Jaut to Jesup—Paddle Georgia 2012
June 19—Altamaha River

**Distance:** 15 miles  **Starting Elevation:** 43 feet Lat: 31°47'6.27"N Lon: 81°58'59.35"W  
**Ending Elevation:** 32 feet Lat: 31°40'0.88"N Lon: 81°50'40.75"W

**Restroom Facilities:**
- Mile 0: Upper Wayne County Landing
- Mile 8: Jaycees Landing
- Mile 9: Oglethorpe Bluff Landing

**Points of Interest:**
**Mile 0—Tar Landing**—Upper Wayne County Landing sits near what is known as Tar Landing, the site of the first commercial turpentine mill in Georgia from 1858 to 1861. Here, casks of turpentine were loaded onto boats bound for Darien. Turpentine harvesting in the area’s piney woods has supported generations of South Georgians. Originally, the gum from pines was valued in waterproofing and sealing wooden ships, thus the turpentine industry came to be known as the Naval Stores Industry. However, the product is also used as a thinner for paints and in lubricants, ointments, medicines, soaps and even crayons. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, Georgia was the world leader in turpentine production, but today there are no commercial turpentine operations in the state. The last “Miss Spirits of Turpentine,” (a beauty pageant sponsored by the Georgia-based American Turpentine Farmer’s Association) was crowned in 1995 and in 2001 the last bucket of Georgia pine gum was drawn. Today, petroleum-based turpentine and gum from Brazil, Portugal, China, and Indonesia dominate the market.

**Mile 2—Beards Bluff & Ft. James**—On river left here is Beards’ Bluff and the former site of Adamson’s Fish Camp, a now defunct commercial operation that served the recreational needs of river users. Two hundred years ago the scene here was much different for this is one possible site of Ft. James, a frontier fort, built in the 1790s and maintained for about 20 years. Ft. James served as a trading and diplomatic post where military leaders settled disputes between early settlers and the Indian population. Its exact location is not known, though some historians place it at what is now Upper Wayne County Landing.

**Mile 4.5—Stickland Bight, Oglethorpe Bluff & The Altamaha’s Right**—A circling or circuitous path or course. Thus, you’ll see this to label the circuitous routes the river takes through sinuous oxbows as in Marrowbone Round (just around the next bend…or round…or bight). If you prefer “Reach”—A straight portion of a river or stream as in Yankee Reach (just beyond Marrowbone Round) or bight—A bend or curve in the shore of a sea or river

**Mile 5.5—Marrowbone Round Cutoff**—Poor Marrowbone Round…such a great name and thanks to the Altamaha’s wandering ways, no longer a part of the river. A cutoff has left this sweeping “round” to become just another oxbow lake.

**Mile 7—Yankee Reach**

**Mile 9—Oglethorpe Bluff**

**Mile 10—Alligators**—Warning: when you set foot on the Altamaha, you are no longer at the top of the food chain. In these waters lurk creatures that are larger than you and can eat you. This is an unsettling thought, for sure, but occasionally, we need to be put in our place. During scouting trips, we ran into dozens of alligators, including a young four-footer basking on a log beneath Oglethorpe Bluff. That said, an unpleasant encounter with an alligator is unlikely. From 1980-2001, there were only eight reported cases of alligator attacks on humans in Georgia and none of these resulted in fatalities. Six of these incidents happened as a result of the human stepping on or otherwise contacting a submerged alligator. The remaining two incidents were a result of the alligator mistaking the human for prey.

We’ll be paddling through their habitat during the nesting season (late June/early July) during which time the females build nests out of marsh grass and other vegetation and lay between 20 and 60 eggs. The mother then defends the nest against predators throughout the 65-day incubation period. Thus, should you happen upon something that looks like a nest, do not disturb it. You don’t want to be caught on the wrong end of an angry mama gator.

These additional words of warning will help you avoid unpleasant alligator encounters: 1. Keep your distance—at least 60 feet from an adult alligator. They are extremely powerful and can move with a startling burst of speed on land over short distances. 2. Do not attempt to capture baby alligators. Mama may be watching you and decide to take action. 3. Keep children away from alligators. They are hungry, alligators act on their hunting instinct. 4. Don’t swim in areas that are known alligator habitats.

**Mile 11—Huguenot Old River**

**Mile 12—Coon Island**

**Mile 14.5—Bugg's Bluff**

**Mile 15—Jaycees Landing & Jesup**—This popular boat landing includes restrooms and bait and tackle store stocked with cold drinks. This landing received a recent upgrade as part of Gov. Sonny Perdue’s much ridiculed “Go Fish Georgia” initiative. The “mega ramp” that allows multiple vehicles and boat trailers access to the landing was completed in 2011 at a cost of $400,000. A marker overlooking the river next to the boat ramp honors the U.S.S. Altamaha, a World War II aircraft carrier named in honor of the river. The Altamaha and her crew of more than 900 seamen served in the Pacific during the war, hunting for Japanese submarines and harassing supply ships. Ironically, after serving the U.S. Navy in World War II, she was sold and eventually scrapped in 1961…in, of all places, Japan. Jesup, the town that timber and railroads built, is located just four miles south of the landing on U.S. 25. On the way to our camp is the commercial employer, which converts pine pulp into the raw materials for oil and air filters, disposable diapers and even flat screen TVs. From Waynew County’s beginnings, timber has driven the local economy, and still today half the wages earned in the county come from manufacturing—most of those are associated with the timber industry.