

Po Bidy Polka

June 23

Distance: 14 miles

Starting Elevation: 420 feet

Ending Elevation: 330 feet

Obstacles/Rapids: You'll find small shoals throughout the day's paddle, though none of them exceed Class I. Pick your way carefully and if water levels are low be prepared to push yourself off some rocks.

Restroom Facilities: **Mile 0** Po Bidy Road
 Mile TBA
 Mile 14 US 19/80

Points of Interest:

Mile 0—Po Bidy Road—One of the more uniquely named roads in all of Georgia. There are several stories surrounding the origins of the name. For those uninitiated, "bidy" is slang for hen, and all the road's name origin tales involve the death of a bidy. In one, a group of people from nearby Centerville Church were enjoying a picnic of fried chicken. When the last drumstick was pulled from the basket, a Centerville pew sitter remarked, "There goes the last of the po-biddy." Another tale is of a mother hen who lost one of her brood when it dashed out into the road and was trampled by a horse to which someone exclaimed, "That's the end of that po' bidy!" Today, a more appropriate road name would be Po Dilla Road...the armadillo is the most common roadkill along this route as the critter most commonly associated with Texas has made a slow steady migration eastward and northward during the last 150 years. Reportedly, this migration was aided by intentional and accidental releases from zoos and circuses. Armadillos have now been spotted as far north as Cumming in Georgia.

Mile 1—Flint River Plantation & Georgia's Timber Industry—Along river right here you will see signs for the Flint River Plantation. Much of the land through which the Flint passes here and further south is managed timber land. Georgia has more acres of commercial timber (24.2 million acres) than any other state, with 70 percent held by private landowners. With a \$19.5 billion impact statewide, timber is Georgia's largest agricultural crop. Aside from these economic impacts, forests and timberland also provide some indirect benefits to our state. For instance, forests in the Atlanta area remove about 19 million pounds of pollutants from the air each year—a service worth about \$47 million, according to the Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC). Forested areas also help keep our water clean. GFC reports that the stormwater retention capacity of Atlanta's urban forests is worth about \$85 million each year. The stormwater these forests process and store would otherwise have to be collected and treated through engineered solutions.

Pressure to convert forest land to shopping malls and subdivisions is changing the face of Georgia's timber industry, however. Many of the largest timber companies in the state are expanding their operations to include land development, and a constitutional amendment that will appear on the ballot this November could make it much easier for these companies to convert their forests into homesites. This measure would allow private entities to develop large swaths of land and levy taxes to help pay for these developments. Dubbed the "Private Cities" amendment by opponents, it would promote development in unlikely places—like the forested banks of the Flint you'll pass by today.

Mile 3—Petroleum Pipeline—As ubiquitous on our route as river cooters, pipelines cross the Flint on multiple occasions. The signs warn "Do Not Anchor or Dredge" but what exactly is under the water here and what is it carrying? These pipelines carry gasoline, kerosene, heating oils, diesel fuel, natural gas and crude oil...and they carry them from far, far away. In Georgia, Colonial and Plantation Pipeline companies are the biggest operators. Colonial operates a 5,519-mile system that conveys petroleum from Texas to New York and each day distributes some 95 million gallons of petroleum products. Plantation boasts of more than 3,000 miles of pipeline. Additionally, Transcontinental Gas Pipeline Corporation, East Tennessee Natural Gas Company and Southern Natural Gas Company operate pipelines in Georgia to convey natural gas.

While the swaths cut across our rivers and land are unsightly, petroleum transported via pipeline would otherwise be shipped using tanker trucks or trains. The industry reports that it costs less to transport 12 gallons of gasoline from Houston to New York than it does to send a first class letter the same distance. In other words, without the pipelines, our \$4 per gallon gas would be much more expensive. And, in case you are wondering...it takes a batch of oil about 18 days to travel via pipeline from Houston to New York.

Mile 4—Snipes Shoals & the Halloween Darter—

On the Ocmulgee in oh-seven, we paddled the Robust Redhorse's haven;

but for the Halloween Darter of the Flint, it's the shoals that are heaven sent.

On those long, boring straight-aways, start working that brain; it's time for Halloween Darter jokes. Who can forget the Robust Redhorse limericks and jokes from last year?...O.K. maybe they were mostly forgettable, but now we have all new aquatic material. The Halloween darter was discovered by our very own resident biologist Mary Freeman in the early 1990s. It is found only in the Apalachicola, Chattahoochee and Flint rivers and is especially abundant in the shoals of the Flint—many of which you will be passing over today. The fish is so new to science that it doesn't yet have a formal scientific name. This bronze 2-4-inch fish distinguished by dark vertical bars gets its name because males and females develop a bright orange band on their front fins during breeding season in the late spring. Their other fins are banded with a bright orange wash. They live exclusively in the swift-flowing shoals and forage on candy corn and Skittles...trick...they eat aquatic invertebrates.

Mile 8—Swift Creek & Wiggam Branch Lake—Swift Creek draining parts of Upson County empties into the Flint here, bringing water from Wiggam Branch Lake, a small private lake a mile as the crow flies from the river. There are thousands of small lakes/ponds in Georgia, and everyone one of them were created by damming up a stream. Banks Lake in South Georgia is considered the state's only natural lake. While there's nothing like catching a big large-mouth or taking a cool swim in one of these lakes, impoundments such as these alter watersheds and destroy habitat for aquatic species that depend on flowing water. Georgia's growing population and increasing water demand has focused much attention on identifying "new water sources" in recent years. One solution to this dilemma is to use already existing reservoirs. By utilizing these resources, we can prevent additional destruction of Georgia's free-flowing streams.

Mile 12—Native American Fish Weir—In the wide bend paralleling US 80/19 keep on the look out for a rock formation, consisting of two lines of boulders, extending from the banks of the river and angled downstream toward the center of the river. This structure is a Native American Fish Weir and was used by the region's original inhabitants to corral and catch fish. Local historian Maxwell Duke suggests that this structure could be up to 6,000 years old. The Native Americans would gather a long line of people across the river at the top of the V and then would walk toward the point, spooking the fish into a waiting basket at the junction of the stacked rocks.

Mile 14—Native American Homestead—In 2000, prior to the construction of the new US 80/19 bridge here, an archeological excavation uncovered the remains of a homestead dating back to the late 1700s. It is believed this homestead was associated with the town of Salenojuh which was documented by Indian Agent Benjamin Hawkins.