

Fish Weir Flemenco

June 29

Distance: 24 miles

Starting Elevation/Coordinates: 670 feet/N34 08.615 W84 55.863

Ending Elevation/Coordinates: 600 feet/N34 13.900 W85 06.141

Obstacles/Rapids: There are no major obstacles in this section. Occasional shoals and fish weirs create small Class I rapids that are generally easy to navigate. There's the occasional man-eating beaver, but they generally only come out at night.

Restroom Facilities:

- Mile 0** Osborne Park
- Mile 3.5** Harden Bridge
- Mile 9** US 411 Bridge
- Mile 24** Freeman Ferry Road

Points of Interest:

Mile 0—Euharlee Covered Bridge—Built by Washington King, the son of freed slave and notable bridge builder, Horace King, the Euharlee Covered Bridge has spanned Euharlee Creek since 1886. It carried passengers until 1976. Each piece of the bridge was pre-cut and numbered before installation; the bridge was then assembled in place. The remains of a grist mill dating to the 1840s can be seen just downstream from the bridge. This grist mill provided the area's first population boom, and in 1852 the settlement known as Burgess Mill incorporated as Euharleeville. Thankfully, residents dropped the "ville" in 1870. The Indian word "Euharlee" translates to "she laughs as she runs", thus, I suppose, Euharleeville would mean "she laughs as she runs through town." During the past 16 years, Euharlee has experienced unprecedented growth, and this sleepy hamlet has grown into a large bedroom community for surrounding urban centers.

Mile 3.5—Gillam Springs—You'll find this spring up Ashpole Creek just upstream from Harden Bridge. A clear, cold spring, it issues forth from a rock wall of about eight feet in height. It is accessible by paddling and walking up the creek. Should you make this stop, please respect private property.

Mile 3.5—Harden Bridge—The last remaining operational iron truss bridge on the Etowah River. The piers predate the Civil War, and the former wooden bridge, like Milam's Bridge upstream, was a key crossing point for troops during the Civil War. On river right, on both sides of the bridge, the remnants of trenches built for protection of the bridge remain. Of course, the trenches didn't provide enough protection. The bridge was burned during the Civil War anyway.

Mile 7—Island Ford—This island complex is the largest on the Etowah River and before bridges spanned the rivers, this was a popular ford. Today, it is a popular camping spot for weekend river travelers.

Mile 10.5—Two Run Creek—Near the mouth of this creek is an excellent, intact fish dam, and along the creek adjacent to the river is the site of a sizable Cherokee Indian village that is shown on maps dating from as early as 1755. Many burials and artifacts have been discovered in the area.

Mile 12—Wooley's Bridge—All that remains of this pre-Civil War bridge are the rock piers. The bridge was burned during the War and never rebuilt. Notice that you will see no mortar in these piers, yet they remain even after more than 150 years.

Mile 14—Ravenel Cave and Spring—On river left on a high bank overlooking the shoals here is the Ravenel or Jolley Cave. This ancient cave was likely used as shelter by Native Americans, but it was most notably employed as a "saltpeter mine" during the Civil War. The Confederate Nitre Bureau mined caves throughout this area to extract nitrates to be used in the production of gunpowder. Proximity to water—an essential ingredient in the extraction process—is the likely reason this cave was mined. Soil was removed from the cave floor and through an arduous process that involved soaking the soil in water, adding wood ash and boiling off the water, potassium nitrate was created. The miners were known as "peter monkeys" and worked for low wages in the dark, damp caves. The workers at the Ravenel Cave were Confederate draftees who earned 60 cents per day. The Ravenel Cave was mined during 1861 and 62, but the nearby, and larger, Kingston Saltpeter Cave produced Confederate gunpowder until Sherman's invading troops destroyed the operation. According to a 1970 survey, the cave extends 203 feet into the bluff overlooking the river. The cave can be accessed by climbing up the bank below the shoals and following the path upstream. Directly opposite the cave, on river right, is a clear, cold spring run that is worth sticking your feet in.

Mile 16—Rome to Kingston Railroad—Paralleling the river on the north bank from Kingston to Rome is the now abandoned Rome to Kingston Railroad. This railroad played in part in the famous Great Locomotive Chase during the Civil War as a Rome mail train picked up the Confederate's chase of the stolen "General" locomotive at Kingston. Trestles of the old railroad still remain over some Etowah tributaries including this one at Tom's Run Creek.

Mile 17—Young's Mill Creek/Ft. Means—Near the mouth of Youngs Mill Creek in the spring of 1838, the U.S. Military constructed Fort Means where nearby Cherokee Indians were gathered before their removal to the west. The fort served as the collection point for 467 Cherokee prisoners, one of whom was shot and killed for trying to escape. Capt. John Means commanded 68 men from here. The accounts of the Cherokee Removal in the area are different, depending upon who is telling the story. One account from the conquerors, goes like so: "After all the warning and with the soldiers in their midst, the inevitable day appointed found the Indians at work in their houses and in their fields. It is remembered as well as if it had been seen yesterday, that two or three dropped their hoes and ran as fast as they could when they saw the soldiers coming into the field. After that they made no effort to get out of the way. The men handled them gently, but picked them up in the road, in the field, anywhere they found them, part of a family at a time, and carried them to the post."

The account from a Cherokee named Oo-loo-cha, the widow of Sweet Water went like so: "The soldiers came and took us from our home. They first surrounded our house and they took the mare while we were at work in the fields and they drove us out of doors and did not permit us to take anything with us, not even a second change of clothes. Only the clothes we had on. And they shut the doors after they turned us out. They would not permit any of us to enter the house to get any clothing, but drove us off to a fort that was built at New Echota (on the Oostanaula River near Calhoun). They kept us in the fort about three days and then marched us to Ross's Landing (Chattanooga). And still on foot, even our little children. They kept us for about three days at Ross's Landing and sent us off on a boat to this country."

Mile 20—Reynold's Bend—This picturesque two-mile bend is a real gem. When you see the rock island, you'll know you've arrived. The island is a great place to soak in the sun and go for a swim. Further downriver, you'll be greeted by high rock bluffs on the south side of the river. The Bend, like so many other spots along the Etowah, is rich in history. Today, the bend is owned by a local cattle farmer, Jarrell Cagle, but had you been here in 1835, the residents included Cherokee Indians that went by Anglo names like Pumpkinpile, Chicken Cook, Gone to Mill, Buffalo Fish and Eagle on the Roost. They lived here for the same reason the Cagles live here now. The river bottom was fertile land, ideal for farming. After Pumpkinpile and his kind were forcibly removed from their homes, the Reynolds moved in, settling the "island" formed by the bend in 1847. Near where the rock island now keeps watch over the bend, a well-travelled north-south transportation route of the 1800s crossed the river at Bass Ferry.