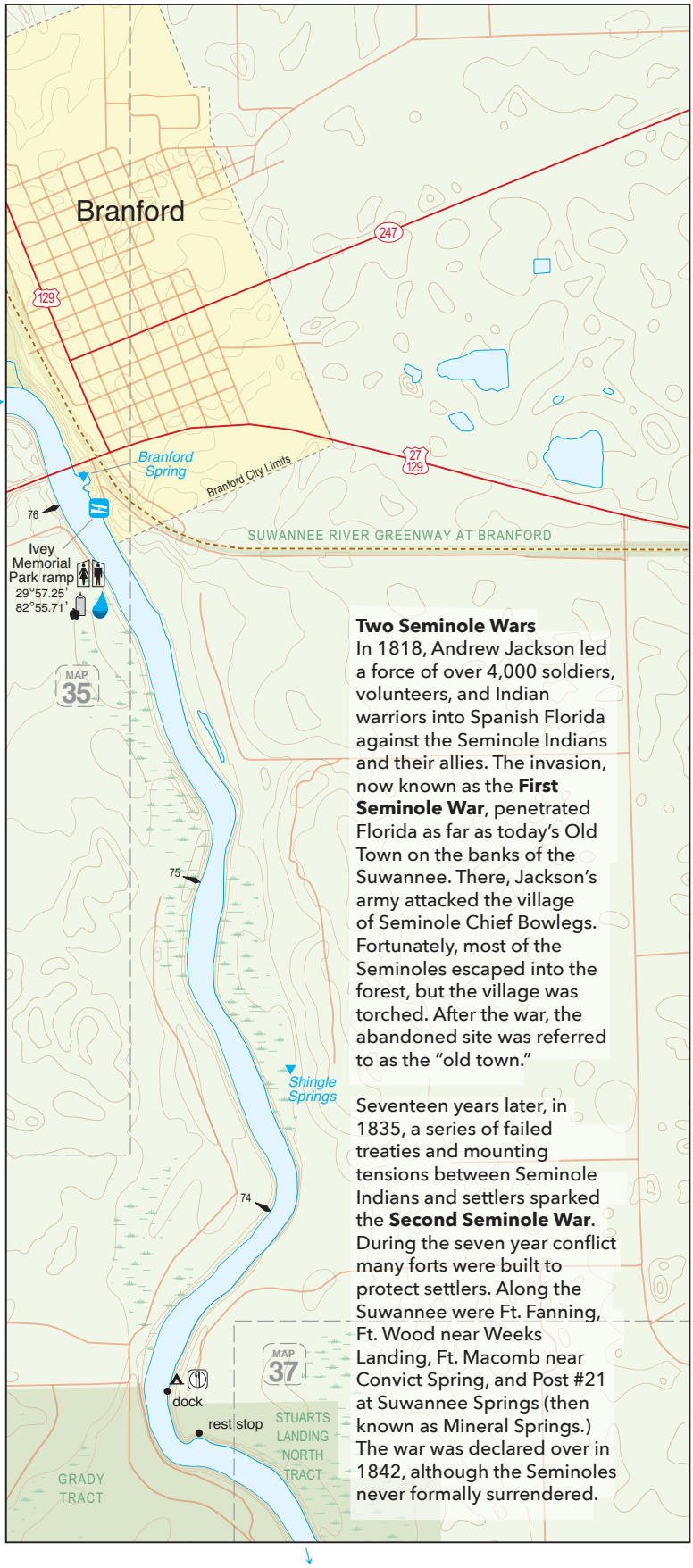
475

349

(76) Branford

Originally called Rolands Bluff, this community changed its name to New Branford, in 1886 in honor of railroad tycoon Henry Plant, who hailed from a town of that name. Even before becoming an important railroad town, New Branford was the primary river port on the Suwannee. Some of the river's largest and most famous steamboats were built here. Perhaps the most famous of the town's steamboat pilots and builders was Captain Robert Ivey. He is commemorated by Ivey Park, which sits alongside the river just below the Hwy 27 Bridge. These days, this is primarily a parking lot for the boat ramp. Many people come and go, oblivious to the park's main attraction, Branford Spring, which lies nestled in a wooded cove alongside the river.

0 1/4 1/2 3/4 1
Miles

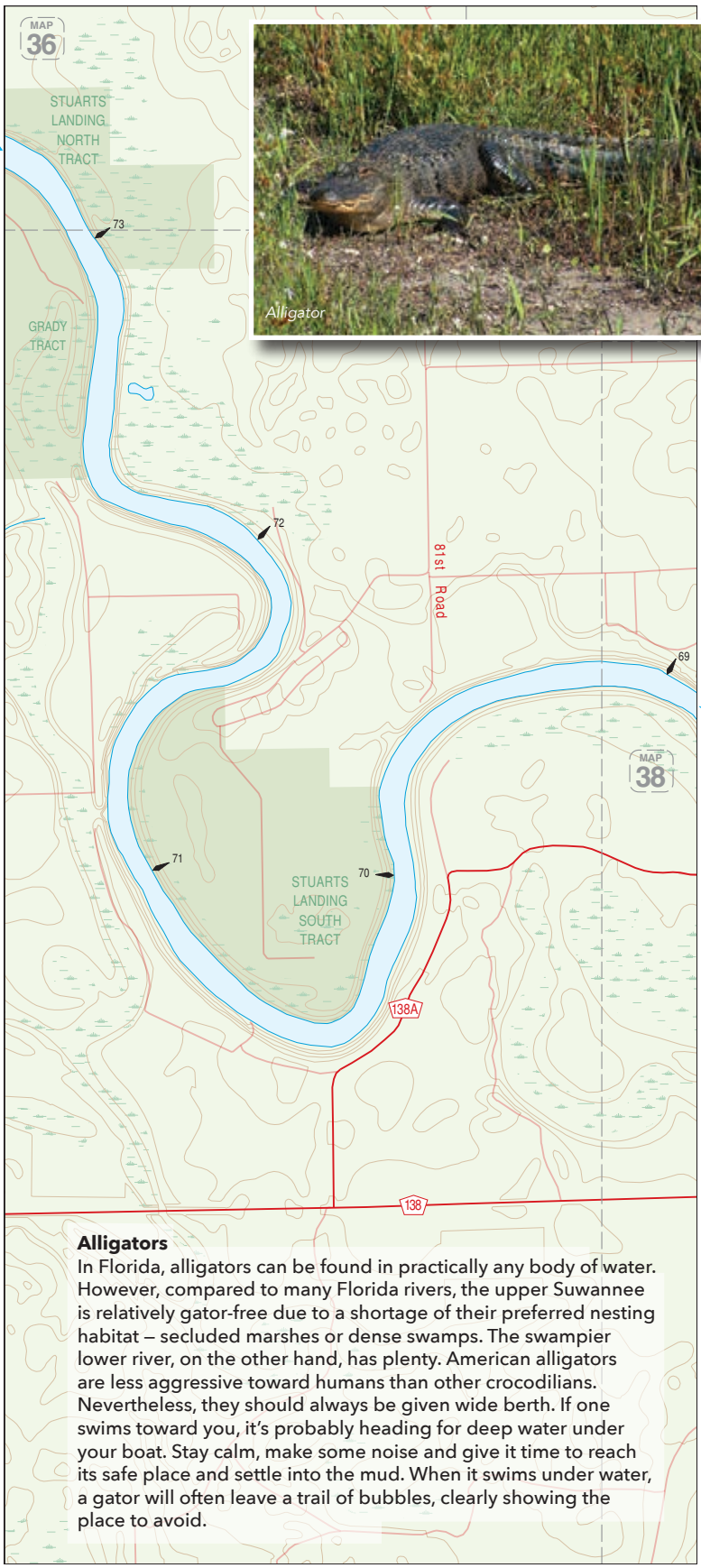


Two Seminole Wars

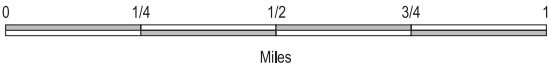
In 1818, Andrew Jackson led a force of over 4,000 soldiers, volunteers, and Indian warriors into Spanish Florida against the Seminole Indians and their allies. The invasion, now known as the **First Seminole War**, penetrated Florida as far as today's Old Town on the banks of the Suwannee. There, Jackson's army attacked the village of Seminole Chief Bowlegs. Fortunately, most of the Seminoles escaped into the forest, but the village was torched. After the war, the abandoned site was referred to as the "old town."

Seventeen years later, in 1835, a series of failed treaties and mounting tensions between Seminole Indians and settlers sparked the **Second Seminole War**. During the seven year conflict many forts were built to protect settlers. Along the Suwannee were Ft. Fanning, Ft. Wood near Weeks Landing, Ft. Macomb near Convict Spring, and Post #21 at Suwannee Springs (then known as Mineral Springs.) The war was declared over in 1842, although the Seminoles never formally surrendered.

Alligator



Alligators
In Florida, alligators can be found in practically any body of water. However, compared to many Florida rivers, the upper Suwannee is relatively gator-free due to a shortage of their preferred nesting habitat – secluded marshes or dense swamps. The swampier lower river, on the other hand, has plenty. American alligators are less aggressive toward humans than other crocodilians. Nevertheless, they should always be given wide berth. If one swims toward you, it's probably heading for deep water under your boat. Stay calm, make some noise and give it time to reach its safe place and settle into the mud. When it swims under water, a gator will often leave a trail of bubbles, clearly showing the place to avoid.



(65.9) Santa Fe River

In contrast to some of Suwannee's lesser-known tributaries, Santa Fe River is a star-studded celebrity – the stars being the 60 springs that line her banks. However, there's much more to the Santa Fe than good swimming holes. A rich diversity of forests supports healthy populations of birds, mammals and reptiles.

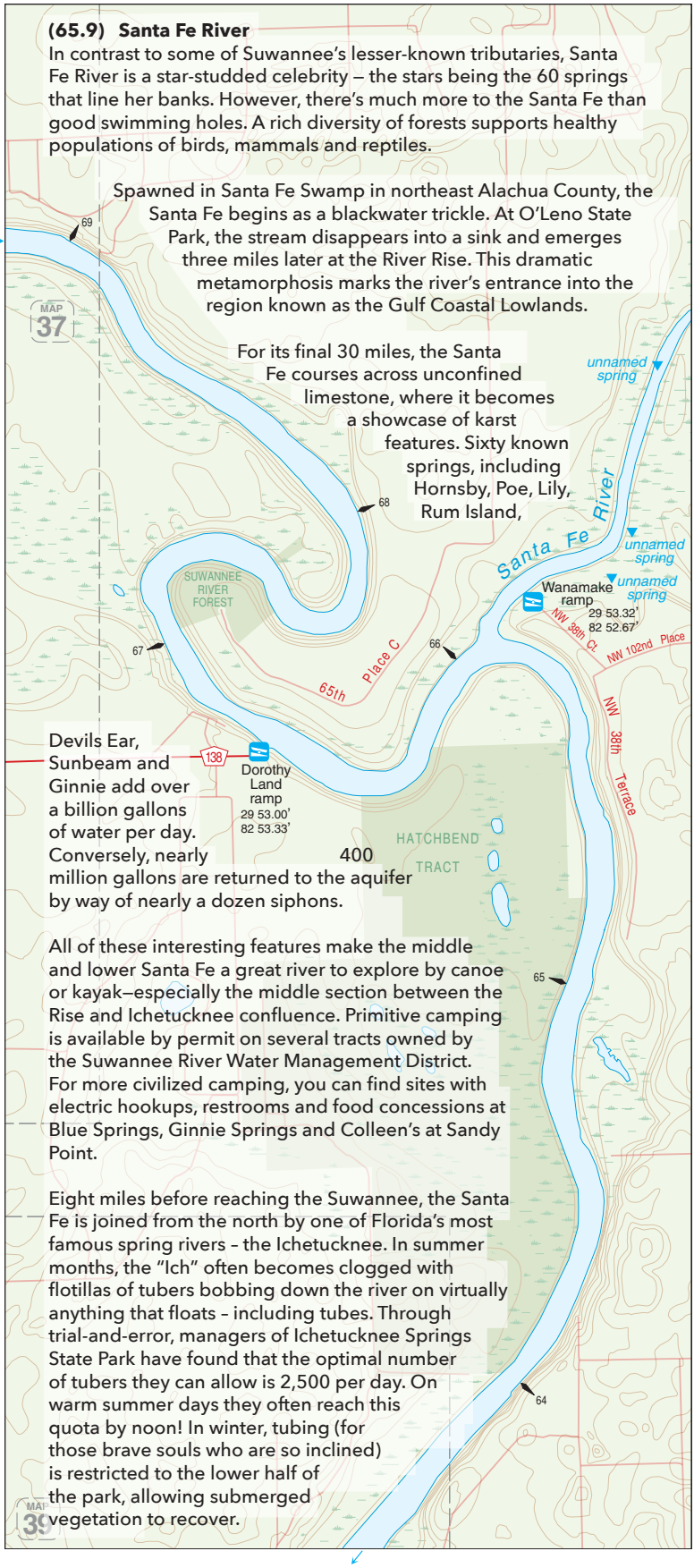
Spawned in Santa Fe Swamp in northeast Alachua County, the Santa Fe begins as a blackwater trickle. At O'Leno State Park, the stream disappears into a sink and emerges three miles later at the River Rise. This dramatic metamorphosis marks the river's entrance into the region known as the Gulf Coastal Lowlands.

For its final 30 miles, the Santa Fe courses across unconfined limestone, where it becomes a showcase of karst features. Sixty known springs, including Hornsby, Poe, Lily, Rum Island,

Devils Ear, Sunbeam and Ginnie add over a billion gallons of water per day. Conversely, nearly 400 million gallons are returned to the aquifer by way of nearly a dozen siphons.

All of these interesting features make the middle and lower Santa Fe a great river to explore by canoe or kayak–especially the middle section between the Rise and Ichetucknee confluence. Primitive camping is available by permit on several tracts owned by the Suwannee River Water Management District. For more civilized camping, you can find sites with electric hookups, restrooms and food concessions at Blue Springs, Ginnie Springs and Colleen's at Sandy Point.

Eight miles before reaching the Suwannee, the Santa Fe is joined from the north by one of Florida's most famous spring rivers – the Ichetucknee. In summer months, the "Ich" often becomes clogged with flotillas of tubers bobbing down the river on virtually anything that floats – including tubes. Through trial-and-error, managers of Ichetucknee Springs State Park have found that the optimal number of tubers they can allow is 2,500 per day. On warm summer days they often reach this quota by noon! In winter, tubing (for those brave souls who are so inclined) is restricted to the lower half of the park, allowing submerged vegetation to recover.



0 1/4 1/2 3/4 1

Miles

HATCHBEND TRACT

MAP 38

(63) Sims Landing
There is little room for camping or picnicking here, but it is a good launch. Stroll the access road in early spring to see wild indigo in bloom.

Sims Landing ramp
29°51.24'
82°53.24'

63

Leapers Great and Small
As you paddle the Suwannee, you're likely to see jumping fish. Two species that most commonly leave their watery home and "dive" into the world of sunlight and fresh air are mullet and Gulf sturgeon. Sometimes, you only glimpse a flash of silver from the corner of your eye, but if you get a good look, they're easy to tell apart. If it's over three feet (sometimes as much as six) and makes a vertical jump, splashing down tail first or on its side, it's probably a sturgeon. Mullet, on the other hand, rarely exceed two feet and their jump is more of an arching, horizontal leap that lands head first or on their belly. Both of these species spend part of their life in salt water and the rest in fresh water rivers.

Turtle Spring

62

Earl Boulevard

unnamed spring

61


Atamasco Lily

Caution – Several motor boaters have been injured by leaping sturgeon. Those using motor boats should go as slow as possible during warm months to avoid collision with sturgeon and minimize potential injury.

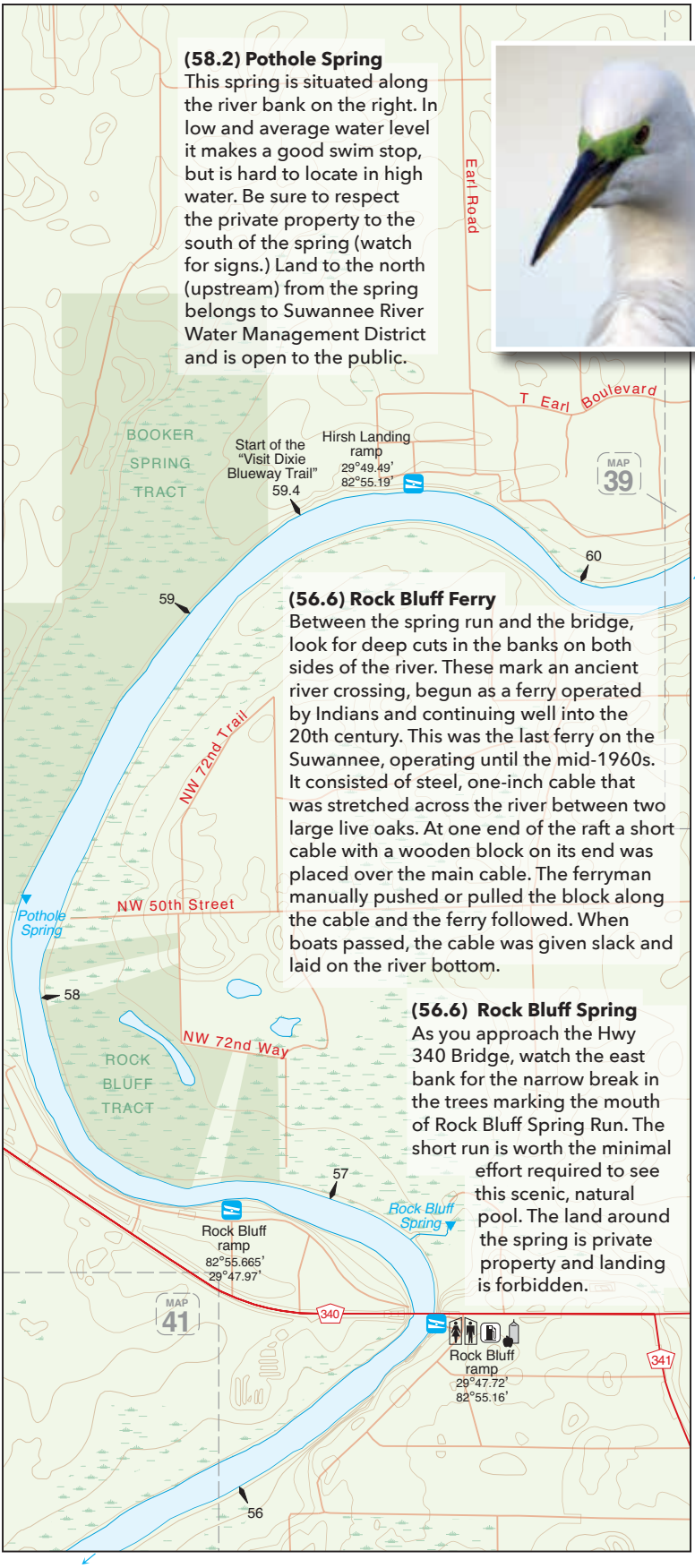
MAP 40

0 1/4 1/2 3/4 1
Miles

(58.2) Pothole Spring
This spring is situated along the river bank on the right. In low and average water level it makes a good swim stop, but is hard to locate in high water. Be sure to respect the private property to the south of the spring (watch for signs.) Land to the north (upstream) from the spring belongs to Suwannee River Water Management District and is open to the public.

(56.6) Rock Bluff Ferry
Between the spring run and the bridge, look for deep cuts in the banks on both sides of the river. These mark an ancient river crossing, begun as a ferry operated by Indians and continuing well into the 20th century. This was the last ferry on the Suwannee, operating until the mid-1960s. It consisted of steel, one-inch cable that was stretched across the river between two large live oaks. At one end of the raft a short cable with a wooden block on its end was placed over the main cable. The ferryman manually pushed or pulled the block along the cable and the ferry followed. When boats passed, the cable was given slack and laid on the river bottom.

(56.6) Rock Bluff Spring
As you approach the Hwy 340 Bridge, watch the east bank for the narrow break in the trees marking the mouth of Rock Bluff Spring Run. The short run is worth the minimal effort required to see this scenic, natural pool. The land around the spring is private property and landing is forbidden.




Great Blue Heron

Gornto Springs ramp
29 46.82'
82 56.35'

Gornto Springs

55

353

GORNTO SPRINGS TRACT

(55) Gornto Springs
Overnight camping destination of the SRWT is located in a Dixie County Blueway Park. This second magnitude spring forms a 125' pool before flowing into the Suwannee River.

54

(52) Log Landing
The names of this landing and nearby Lumbercamp Spring (located along Sun Spring Run) allude to the thriving logging industry that was once the focus of life along the river. In less than a century, from the mid 1800s to the early 1900s, the vast stands of virgin cypress that once lined the Suwannee were cut and hauled to the river where they were floated to the nearest mill. But, some logs sank before reaching the mill. Today, "deadhead loggers" are sometimes seen pulling these valuable logs of virgin cypress out of the river.

53

NW 72nd Street

NE 709th Avenue

MAP 42

LOG LANDING TRACT

52

Log Landing ramp
29 44.80'
82 56.26'

NW 6th Street

SUWANNEE STREET TRACT

MAP 40

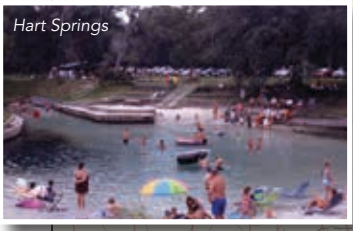
0 1/4 1/2 3/4 1
Miles

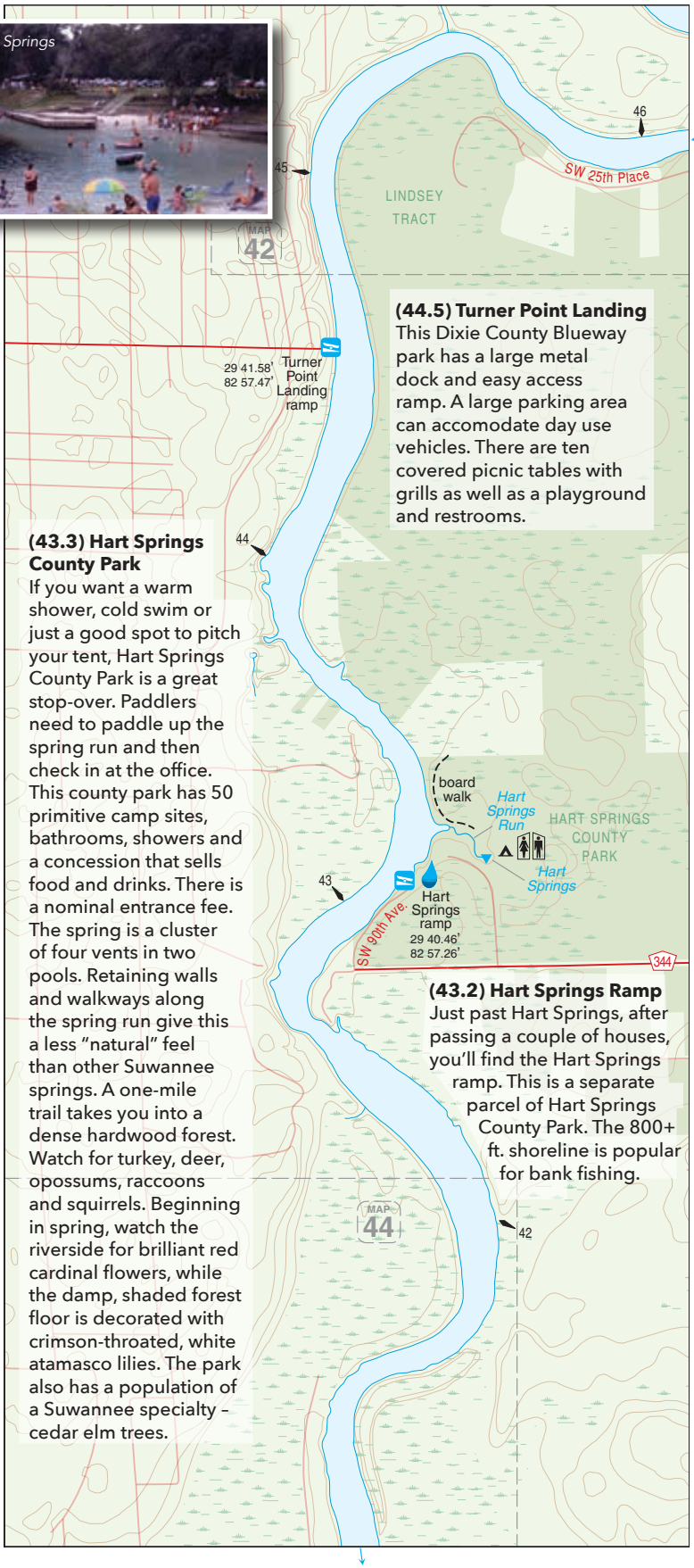
Live Oak

(50.5) Rock Sink Spring
Situated on SRWMD property, this minimal flow spring is open to public visitation.

(49.7) Wannee Boat Ramp
This little park is on a low, open rise alongside the river.

(46.4) Eula Landing
If you prefer to picnic on a table, this little park might fit the bill. But don't expect it to be "wild", as there are houses nearby. The concrete ramp makes good access for motor boats as well as paddlers.





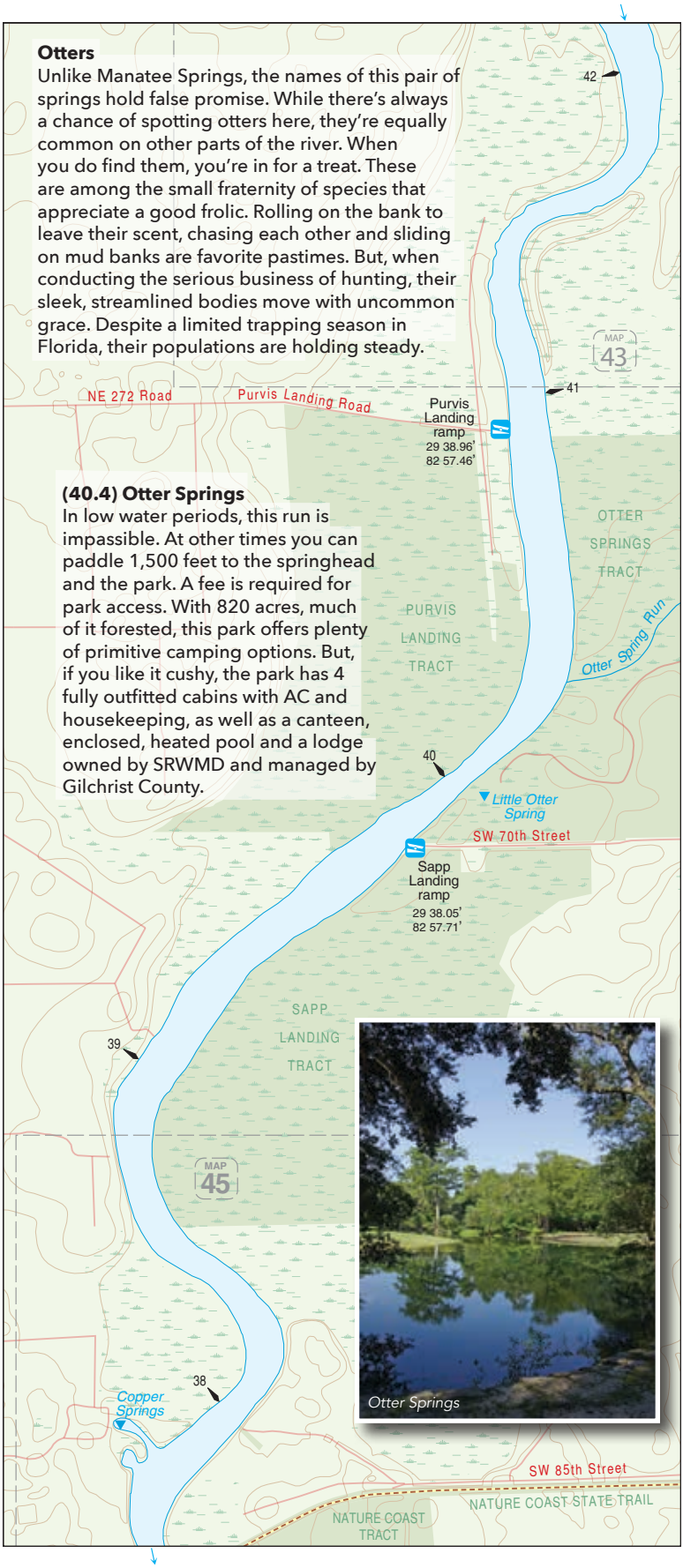
(44.5) Turner Point Landing
This Dixie County Blueway park has a large metal dock and easy access ramp. A large parking area can accomodate day use vehicles. There are ten covered picnic tables with grills as well as a playground and restrooms.

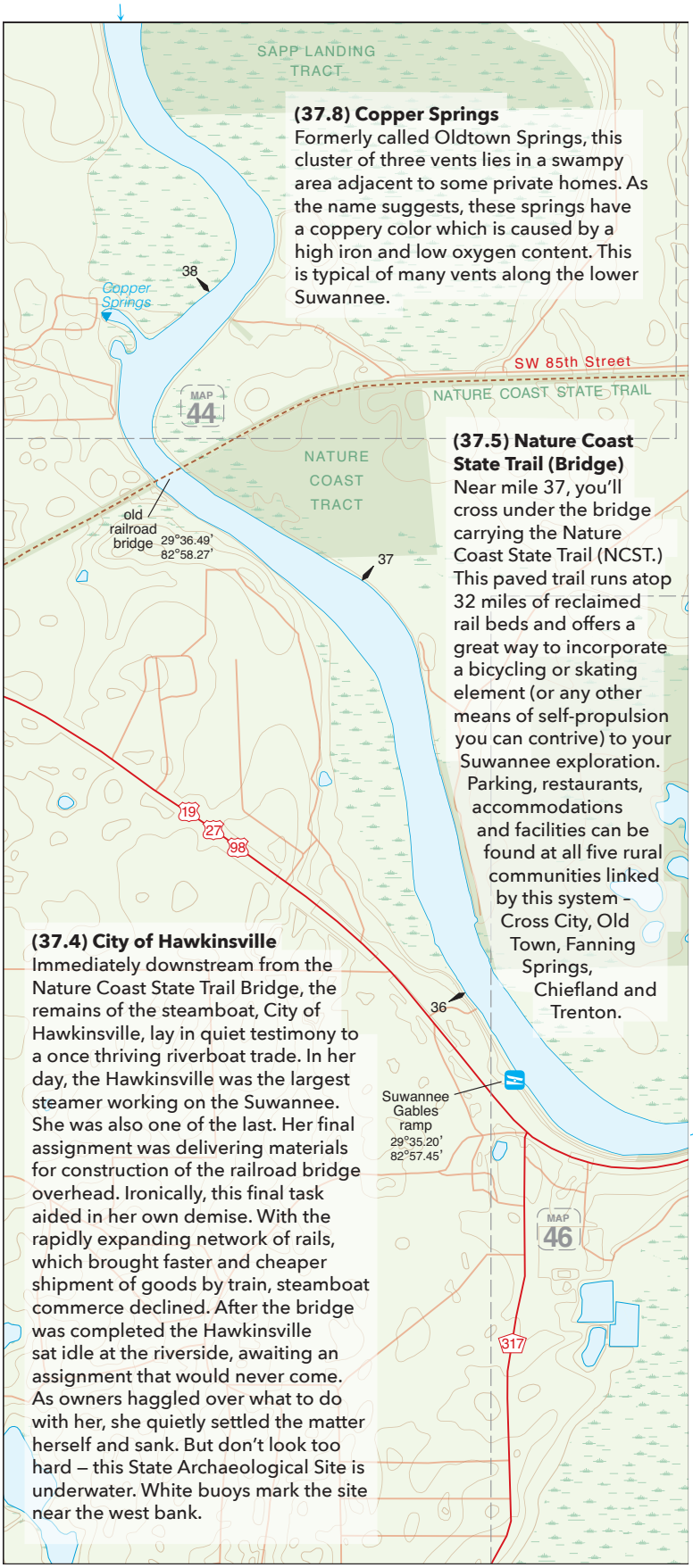
(43.3) Hart Springs County Park
If you want a warm shower, cold swim or just a good spot to pitch your tent, Hart Springs County Park is a great stop-over. Paddlers need to paddle up the spring run and then check in at the office. This county park has 50 primitive camp sites, bathrooms, showers and a concession that sells food and drinks. There is a nominal entrance fee. The spring is a cluster of four vents in two pools. Retaining walls and walkways along the spring run give this a less "natural" feel than other Suwannee springs. A one-mile trail takes you into a dense hardwood forest. Watch for turkey, deer, opossums, raccoons and squirrels. Beginning in spring, watch the riverside for brilliant red cardinal flowers, while the damp, shaded forest floor is decorated with crimson-throated, white atamasco lilies. The park also has a population of a Suwannee specialty – cedar elm trees.

(43.2) Hart Springs Ramp
Just past Hart Springs, after passing a couple of houses, you'll find the Hart Springs ramp. This is a separate parcel of Hart Springs County Park. The 800+ ft. shoreline is popular for bank fishing.

Otters
Unlike Manatee Springs, the names of this pair of springs hold false promise. While there's always a chance of spotting otters here, they're equally common on other parts of the river. When you do find them, you're in for a treat. These are among the small fraternity of species that appreciate a good frolic. Rolling on the bank to leave their scent, chasing each other and sliding on mud banks are favorite pastimes. But, when conducting the serious business of hunting, their sleek, streamlined bodies move with uncommon grace. Despite a limited trapping season in Florida, their populations are holding steady.

(40.4) Otter Springs
In low water periods, this run is impassible. At other times you can paddle 1,500 feet to the springhead and the park. A fee is required for park access. With 820 acres, much of it forested, this park offers plenty of primitive camping options. But, if you like it cushy, the park has 4 fully outfitted cabins with AC and housekeeping, as well as a canteen, enclosed, heated pool and a lodge owned by SRWMD and managed by Gilchrist County.

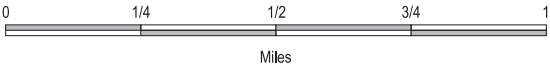


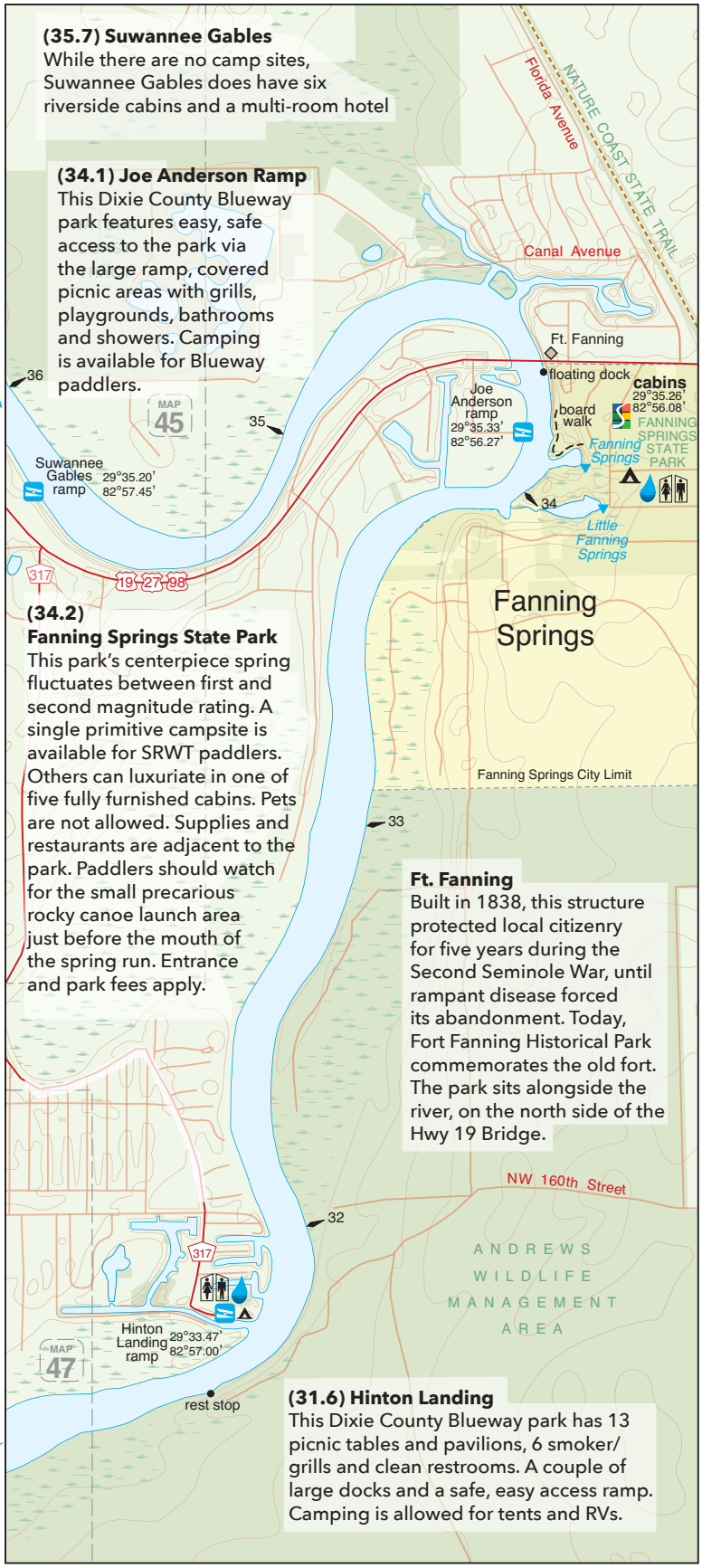


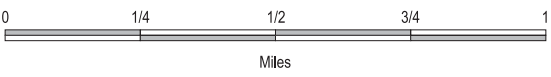
(37.8) Copper Springs
Formerly called Oldtown Springs, this cluster of three vents lies in a swampy area adjacent to some private homes. As the name suggests, these springs have a coppery color which is caused by a high iron and low oxygen content. This is typical of many vents along the lower Suwannee.

(37.5) Nature Coast State Trail (Bridge)
Near mile 37, you'll cross under the bridge carrying the Nature Coast State Trail (NCST.) This paved trail runs atop 32 miles of reclaimed rail beds and offers a great way to incorporate a bicycling or skating element (or any other means of self-propulsion you can contrive) to your Suwannee exploration. Parking, restaurants, accommodations and facilities can be found at all five rural communities linked by this system – Cross City, Old Town, Fanning Springs, Chiefland and Trenton.

(37.4) City of Hawkinsville
Immediately downstream from the Nature Coast State Trail Bridge, the remains of the steamboat, City of Hawkinsville, lay in quiet testimony to a once thriving riverboat trade. In her day, the Hawkinsville was the largest steamer working on the Suwannee. She was also one of the last. Her final assignment was delivering materials for construction of the railroad bridge overhead. Ironically, this final task aided in her own demise. With the rapidly expanding network of rails, which brought faster and cheaper shipment of goods by train, steamboat commerce declined. After the bridge was completed the Hawkinsville sat idle at the riverside, awaiting an assignment that would never come. As owners haggled over what to do with her, she quietly settled the matter herself and sank. But don't look too hard – this State Archaeological Site is underwater. White buoys mark the site near the west bank.




(35.7) Suwannee Gables
While there are no camp sites, Suwannee Gables does have six riverside cabins and a multi-room hotel
(34.1) Joe Anderson Ramp
This Dixie County Blueway park features easy, safe access to the park via the large ramp, covered picnic areas with grills, playgrounds, bathrooms and showers. Camping is available for Blueway paddlers.
Florida Avenue
NATURE COAST STATE TRAIL
Canal Avenue
Ft. Fanning
floating dock
cabins
29°35.26'
82°56.08'
board walk
FANNING SPRINGS STATE PARK
Fanning Springs
Joe Anderson ramp
29°35.33'
82°56.27'
36
35
34
MAP 45
Suwannee Gables ramp
29°35.20'
82°57.45'
317
19-27-98
Little Fanning Springs
Fanning Springs
Fanning Springs City Limit
(34.2)
Fanning Springs State Park
This park's centerpiece spring fluctuates between first and second magnitude rating. A single primitive campsite is available for SRWT paddlers. Others can luxuriate in one of five fully furnished cabins. Pets are not allowed. Supplies and restaurants are adjacent to the park. Paddlers should watch for the small precarious rocky canoe launch area just before the mouth of the spring run. Entrance and park fees apply.
33
Ft. Fanning
Built in 1838, this structure protected local citizenry for five years during the Second Seminole War, until rampant disease forced its abandonment. Today, Fort Fanning Historical Park commemorates the old fort. The park sits alongside the river, on the north side of the Hwy 19 Bridge.
NW 160th Street
32
317
ANDREWS WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA
Hinton Landing ramp
29°33.47'
82°57.00'
MAP 47
rest stop
(31.6) Hinton Landing
This Dixie County Blueway park has 13 picnic tables and pavilions, 6 smoker/grills and clean restrooms. A couple of large docks and a safe, easy access ramp. Camping is allowed for tents and RVs.


0
1/4
1/2
3/4
1
Miles

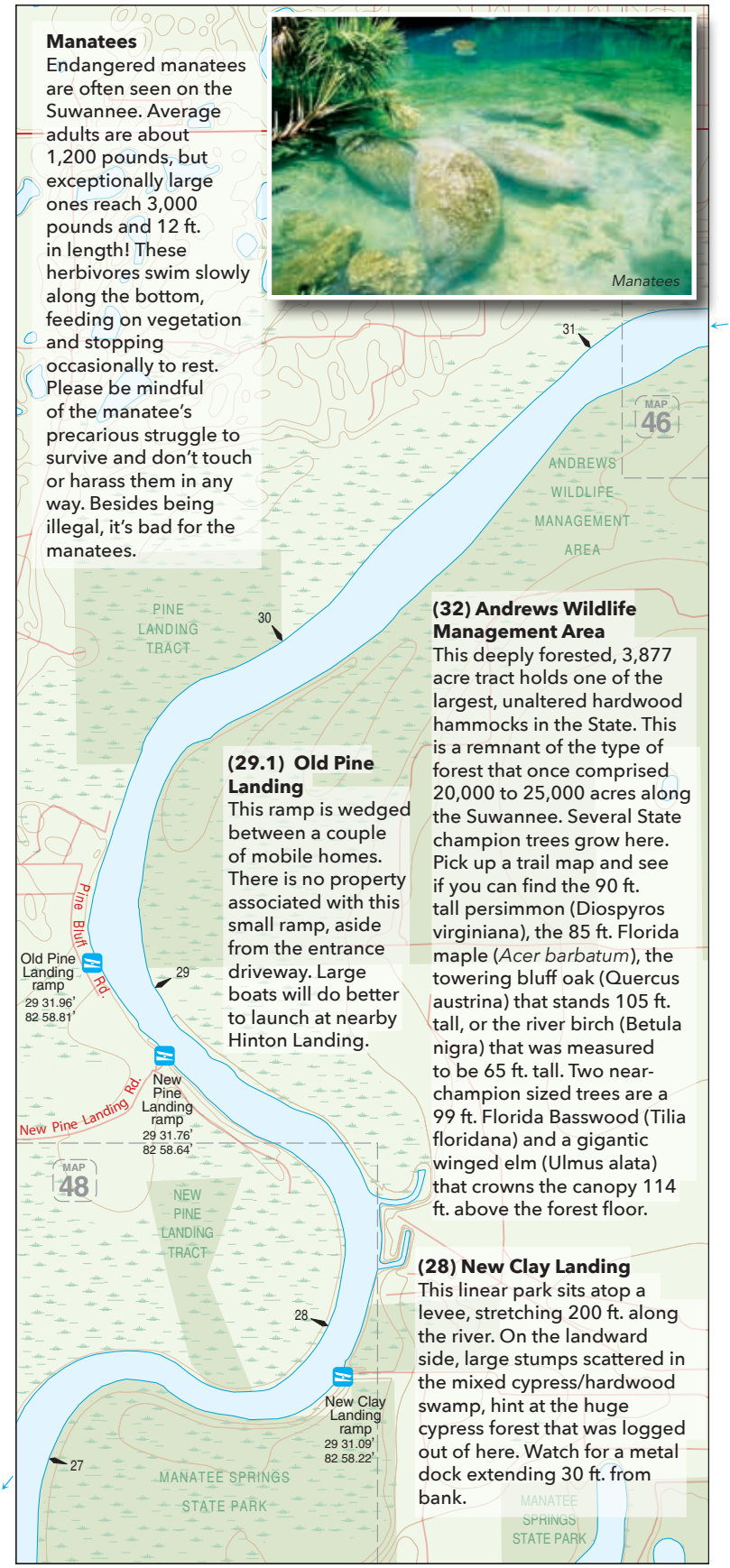
Manatees
Endangered manatees are often seen on the Suwannee. Average adults are about 1,200 pounds, but exceptionally large ones reach 3,000 pounds and 12 ft. in length! These herbivores swim slowly along the bottom, feeding on vegetation and stopping occasionally to rest. Please be mindful of the manatee's precarious struggle to survive and don't touch or harass them in any way. Besides being illegal, it's bad for the manatees.

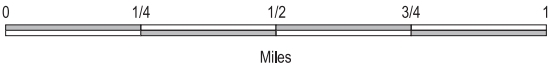
Manatees

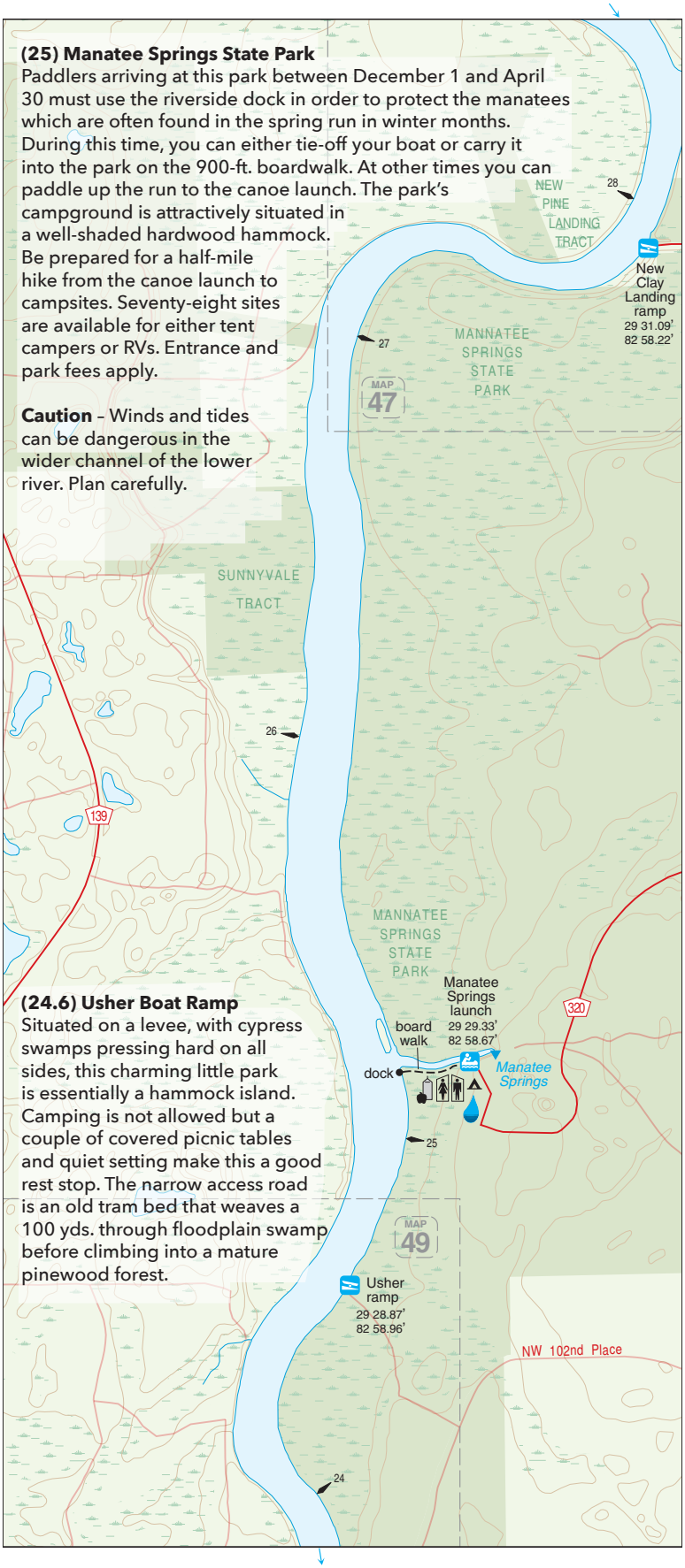
(32) Andrews Wildlife Management Area
This deeply forested, 3,877 acre tract holds one of the largest, unaltered hardwood hammocks in the State. This is a remnant of the type of forest that once comprised 20,000 to 25,000 acres along the Suwannee. Several State champion trees grow here. Pick up a trail map and see if you can find the 90 ft. tall persimmon (Diospyros virginiana), the 85 ft. Florida maple (*Acer barbatum*), the towering bluff oak (Quercus austrina) that stands 105 ft. tall, or the river birch (Betula nigra) that was measured to be 65 ft. tall. Two near-champion sized trees are a 99 ft. Florida Basswood (Tilia floridana) and a gigantic winged elm (Ulmus alata) that crowns the canopy 114 ft. above the forest floor.

(29.1) Old Pine Landing
This ramp is wedged between a couple of mobile homes. There is no property associated with this small ramp, aside from the entrance driveway. Large boats will do better to launch at nearby Hinton Landing.

(28) New Clay Landing
This linear park sits atop a levee, stretching 200 ft. along the river. On the landward side, large stumps scattered in the mixed cypress/hardwood swamp, hint at the huge cypress forest that was logged out of here. Watch for a metal dock extending 30 ft. from bank.






(25) Manatee Springs State Park
Paddlers arriving at this park between December 1 and April 30 must use the riverside dock in order to protect the manatees which are often found in the spring run in winter months. During this time, you can either tie-off your boat or carry it into the park on the 900-ft. boardwalk. At other times you can paddle up the run to the canoe launch. The park's campground is attractively situated in a well-shaded hardwood hammock. Be prepared for a half-mile hike from the canoe launch to campsites. Seventy-eight sites are available for either tent campers or RVs. Entrance and park fees apply.
Caution – Winds and tides can be dangerous in the wider channel of the lower river. Plan carefully.
(24.6) Usher Boat Ramp
Situated on a levee, with cypress swamps pressing hard on all sides, this charming little park is essentially a hammock island. Camping is not allowed but a couple of covered picnic tables and quiet setting make this a good rest stop. The narrow access road is an old tram bed that weaves a 100 yds. through floodplain swamp before climbing into a mature pinewood forest.
NEW PINE LANDING TRACT
28
New Clay Landing ramp
29 31.09'
82 58.22'
27
MANNATEE SPRINGS STATE PARK
MAP 47
SUNNYVALE TRACT
26
139
MANNATEE SPRINGS STATE PARK
Manatee Springs launch
29 29.33'
82 58.67'
board walk
dock
Manatee Springs
320
25
MAP 49
Usher ramp
29 28.87'
82 58.96'
NW 102nd Place
24
0
1/4
1/2
3/4
1
Miles


Blue Flag Iris

Usher ramp
29 28.87'
82 58.96'

MANATEE SPRINGS STATE PARK

MAP 48

24

Yellow Jacket Rd

Yellow Jacket ramp
29 27.83'
83 00.04'

23

Camp Azalea ramp
29 27.81'
82 59.20'

NW 102nd Place

MANATEE SPRINGS STATE PARK SOUTH TRACT

(23.3) Camp Azalea boat ramp
Excellent boat ramp with no amenities.

LOWER SUWANNEE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

22

(22.6) Yellow Jacket Ramp
This Dixie County ramp is adjacent to the Yellow Jacket RV Park and the Dixie County Blueway park. Camping is available at both factilities.

MAP 50

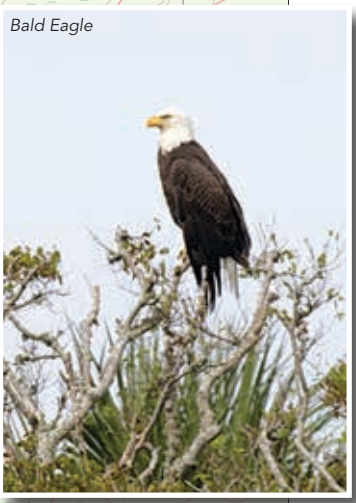
NW Camp Azalea Road

347

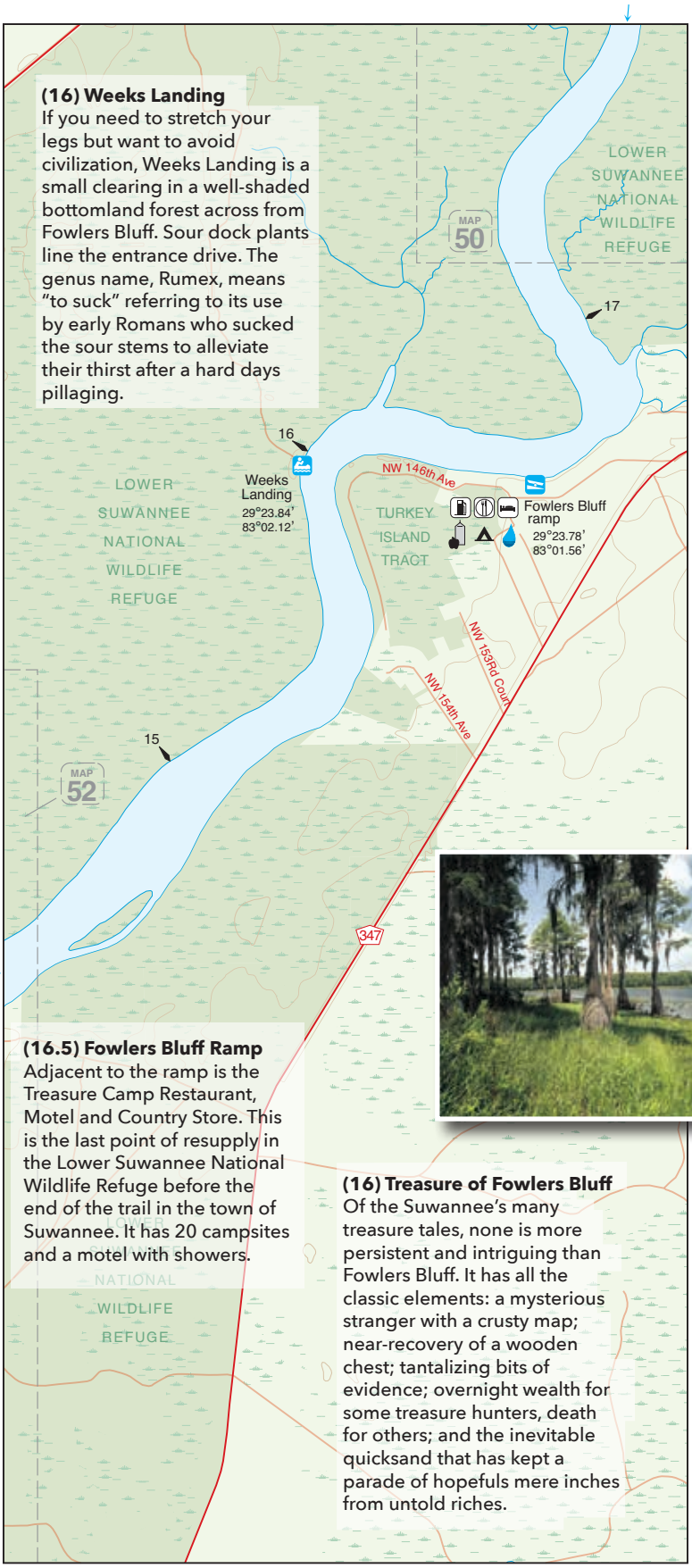
0 1/4 1/2 3/4 1

Miles

(0 – 16) Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge
The last 16-miles of the river are fronted by swamp forests of the Lower Suwannee Wildlife Refuge. These lands were purchased in 1979, primarily to help protect the rare river delta estuary system. In addition to cypress and mixed hardwood swamps along the river, the refuge contains a wide swath of salt marshes along 26-miles of the Gulf coast. Interior parts of the refuge have some scrub oak and pineland communities. All together, the refuge covers 53,000-acres. Hunting is permitted during certain times of the year. For information on hunting season dates, contact the Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge at (352.493.0238).

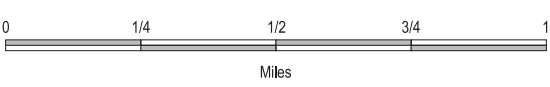

Bald Eagle

(16) Weeks Landing
If you need to stretch your legs but want to avoid civilization, Weeks Landing is a small clearing in a well-shaded bottomland forest across from Fowlers Bluff. Sour dock plants line the entrance drive. The genus name, Rumex, means "to suck" referring to its use by early Romans who sucked the sour stems to alleviate their thirst after a hard days pillaging.

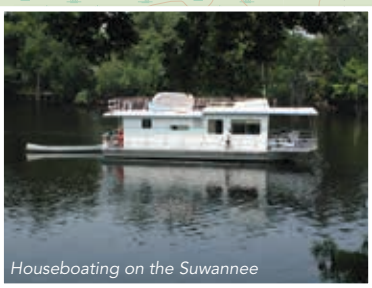


(16.5) Fowlers Bluff Ramp
Adjacent to the ramp is the Treasure Camp Restaurant, Motel and Country Store. This is the last point of resupply in the Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge before the end of the trail in the town of Suwannee. It has 20 campsites and a motel with showers.

(16) Treasure of Fowlers Bluff
Of the Suwannee's many treasure tales, none is more persistent and intriguing than Fowlers Bluff. It has all the classic elements: a mysterious stranger with a crusty map; near-recovery of a wooden chest; tantalizing bits of evidence; overnight wealth for some treasure hunters, death for others; and the inevitable quicksand that has kept a parade of hopefuls mere inches from untold riches.



(14.2) Vista
A small elevated observation deck is all that is visible of the quarter mile "river trail" in the Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge. There's no landing beach and the deck's too high to climb, so file this under "places to visit when exploring by car," and paddle on.


Houseboating on the Suwannee

MAP 51
MAP 53

LOWER SUWANNEE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

14
13
12
11
10

0 1/4 1/2 3/4 1
Miles

Tides
The Lower Suwannee rises and falls with the tides – twice daily. During periods of low water, tidal influence is seen as far up river as Rock Bluff. When levels are above average, the tidal reach is much shorter. Paddlers should note that the lower river reverses direction of flow with the rising tide. To save time and energy, check tides before your trip and paddle with the tidal flow.

MAP 52

LOWER SUWANNEE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

9

8

MAP 54

LOWER SUWANNEE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Swamp
For some people, the word swamp evokes a sense of mystery and danger. But, steering your boat off the main channel of the lower Suwannee and ascending one of the many side creeks, you'll find yourself in a lush, semi-tropical world, rich in plants and interesting animal species. Besides being the only forests of the Suwannee you can actually paddle into, the swamp has much to offer. Watch for woodpeckers, warblers, titmice, yellow-billed cuckoos, and phoebes flitting among the branches. A large, dark form gliding swiftly and quietly through the canopy might be a barred owl or red-shouldered hawk. Another species who benefits significantly from these forested wetlands are humans. Compare the height of the stilted houses on the steep-banked upper Suwannee with those on the lower river, where vast swamps absorb the overflow of floods, and you'll see that swamps play a critical role in flood prevention. We also benefit from the improved quality of the river resulting from swamp processes like the filtration of toxins from upland runoff and from the flush of nutrients that wash into the river with every flood.


Coreopsis

0 1/4 1/2 3/4 1
Miles

(7.5) Munden Creek
Near mile 7.5, a small cut in the tree line on the right shore marks the entrance to a man-made canal. This leads about a mile through the swamp to the small community of Munden Camp. The small public ramp here offers rare road access to this remote area. But, unless you need a ramp, swamp explorations are better along the many natural creeks in this area – especially the nearby Lower Suwannee NWR Canoe/Kayak Trail.

Munden Creek ramp
29 20.44'
83 06.34'

MAP 53

Munden Cr.

8

Shingle Creek

Lower Suwannee NWR canoe/kayak trail

LOWER SUWANNEE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Shingle Creek entrance
29 19.60'
83 06.56'

7

access to Munden Creek ramp
29 20.14'
83 06.05'

MAP 55

6

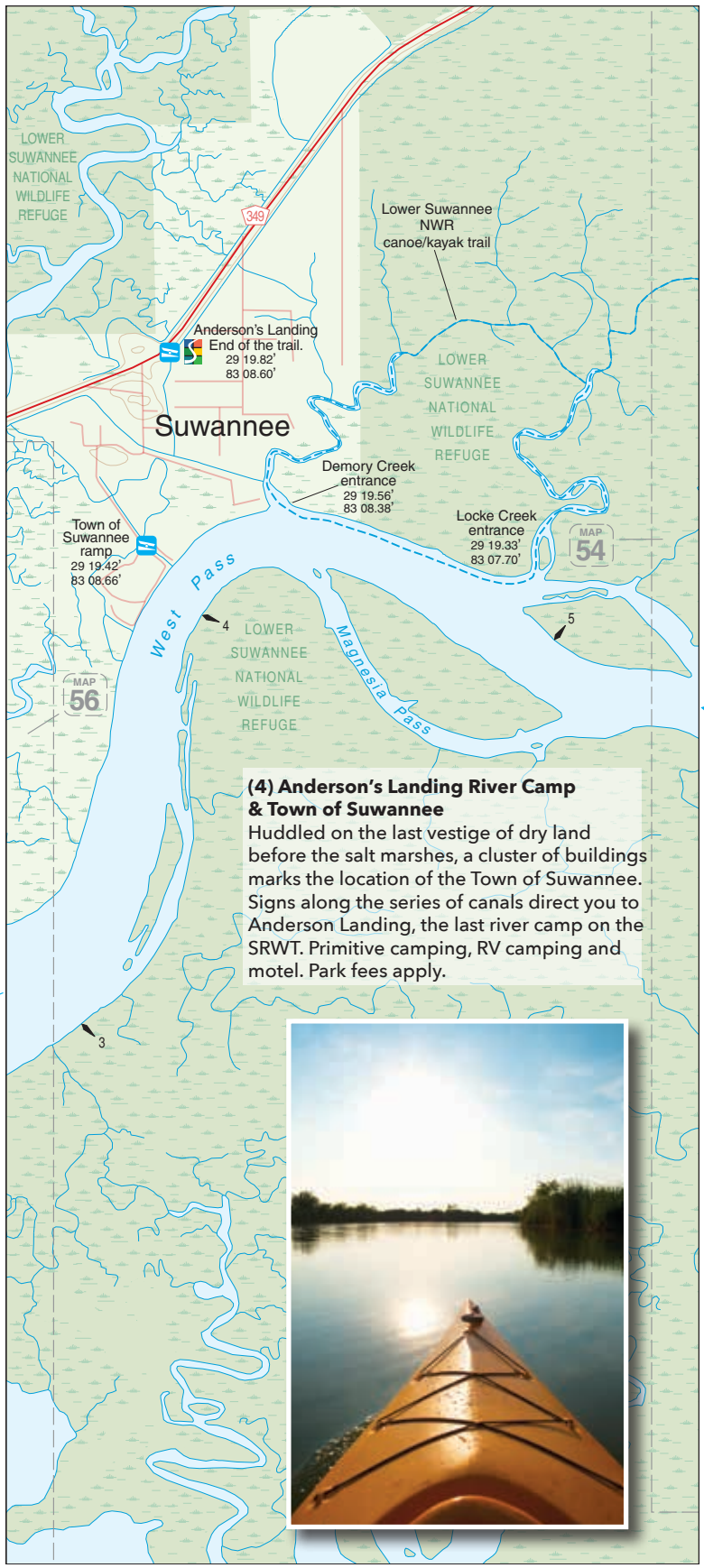
East Pass entrance
29 19.02'
83 07.20'

LOWER SUWANNEE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

East Pass

(4.5 – 6.5) Lower Suwannee Paddling Trails
Some paddlers avoid the lower Suwannee because of its wide, motor-boat friendly waters, never realizing that a world of great paddling can be found in the areas many side creeks and tidal streams. The Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge has marked out three loop trails, covering nine miles, through the tidal creeks and backwaters near the Town of Suwannee. The salt marshes adjacent to the river's mouth can be explored along a portion of the Big Bend Saltwater Paddling Trail. Paddling the tidal creeks and marshes of this area brings you into the world of bottlenose dolphins, manatees, rays, horseshoe crabs and many fish species. Osprey, bald eagles and vultures often glide overhead while wading birds such as egrets (great and snowy), herons (little blue, great blue and green), wood storks, and ibis (white and glossy) work the shallows.

0 1/4 1/2 3/4 1
Miles



(4) Anderson's Landing River Camp & Town of Suwannee
Huddled on the last vestige of dry land before the salt marshes, a cluster of buildings marks the location of the Town of Suwannee. Signs along the series of canals direct you to Anderson Landing, the last river camp on the SRWT. Primitive camping, RV camping and motel. Park fees apply.

(1 – 3) The River meets the Sea
Rounding the bend at mile four, the tree line ends abruptly and is replaced by a vast expanse of salt marsh. Here, shallow waters along the Gulf coast minimize wave action and allow marsh vegetation to thrive. A sea of saw grass, cattails and rushes, broken only by widely-scattered islands of palm and coastal hardwoods, stretches as far as the eye can see. Be very careful while paddling in this environment. The lack of unique landmarks and the dizzying maze of tidal channels can be very confusing. To make things worse, fluctuating tides can turn a beautiful little creek into waist-deep muck within minutes.

LOWER SUWANNEE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

MAP 55

(0 - 4) Salt marshes
At first glance, the salt marsh environment seems relatively barren. But, of the many natural communities along the Suwannee, few are more diverse and ecologically important. In this estuary, the Suwannee's unique blend of fresh waters – tannic tea, alluvial, surface runoff and mineral-rich spring water – mingles with the briny Gulf to create a haven for wildlife. At high tide, periwinkle snails climb to the safety of tall needle rushes while nutrients and small sea creatures are washed into the shallows. As the tide drops, 'herds' of small fiddler crabs emerge from their burrows to feed and breed. Birds such as sandpipers, plovers and other shorebirds return to search for insects, mussels, worms and crustaceans. A few species nest here, including the clapper rail, marsh wren and seaside sparrow. Fish also depend heavily upon these salt marshes, with over 90 species spending part of their lives here. For species like mullet, snapper, drum, flounder and shrimp, these are critical nursery areas for raising young.

Gulf of Mexico

0 1/4 1/2 3/4 1
Miles

SUWANNEE RIVER WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT
9225 CR 49, Live Oak, FL 32060
386.362.1001 or 1.800.226.1066 (Florida Only)
www.MySuwanneeRiver.com

SUWANNEE RIVER WILDERNESS TRAIL
4298 NW County Road 292
Mayo, FL 32066
386.294.1120 or 800.868.9914
www.SuwanneeRiver.com

COLUMBIA COUNTY TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL
971 W Duval St., Suite 145
Lake City, FL 32055
386.758.1312 or 877.746.4778
www.SpringsRUs.com

LEVY COUNTY VISITOR'S BUREAU
620 N Hathaway Ave.
Bronson, FL 32621
352.486.3396 or 1.877.387.5673
www.VisitNatureCoast.com

SUWANNEE COUNTY TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL
212 N Ohio Ave.
Live Oak, FL 32064
386.362.3071
www.VisitSuwanneeCounty.com

HAMILTON COUNTY TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL
207 NE 1 St., Room 107
Jasper, FL 32052
386.792.6829
www.HamiltonCountyFlorida.com

PURE WATER WILDERNESS
P.O. Box 214
Trenton, FL 32693
352.463.3467
www.PureWaterWilderness.com

FLORIDA PARK SERVICE
3900 Commonwealth Blvd
Tallahassee, FL 32399
850.245.2157
www.dep.state.fl.us/parks

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Gainesville, FL 32653
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