

Wildcat Bridge Bump –Paddle Georgia 2010

June 19–Broad & Savannah Rivers

Distance: 13 miles

Starting Elevation: 580

Ending Elevation: 480

Obstacles/Rapids: From U.S. 29 to Wildcat Bridge Road and the trip's first seven miles, the Broad runs calmly with only minor shoals. Below Wildcat Bridge Road the pace quickens and over the next six miles you will encounter numerous small shoals and four Class II rapids. Those paddlers wishing to bypass the whitewater section may take out at Broad River Outpost. Paddlers will be shuttled back to the campsite and boats will be shuttled to Sunday's launch site. Safety boaters will be stationed at each major rapid. Please follow their directions, and do not enter a rapid until you receive a signal to proceed. You must wear your helmet when navigating these shoals.

Mile 8.5 Flat Shoals—Flat Shoals is best run on river left where one large drop is followed by a second. Run the first drop on far river left. After the first drop ferry right to the center of the river to find the best shoot for the second drop. The second drop is followed by a series of small rocky shoals.

Mile 9.5 Scarborough Shoals—This shoal is marked by a large island in mid-channel that splits the river, diverting most of the river's flow from river right to river left. And, that's how to run this rapid. Start river right and run the shoot to the left of the large rock island, moving toward the left bank of the river. The primary hazard is allowing the current to push you into the rock island as you descend through the rapid. A large pool and eddy at the base of the island provides easy recovery in the event of capsizing.

Mile 11.5 Brown Shoals & The Waterfall—This set of shoals provides two options. You'll know you're getting close when you pass the pipeline crossing at Mile 11. A large island splits the river here. Go left and stay close to the island and wind through a series of shoals and drops that requires more technical paddling. Go right and there's less technical paddling, but you descend over "The Waterfall"—a drop of about six feet. A large pool below the Waterfall provides easy recovery.

Mile 12.5 Compton Shoals—The entrance to Compton Shoals is marked by an island connected to river left with a footbridge. Paddle right through the small shoals at the top of the island and then make your choice. Go left through a series of rocky shoals and smaller drops or go right through "Roostertail" an exciting drop that's likely to fill your boat with water. Shoals and small rapids then continue for the next quarter mile below the Ga. 172 Bridge.

Restroom Facilities:
Mile 0 Porta Toilet at Slow Water
Mile 7 Porta Toilet at Broad River Outpost
Mile 13 Porta Toilet at Broad River Outpost Take Out

Points of Interest:

Mile 0.5—Franklin Springs—If you followed the small stream entering the river here just downstream from the U.S. 29 Bridge, you would, after a three-mile walk, wind up at the spring that gives the city of Franklin Springs its name. During the 1800s, the spring was a well-known watering hole and later a place of healing as people came from far and wide convinced that the mineral springs contained restorative powers. In the early 1900s, the springs drew a resort crowd and the community included two hotels and even a skating rink. One of those hotels still stands and serves as an Emmanuel College dormitory (Jackson Hall). In recent years, the spring that flowed so steady and so long ceased flowing...until the historic droughts of 2007-08. Inexplicably, during the height of the drought, the spring sprung once more. A visit to the spring will confirm its mineral content (strong sulfur smell and significant discoloration). Despite the spring's significance in the history of this area, the creek that it feeds has no name. This is not unusual. In most river systems, 70 to 80 percent of the stream miles are located on small tributaries with no names, yet these nameless places are among the river's most important. It's here that the health of the mainstem of the river is determined.

Mile 1—Hudson River—On river right here, the Hudson contributes its flow to the Broad. You may know the Hudson from journeys up I-85 which it flows beneath about 13 miles upstream. The Hudson holds lively Class I & II rapids. According to Kenneth Krakow's *Georgia Place Names* the Hudson got its name from the Hudson River in New York. Along with the Broad, it is among only a few Georgia rivers that do not carry a Native American name. Of Georgia's 14 major river basins, only two (the St. Mary's and the Flint) use English monikers. The Broad was once called the called the Dart River, but maps from the 1700s identify it as the Salivegee River.

Mile 1.5—Fish Weir—Native Americans used these V-shaped rock structures to capture fish. A line of "anglers" would walk downstream from the top of the V, spooking fish to the point of the V where others would wait with a basket. Thusly, dinner was obtained. Early settlers also made use of these weirs. The weirs were so effective that reportedly the State of Georgia eventually outlawed the use of these weirs to protect fish populations.

Mile 5 Old Wildcat Bridge Road Bridge Pier—The bridge pier here once supported the Wildcat Bridge Road Bridge—the first bridge built across the Broad into Madison County in 1890. This bridge was destroyed in a 1902 flood, later rebuilt and eventually replaced all together with a new "Wildcat Bridge" at the present day location on Ga. 281. Downstream from the pier, there are reportedly some caves along the bluffs—the remnants of a mining operation at the site. The property here is owned by the Boys & Girls Club of Atlanta which operates the 160-acre Camp Kiwanis.

Mile 5.5 Waterfall—Another un-named tributary of the Broad, this little stream drains a tiny, steeply sloped watershed and is only about three-tenths of a mile long, but it packs a lot of beauty in its short run. Visible from the river, it leaps over a series of rock ledges before spilling into the Broad.

Mile 6 Devil's Pulpit Bluffs—On river left is an impressive bluff that hides within its wild façade a cave. Locals have speculated that the cave was a hiding place on the Underground Railroad. The opening to the cave is large, but well hidden.

Mile 7 Broad River Outpost & The Broad's Outfitter Business—For some in the local community, the Broad puts "taters on the table." Three local businesses provide canoe & kayak rental and other services (including camping, cabin rentals and restaurants) on the Broad—Broad River Outpost, The Sandbar and Slow Water (who provided our launch site for today). BRO, as it is known locally, was the first on the scene, setting up shop in 1985. Since then, it has seen its business—and competition—increase. Collectively, the three outfitters put hundreds of people on the river each year.

Mile 8—Broad River Natural Area—Creation of the Broad River Natural Area dates back to the mid-1990s when the state used RiverCare 2000 funds to purchase the 440 acre tract. The tracts were featured in a Broad River Heritage Trail proposal developed by members of the Broad River Watershed Association to support protection of significant tracts along the Broad. The BRNA is home to some rare species, including ground juniper and the sandbar shiner (a fish found in the Broad). State funding for land acquisition has dried up considerably since the heady days of the 90s. According to the Trust for Public Land, Georgia ranks 40th among the states in the percentage of land that it owns (1%). Protected land generally translates into healthier rivers.

Mile 8.5—River Etiquette—The large numbers of recreational paddlers (and alcohol consuming partiers) that utilize the whitewater section of the Broad have created conflicts with riverfront landowners who object to the litter, loud and sometimes lewd behavior and loss of privacy. These conflicts are creating obstacles to the further development of a Broad River Canoe Trail. When traveling Georgia's rivers, be an ambassador. Respect private property, leave no trace and leave obnoxious behavior at home.