Have the opportunity to make memories at Steel Bridge as have our previous generations.

History. In an article for the Effingham Herald, Susan Exley of the Historic Effingham Society, wrote, "The impact of the 2011 fish kill still lingers. It seems the catastrophe not only soiled the river; it soiled a part of the region's cultural history."

Narrow the river's channel. It is certainly one of the most common trees along the river. Before you curse it, consider its importance. It’s food for more than 18 different animals, including beavers, butterflies and birds (like yellow-bellied sapuckers); it stabilizes river banks and prevents pollution from entering rivers and streams; and, should you find yourself experiencing a headache as you navigate these tight spaces, you’ll be happy to know that chewing on a few green twigs will release a chemical called salicin, a kind of natural aspirin. Its wood was also once used extensively for making artificial limbs because it is lightweight, doesn’t splinter easily and holds its shape.

Steel Bridge Landing—Our launch site for the day has been in the Beasley family for three generations. Donny Beasley, the current owner, recalls his father, Joseph Beasley, swimming and fishing off the road to the river in the 1950s, an undertaking that took several years, but paid dividends as a place for family and friends to recreate. On summer Sunday afternoons, dozens would gather at the landing after church for swimming…but no fishing. The elder Beasley believed strongly that Sunday was a day reserved for rest. Work—including hunting and fishing—was strictly forbidden. Today, the landing is used for baptisms by nearby Lane Primitive Baptist Church where the Beasley family attends. The theme for the church’s vacation Bible school this summer: “Gone Fishing.”

Flat Ford Road Bridge—The bridge pilings here mark the site of the Flat Ford Bridge which spanned the river in the late 1800s. During that era the bridge and surrounding land was a popular spot for community fish fries. A notice published in the July 6, 1891 issue of the Bulloch Times announced, “there will be a at Flatford Bridge July 15, the grandest Basket Picnic of the season. Will have on hand a first class band of music and all kinds of refreshments for sale. Everybody is invited to come.”

Bald Cypress Trees—An impressive stand of cypress trees can be found on river left. Cypress, unlike evergreen conifers, lose their leaves each fall in a brilliant display of tan, cinnamon and fiery orange. This characteristic and their state of winter undress lends the tree its common name “bald” cypress. Slow-growing, cypress can live for hundreds of years and play an important role in riverine ecosystems. Seeds from the cypress are food for wild turkey, wood ducks, songbirds and squirrels, and bald eagles and other raptors like to nest in their top branches. Cypress also help stabilize river banks and soak up floodwater. The “knees” that we associate with these trees are a mystery. Botanists have debated for years the function of these knees without reaching consensus. The most popular theory is that the knees are pneumatophores, specialized roots that provide air for cellular respiration in root systems of trees growing in poorly aerated soils like that found in swamps. Lumber cut from old cypress is highly prized because of its resistance to rot and decay.

St. Peters Bluff—What watch for the bluff here! This is one of many locations along the Ogeechee where willow trees narrow the river’s channel. It is certainly one of the most common trees along the river. Before you curse it, consider its importance. It’s food for more than 18 different animals, including beavers, butterflies and birds (like yellow-bellied sapuckers); it stabilizes river banks and prevents pollution from entering rivers and streams; and, should you find yourself experiencing a headache as you navigate these tight spaces, you’ll be happy to know that chewing on a few green twigs will release a chemical called salicin, a kind of natural aspirin. Its wood was also once used extensively for making artificial limbs because it is lightweight, doesn’t splinter easily and holds its shape.