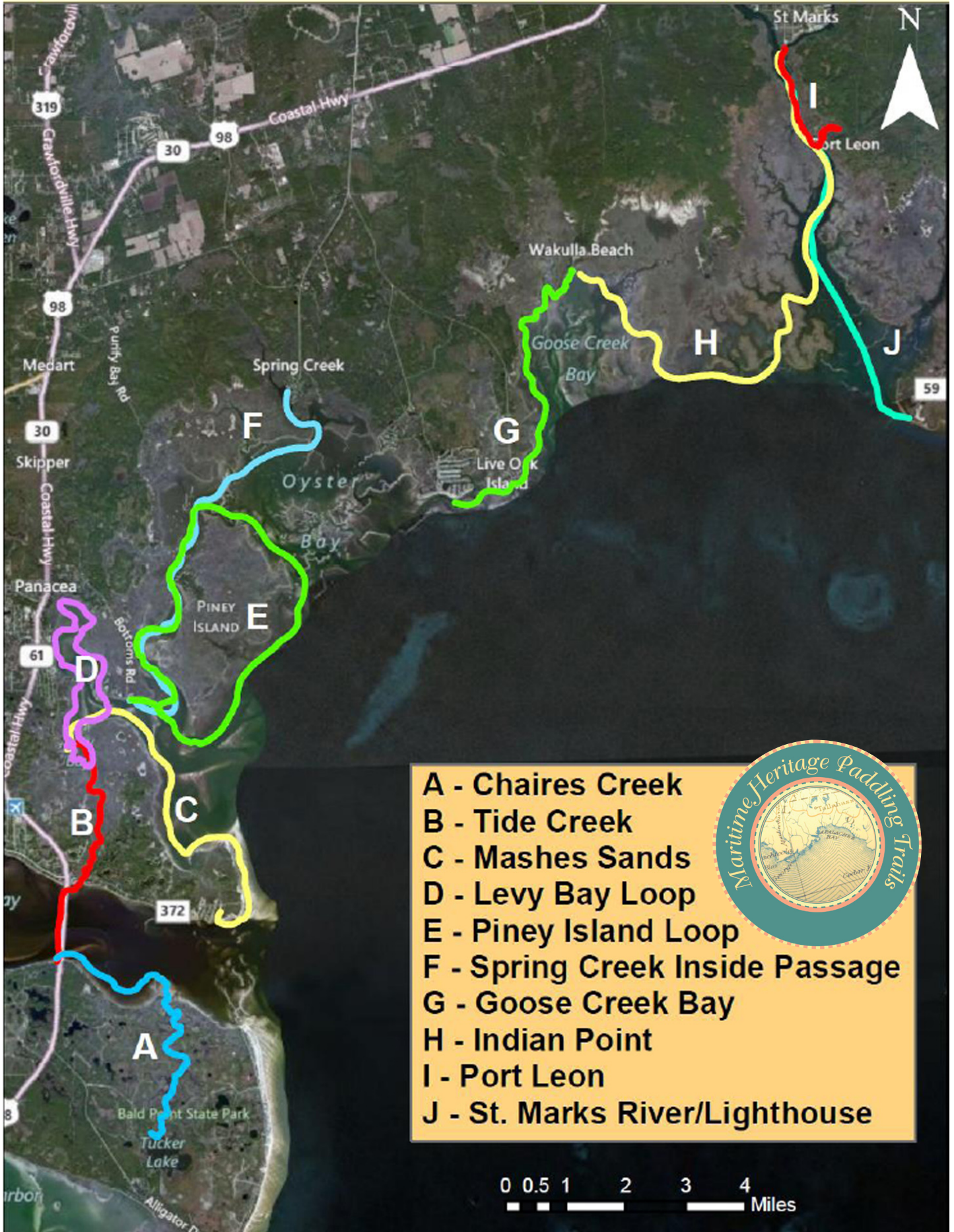


Suggested Gear List

- Lightweight paddle
- U.S. Coast Guard approved personal flotation device
- Towline
- Marine whistle, bell, or horn within easy reach
- Waterproof GPS and extra batteries
- Pertinent maps and tide charts
- Cell phone
- First aid kit (ace bandage, butterfly bandages, bandaids, moleskin, eyedrops, tweezers, scissors, cold/hot pads)
- Rain gear
- Medication (bi-ox, Tylenol, antacid, painkiller, antibiotic)
- Appropriate clothing for anticipated weather
- Sun hat, waterproof sunscreen, and long-sleeved, light-colored shirt
- Polarized sunglasses
- Insect repellent
- Paddling gloves
- Easily accessible water bottle
- Dry bags for maps, binoculars, camera
- Fishing rod, bait, dip net and line

Apalachee Bay Maritime Heritage Paddling Trail System



Potential Hazards

Paddlers should always consult tide charts and weather conditions before planning trips, since each paddling trail is affected by wind and incoming and outgoing tides. Other considerations include:

Oyster Bars: Exposed at low tide, these may look inviting, but are not. Oyster shells have sharp, jagged edges which can cut deep. So never try to walk on these flats.

Alligators: These ancient creatures are common along the rivers and marshes of Apalachee Bay. When startled, they will slide from the bank into the water for safety. Always give them plenty of room and do not feed or approach them, as they may have a nest or young nearby. Never carry a small animal on board, as it would represent a food source and thus create interest on the part of the gator.

Manatees: It is very exciting to see these docile creatures as they graze on vegetation and swim along the shallow waters in groups. However, keep your distance when observing them. They pose no threat, except for the fact that they surface to breathe and in so doing may accidentally tip your kayak.

Trail Design

Trail maps were provided by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Office of Greenways and Trails. Trail development was assisted by Diane Delaney and Don Lesh of Applied Sustainability Enterprises, with guidance from: Doug Alderson, Office of Greenways and Trails; Robert Baker, TnT Hideaway; Madeleine Carr, Historian; Bill Lowrie, Big Bend Maritime Center and Scenic Byway; Mike McNamara, St. Marks Outfitters; Mark Mitchell, Panacea Waterfronts; Pam Portwood, Wakulla County Tourist Development Council; and Liz Sparks, FWC Apalachicola River Paddling Trail System.

Seasons

Spring and fall are the best times to explore the trails, though they can be enjoyed at any time of the year. From December to February, expect windier conditions and colder weather, with normal highs in the mid-50s to low 60s. In summer, from June – August, expect higher humidity, chances of storms, more insects, and temperatures in the upper 80s and mid 90s. During spring and fall, the temperatures are in the upper 70s to mid-80s, with lower humidity. These seasons also offer the best wildlife and wildflower viewing.

Fees

Fees from \$3 - \$5 apply for entrance to parks and/or ramps for most paddling trail launch sites.



Paddle Apalachee Bay



Be transported to a different time and place as you paddle Apalachee Bay's Ten Maritime Heritage Trails. Designed for enthusiasts of all levels, enjoy fishing, wildlife viewing, and photography as you explore one of Florida's last great bays, its inlets, rivers, and springs. Apalachee is one of the healthiest and most productive bays in the United States, providing a host of ecosystem services to an area that lacks industrial and commercial development. Most of the Bay's coastline is protected as part of the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge.

The Bay is bounded by the Ochlockonee River in the west and the Econfina River in the east. Named for the Apalachee Indian nation, Apalachee Bay is in the northeastern Gulf of Mexico, occupying an indentation of the Florida coast known as the Big Bend region. It occupies a 412 km² surface area with an 11,900 km² drainage area. It is surprisingly shallow, with an average depth of 3.0m. Most trails occur in Wakulla County, between the Waterfront Florida Communities of Panacea in the west and St. Marks in the east and can be completed in 2-3 hours.

Natural Splendor

The water flowing into Apalachee Bay is its lifeblood. The Florida Aquifer moves underground, occasionally surfacing as springs, from South Georgia to the Bay, creating seven rivers which feed into it. The extensive marsh grass ecosystem serves as a nursery for a wealth of marine life and is also important for erosion control, serving as a buffer between sea and land. Forest lands, primarily Long-Leaf Pine, protect the Bay's watershed and water quality. In addition to this natural beauty, premier wildlife viewing – Black Bear, Deer, Bobcat, River Otter, Manatee, Dolphins, a host of shore birds, Eagles, Osprey, White and Brown Pelicans, and migrating waterfowl and butterflies – makes paddling these trails a real adventure!



Amenities

US Highway 98 -- known as the Big Bend Scenic Byway, a 220-mile state and nationally designated scenic route -- connects the town of St. Marks and the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge to Panacea, Ochlockonee Bay, and Bald Point State Park. All launch points are off this route, as are lodging, camping, shopping, dining, and other amenities. Go to Visitwakulla.com and FloridaBigBendScenicByway.org and for more information.

Trail Information

Laminated itineraries for each trail can be borrowed at the Wakulla Welcome Center (850/984-3966) in Panacea and St. Marks Outfitters (850/510-7919) in St. Marks or downloaded at Visitwakulla.com. Brochures are available at area Information Centers and paddlers can purchase the waterproof Top Spot Map: Panacea to Apalachee Bay Fishing and Recreation Map # N231 online at offshoremapping.com. Contact the following ACA certified professionals and outfitters for additional information and assistance and visit the listed marinas for maps, supplies, and rental equipment.

Doug Alderson, DEP Office of Greenway and Trails
850/421-3677; 850/245-2061,
doug.alderson@dep.state.fl.us

Robert Baker, T-n-T Hideaway, (850) 925-6412
Tnthideaway.com & Wilderness Way,
850/ 877-7200 Thewildernessway.net

Mike McNamara, St. Marks Outfitters,
(850) 510-7919 Stmarksoutfitters.com

Liz Sparks, FWC Apalachicola River Paddling Trail System,
850/922-6160, liz.sparks@myfwc.com

Rock Landing Marina, 850/984-5844,
Rocklandingmarina.com

Shields Marina, 850/270-0584, Shieldsmarina.com

Financial Support

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May, 2013."





Chaires Creek Paddling Trail



Overview:

Begin at the Ochlockonee Bay Boat Ramp in Franklin County, located at the south end of the Ochlockonee Bay Bridge. Paddle east along the Bald Point State Park shoreline for 1.7 miles to Chaires Creek. Travel 2 miles up Chaires Creek to reach Tucker Lake. Take out at the landing located on northwest side of Tucker Lake. Or launch from Bald Point State Park.

Considerations:

Enter Chaires Creek on high tide. This is a sheltered trip, in shallow water.

Focus:

Explore the extensive tidal creek system. Fishing in the lake and creek can be excellent. Sea Trout, Red Fish, Flounder, and Sheepshead are common catches. This is also an excellent area to cast a net for Mullet or catch Blue Crabs.

Distance:

3.7 miles, 2 hours.

Put In:

Ochlockonee Bay Boat Ramp at the south end of the Ochlockonee Bay Bridge. Or launch from Bald Point State Park on rising tide. Both have sandy launch, parking, dock, beach, toilets, and benches.

Take Out:

Tucker Lake launch in Bald Point State Park. Take US 98 south over the Ochlockonee Bay Bridge. Turn east (left) onto CR 370 for 3/4 mile to the Ranger Road on the left. This paved drive provides access to a fishing bridge over Chaires Creek and the kayak launch on Tucker Lake. Has natural dirt entry, signs, parking, benches, toilets, trash cans.

Expertise:

Intermediate and up. Beginners can launch and paddle around the protected waters of Tucker Lake.



This publication was funded in part, through a grant agreement from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Florida Coastal Management Program, with assistance provided by the Wakulla County Tourist Development Council and by the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity.

Indigenous Populations

As long ago as 14,000 years, Paleoindians lived in a local environment that was drier and less lush than today. The sea level was lower, with a shoreline as far away as 80 miles. Ancient, shallow river lowlands gradually filled with water when sea levels began rising about 8,000 years ago. Remnants of beach dunes here date back to a much older geologic time. These high, solid grounds offered perfect locations for coastal living as the former woodlands vanished. Alligators and wood storks remain as reminders of ancient life in these parts. Europeans arriving in Florida 500 years ago encountered native populations who fished, constructed canoes and nets and other means of trapping animals. The Apalachee were expert archers. Coastal populations exchanged seafood with the inland farming population near today's state capital of Tallahassee.



Bald Point State Park

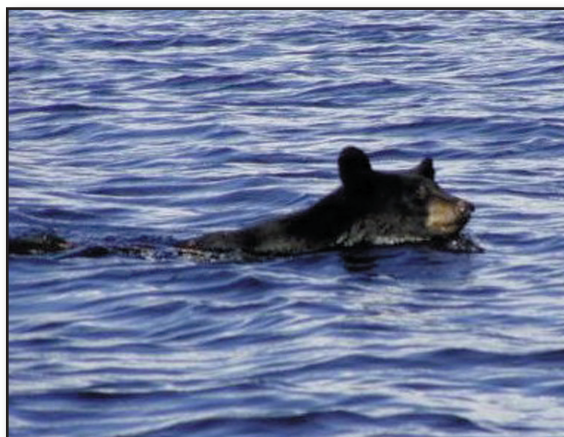
Located on the eastern end of St. James Island where Ochlockonee Bay meets Apalachee Bay, this state park encompasses 4,859 acres. It offers a multitude of land and water activities, coastal marshes, pine flatwood lakes, and oak thickets that make the park a popular destination for birding and wildlife viewing. Every fall, Bald Eagles, other migrating raptors, and Monarch Butterflies are commonly sighted heading south for the winter. The variety of habitat types offer surprises.

Camp Gordon Johnston

Originally named Camp Carrabelle, it was established on St. James Island for amphibious training in World War II. It was home to 30,000 military personnel, training an estimated 250,000 troops for the June 1944 D-Day invasion in Normandy, France. It was the second largest military installation in Florida. World War II ended in 1945 and by 1948 most of the buildings were demolished. Lands transferred back to private ownership. Many former officers' family quarters are in the Lanark Village Retirement Community.

River Otter

These are the most commonly encountered of Florida's mustelids. Otters are very vocal and have a large repertoire of calls. If you are kayaking on a quiet river or stream, their bird-like chirping contact calls will often be your first indication that otters are nearby. These semi-aquatic, slender, long-bodied mammals are specialized for finding and capturing prey in the



water. The broad flattened head has numerous stiff whiskers around the nose and snout, and these very sensitive tactile hairs are used for locating prey underwater. Otters have a long muscular tail, short stout legs and thick oiled fur. Small rounded ears and nostrils close when the otter is underwater. In Florida, river otters weigh 11-31 lb. Males are larger than females. They forage alone or in pairs. They are active during the day and at night, hunting in streams, rivers, and ponds for fish, crayfish, and turtles. Otters have a high metabolic rate, an adaptation for living in an aquatic environment where body heat is rapidly lost. They need to eat 15% of their body weight a day.

Marsh Habitat

The marsh's boundaries are fluid, adjusting themselves according to storms, erosion, sedimentation, the ebb and flow and meandering of tidal creeks, and sea level changes. A salt marsh may not be much to look at, but what it does for us is remarkable. These monotonous stretches of grasses produce an enormous amount of dead plant matter, which is quickly broken down by crabs and other little creatures into tiny pieces, called detritus, which in turn feeds the young of many fish and shellfish species that end up on our tables. Blue Crabs, Shrimp, Mullet, Spotted Sea Trout, and Large-Mouth Bass spend part of their lives in these marshes. No marsh? No seafood. You can detect where the tide is strongest by which species of grass is dominant. There's Smooth Cordgrass where the marsh is flooded by tides most frequently and Black Needlerush where the tides don't reach quite as far. In transition zones between the marsh grasses and the adjacent uplands, you'll find Glasswort, Saltwort, and Marsh Elder.



Black Bear

The Florida black bear is a unique subspecies of the American Black Bear that once ranged throughout Florida but now lives in six core areas across the state. Since the 1980s, the black bear population has been expanding and the forests and interconnected greenways along Apalachee Bay provide an essential habitat. Black bears can sometimes be spotted along the ocean, foraging for crabs and turtle eggs. Local residents refer to them as "Seaside Bears;" sometimes they can be spotted dining on oyster bars at low tide. Proper storage of food, garbage, and other attractants is crucial to prevent bears from becoming accustomed to people and losing their natural fears of them. Feeding bears can lead to personal injury, property damage, and the need to destroy the problem bears.



Tide Creek Paddling Trail

Overview:

Begin at Levy Bay Boat Ramp. Head south through Tide Creek, passing under Mashas Sands Bridge into Ochlockonee Bay. Upon entering the Bay, head west, passing under the Ochlockonee Bay Bridge, then cross the Bay (1 mile) to the other side. End at Ochlockonee Bay Boat Ramp in Franklin County.

Considerations:

Sheltered and tidal, best taken on a high, outgoing tide. The first 2 miles are protected and winding. The last mile, across Ochlockonee Bay, is in open water, which can be choppy if it's windy.

Focus:

Explore the vast tidal marsh system. Birding is very good, including Great Blue Herons, Great and Snowy Egrets, Clapper Rails, Harriers, and Marsh Wrens.

Distance:

3.5 miles, 3 hours. It is 2 miles from the launch site to Ochlockonee Bay.

Put In:

Take US 98 south through Panacea. Turn right (east) onto Chattahoochee and left on Levy Bay Road. The boat ramp is at the end of the road with restroom, benches, and parking. Launch on sand next to ramp.

Take Out:

At the Ochlockonee Bay Boat Ramp in Franklin County, located at the south end of the Ochlockonee Bay Bridge, with restrooms, trash cans, and parking. There is easy entry next to the floating boat dock.

Expertise:

Intermediate and up.



Ochlockonee River, Bay, and Community

Eventually emptying into Ochlockonee Bay, the Ochlockonee River originates in southwest Georgia. It flows through the Red Hills, Talquin State Forest, Lake Talquin State Park and the Apalachicola National Forest, and past Ochlockonee River State Park. Here it is tidally influenced and a mixture of fresh, brackish, and salt water flows in and out of the Bay. The River is 206 miles long and the Basin measures 2,450 square miles. The tranquil bayside community of Ochlockonee Bay offers restaurants, fishing supplies, deli food, coastal home rentals, RV camping, a gas station, and liquor store.

Great Blue Heron

Our largest and heaviest heron (L 46" WS 72" WT 5.3lbs.) is one of the most vocal, calling frequently in flight. Generally solitary, it hunts fish and other animals while wading slowly in quiet waters.

Northern Harrier

Slender and buoyant with an owl-like facial disk, the Northern Harrier is usually seen coursing low over fields or marshes looking for small birds and mammals. Once scared into the open, it captures its prey with a sudden pounce. The bird has long wings and tail, and is easily recognized by a very noticeable white rump patch in all plumages.

Tidal Flats

Tidal flats are also known as mudflats (because their surface soils are muds brought in by channels from uplands) and intertidal zones (because they are between the tides, exposed at low tide and flooded at high tide). We may not see much besides mud when we look at tidal flats, but many animals see breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Tidal flats are essential refueling stops for migrating shorebirds. A world of invertebrate animals lives in and on that mud, including Tube Worms, Sand Dollars, Burrowing Shrimp, Sea Cucumbers, and assorted Mollusks and Crabs. Not only are there lots of species, there are also thousands of animals per

square foot. These invertebrates live on tiny bits of leaves and stems of both land and aquatic plants that are brought into the mudflats in freshwater channels or by tides. The invertebrates become food for fish and birds. When the tide comes in, fish come with it to feast; when the tide goes out, birds dig in.

Crabbing

Crabs are harvested using a variety of methods. Recreational crabbers, or "chicken neckers," may only use a piece of bait tied to a string while commercial watermen use crabpots or trotlines. Commercial watermen prefer to use various types of oily bait fish, eel, and bull lip. Some watermen use frozen fish because it tends to break down (decompose) faster than fresh, which seems to attract more crabs. Most



crabbers carry several items with them on the water. A dip is essential to scoop up stray crabs. A wooden bushel basket is a good for storing caught crabs (all seafood stores buy and sell crabs "by the bushel"). Also helpful are thick crabbing gloves and a culling stick measuring 5 inches, point-to-point, which is the minimum legal keeper size. It is easy to tell the difference between a male and female blue crab. Males have blue claws and, like most humans, female blue crabs "paint their fingernails" (i.e., the tips of their claws are "painted" red)!





Mashes Sands Paddling Trail



Overview:

Begin at the Wakulla County Park's Mashes Sands Recreational Facility. Paddle east around the tip of Mash Island, following the shore along the back side. Stop at the broad white sand beach for a rest or picnic. Continue west along shoreline to Levy Bay. End at Levy Bay Boat Ramp.

Considerations:

Best traveled in low winds on an incoming tide.

Focus:

Explore the white sand beaches and oak thickets along the back side of Mash Island. Fishing near shore for Sea Trout and Red Fish can be excellent. This is a very scenic route for photography.

Distance:

6.6 miles, 3.5 hours

Put In:

Travel south on US 98 through Panacea to Ochlockonee Bay. Turn east (left) before the bridge onto Mashes Sands Road and continue to the end of the road at the county recreational facility. Kayaks are best launched on the sand beach at the entrance to the fishing pier. Parking, trash cans, and benches are available. Restrooms and picnic tables are at the boat ramp and beach.

Take Out:

Take US 98 south through Panacea. Turn right (east) onto Chattahoochee and left on Levy Bay Road. The boat ramp is at the end of the road, with restroom, trash cans, benches, and parking. Launch on sand next to asphalt ramp.

Expertise:

Intermediate and up.



Indian Mounds

Shell middens, and a large ceremonial mound, approximately 250-1,000 years old were once located along the mouth of this bay and along the shores of the Ochlockonee River. Construction of Mashas Sand Road and shell harvesting for road beds destroyed the mound.

Tar Pine

Look closely at some of these old pines for “cat faces” that attest to extensive turpentine. Rosin collected from these trees between 1870 and 1930 was distilled into turpentine. Pitch and turpentine were used in paints. Indigenous people used pitch to waterproof baskets before pottery came along, and in the making of tools.



Civil War

After Florida left the Union in January 1861 Florida's Militia was established on February 14, 1861, two months before war broke out between the North and the South. The Union (North) imposed a blockade on all sea ports in the South. The Union blockade was aimed to halt, confiscate, or destroy shipments of cotton, turpentine, lumber, beef, and other products to undercut the South's economy.

Transition Zone

Mashes Island lies in a transition zone between salt marsh and spring karst features to the east and sand hills and beaches to the west. Karst topography extends into Apalachee Bay, creating tunnels and caves of fresh water that support unique aquatic species and are popular with divers.

Great and Snowy Egrets

These widespread white egret species often gather in loose flocks and feed mainly on fish caught in open water.



The Great Egret (L39" WS 51") is tall, extremely slender, and long-necked with buffy grey legs and feet. The Snowy Egret (L24 WS 41) is small and slender with dark legs and distinctive yellow feet (golden slippers).

West Indian Manatees

Apalachee Bay and its river systems support habitat for “sea cows” or manatees. Considered vulnerable to extinction, the manatee depends on the healthy aquatic environment. An herbivore, the manatee may eat as many as 60 different plant species. It is very exciting to see these docile creatures as they graze on vegetation and swim along the shallow waters in groups. However, keep your distance when observing them. They pose no threat, except for the fact that they surface to breathe and in so doing can accidentally tip your kayak.



Willet

Large, rather heavysset wader (L 15" WS 26") with thick bill and broad, rounded wings. Striking black and white under wing pattern revealed in flight. Found in many habitats – from marshes to rocky shores—it is often seen singly on beaches.





Levy Bay Loop Paddling Trail



Overview:

Begin and end at the Levy Bay Boat Ramp. Follow the shoreline northward to the end of Dickerson Bay. Continue around the shore, following St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge property back into Levy Bay and boat ramp.

Considerations:

This trip is in sheltered, shallow water. It is best enjoyed on a high tide.

Focus:

Exploring Levy and Dickerson Bay adjacent to the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge. Birding is excellent, especially in spring and fall.

Distance:

4.5 miles/ 2-3 hours.

Put In/ Take Out

Take US 98 south through Panacea. Turn right (east) onto Chattahoochee and left on Levy Bay Road. The boat ramp is at the end of the road, with restroom, trash cans, benches, and parking. Launch on sand next to asphalt ramp.

Expertise:

Beginner and up.





Piney Island Loop Paddling Trail



Overview:

Begin and end at the Bottoms Road Boat Ramp. Paddle east to circle Piney Island. Stop at Cabbage Palm trees on the north tip for a rest or picnic.

Considerations:

Open water, susceptible to wind and choppy water.

Focus:

Piney Island, which was once renowned for duck and goose hunting, is now better known for fishing and recreation.

Distance:

8 miles, 4 hours. Paddling north, it is 2.9 miles to north tip of the island. Then 1.6 miles to the east tip. Paddling the back side, it is some 2.6 miles to the south tip, and .9 mile back to Bottoms Road Boat Ramp.

Put In/Take Out:

Take US 98 south past Medart. Before entering Panacea, turn left (east) onto Bottoms Road, indicated by a Byway and Great Florida Birding Trail sign with arrow. This dike road passes through Dickerson Bay in the Panacea Unit of the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge. There is ample parking at the launch point at road's end.

Expertise:

Intermediate and up.

Piney Island Loop Paddling Trail



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Duck and Goose Hunting

Before the wildlife refuge was established in the 1930s, Apalachee Bay and its tributaries were known for duck and goose hunting in addition to fishing. Locals worked the skiff for ducks the same way they did for throwing the net... backwards up the creek. It was not uncommon for feathers to bank up on the edge of the marsh grass like snow. Thousands of Canada Geese would winter along the shore. The ducks and geese sold for a dime apiece at restaurants in Tallahassee.

Seagrass Beds

(Meadows)

Apalachee Bay supports one of the most productive seagrass meadows in Florida. Seagrass meadows get their name from a half-dozen species of plants that flower just as land plants do. Hundreds of species of algae grow on the leaves of these plants, which would smother them if it weren't for animals that graze on algae, such as Pinfish and Manatees. The young of many fish and invertebrate species rely on seagrasses for food and shelter. Without seagrass meadows providing protection, we would have no scallops or shrimp and our fisheries would be much poorer. Sea turtles savor Turtlegrass and Manatees munch on Manatee Grass, which are two of the most widespread seagrasses in the area. Because seagrasses, like other plants, depend on sunlight, they cannot grow in muddy or deep water.

White and Brown Pelicans

Paddlers can see both species in Apalachee Bay. The American White Pelican (L62" WS 108") is immense with contrasting black wing reimages and pinkish or yellow-orange bill. It is present during winter migration and often soars in large groups. Rather than diving from the air, it catches fish while swimming in small groups. The Brown Pelican (L51" WS 79") is here year-round. It is well known and unmistakable as it hunts fish with spectacular twisting plunge-dives from the air.

Osprey (Fish Eagle)

A unique species that feeds on fish it captures by hovering, then plunging feet-first into water. Large (L23" WS 63") with narrow wings always angled and bowed down. Its shape, underwing pattern with dark wrists and secondaries, and dark eyestrip through its white face are diagnostic.



Sabal (Cabbage) Palms

Sabal or Cabbage palms are common along Apalachee Bay's coastline. Cabbage palms have a long history of use as food, construction materials, and shelter for people and wildlife. This palm is remarkably resistant to fire, floods, coastal conditions, cold, high winds, and drought and is Florida's official tree.



Commercial Fishing

By the first half of the 20th century, most Apalachee Bay fishermen had a model bow skiff. Built of 16-foot old-growth cypress lumber, these vessels became the standard for commercial fishermen. People rowed, poled, sailed, and paddled them through creeks, bayous, and coastal waters where they caught mullet and other fish with seine nets.

In 1993, an amendment to Florida's constitution imposed restrictions on commercial net fishing in state waters and, for many fishing families, this ended their traditional way of life. Some turned to using smaller mesh or cast nets, while others shifted to crabbing or clam farming. Lawsuits filed by fishermen relating to the amendment are still in Florida courts.

Panacea Mineral Springs

Imagine sinking into a smelly pool of mineral water to alleviate your pains. Panacea has several mineral springs and local health spas attracted the ailing from far away. They listened to piano playing at night, the sound most often drowned out by loud insects. Travelers arrived from the Sopchoppy train station in the late 1890s in buggies and mule-drawn carts over

Panacea

In 1895, W.C. Tully founded Panacea, named for the healing properties of its mineral springs, estimated to number up to 20. He built the 125-room Panacea Mineral Springs Hotel. It burned in the 1920s. Another large hotel was the Bay View Inn on Dickerson Bay. This was torn down in the 1950s. A long-time commercial fishing village and a designated



Waterfronts Florida community, Panacea is steeped in 20th-century maritime history, from the days of catching huge runs of Mullet by hand-drawn seine nets to later oystering, shrimping, and crabbing. Panacea prospered during World War II thanks to U.S. Army Camp Gordon Johnston located on St. James Island in neighboring Franklin County. Panacea has antique shops, a grocery store, gas stations, post office, lodging, seafood restaurants, a marina, marine supplies, fishing guides, RV camping, and several retail seafood houses offering fresh Grouper, Shrimp, Oysters, and other delicacies.

plank roads to "take the waters." Some referred to the springs as "Medicine Springs."

Shrimping

By the 1920s, shrimpers had shifted operations from Fernandina Beach to the Big Bend. Packing companies shipped canned shrimp to Boston and other markets and sold fresh shrimp locally. Shrimp trawlers still ply this area of the Gulf, supporting 4,400 jobs and contributing \$185 million to the state's economy. However, the industry has been impacted in recent years by the importation of less expensive farmed shrimp.





Spring Creek Inside Passage Paddling Trail



Overview:

Begin at Bottoms Road Boat Ramp. Paddle north, along the shoreline of the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge. Stop at Skipper Bay to rest or for a picnic. Continue into Oyster Bay toward the town of Spring Creek. Time permitting, paddle up Spring Creek and explore the upwelling springs around town. End at RV Park Boat Landing.

Considerations:

Paddle near shore in shallow water. Watch for exposed oyster bars. Route is susceptible to wind and currents. Best traveled on an incoming high tide with little wind.

Focus:

Photography and wildlife watching are reasons to take this trip.

Distance:

8 miles, 4 hours. It is 2.8 miles to the tip of island entering Spring Creek.

Put In:

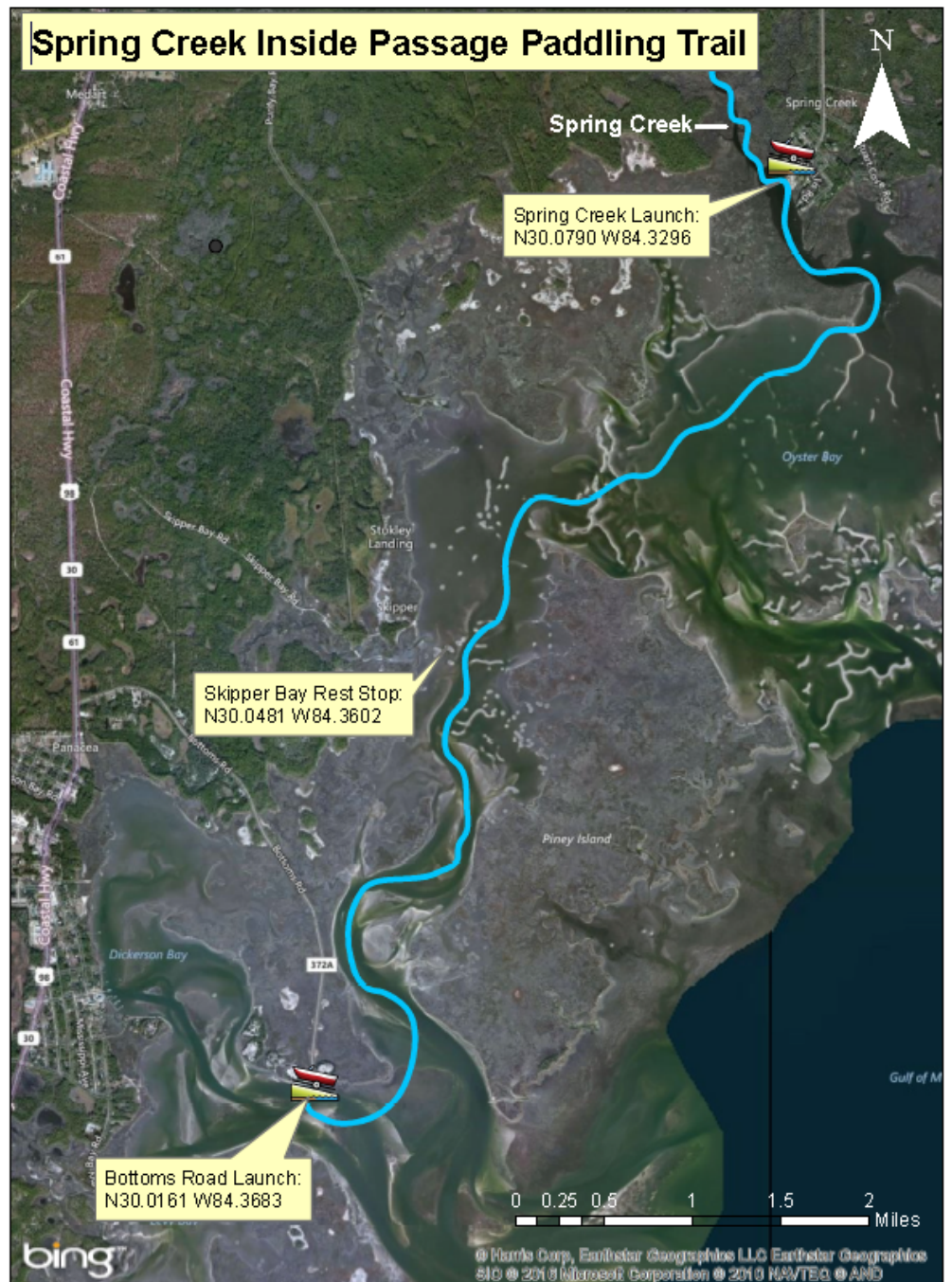
Take US 98 south past Medart. Before entering Panacea, turn left (east) onto Bottoms Road, indicated by a Byway and Great Florida Birding Trail sign with arrow. This dike road passes through Dickerson Bay in the Panacea Unit of the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge. There is ample parking at the launch point at road's end.

Take Out:

Spring Creek boat landing adjacent to the RV Park. From Bottoms Road, take US Highway 98 north for 4.3 miles. Before the intersection with US Hwy 319 in Medart, turn right onto Jack Crum Drive for 3.7 miles to CR 365. Turn right on CR 365 for 2 miles to Spring Creek. Turn left into the RV Park at road's end. Launch next to ramp, parking is available.

Expertise:

Intermediate and up.



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Seineyards

A seine is a fishing net. It is rumored that Apalachee Indians taught the black Spaniards how to fish in the 18th and 19th centuries. Seine fisheries supplied locals and tourists with striped mullet and roe. Operated in the spring and fall to



coincide with spawning or “run” seasons along shores. Using hand-drawn seine nets, locals caught and split the mullet, then packed them in barrels with salt brine. Mullet runs at area seineyards were impressive in size. One eyewitness at Shell Point reported that “40 barrels of mullet were brought in with one pull of the seine.” Families packed picnics, camping gear, and produce into wagons and came south to the Apalachee Bay from as far away as Georgia. Meal, grain, syrup, sweet potatoes, and other kinds of farm produce were exchanged for barrels of mullet. Some 19 seineyards once operated along Apalachee Bay at points such as Mashers Sands, Bottoms Road, Skipper Bay, Spring Creek, Shell Point, and Goose Creek. The culture of the seineyards virtually came to an end after 1993 for a variety of reasons. Only Bottoms Road Seineyard near Panacea remains in operation seasonally.

Spring Creek

Spring Creek gets its name from a first magnitude spring and the creek that flows into Oyster Bay. A small fishing hamlet once favored by Georgians who came to rent boats at two now-closed fish camps. The name comes from a series of first magnitude springs that upwell just off shore. Facilities include a campground and boat launch and a renowned seafood restaurant.



Fresh Water Spring “Boils”

Starting from the Florida-Georgia state line and extending south to Apalachee Bay, the St. Marks Watershed is a major geographic, hydrological, and environmental feature of the Scenic Byway corridor. Covering 1,170 square miles, the Watershed serves as a drainage basin from north of Tallahassee to the St. Marks River and ultimately to Apalachee Bay. Within the watershed lies the Woodville Karst Plain, a limestone-based topographic feature. This underground cavernous formation allows fresh water that is part of the Floridan Aquifer to move south to the bay. Prominent Karst Topography features, created over millions of years, include sinkholes, sinkhole lakes, springs, disappearing rivers, and underground caverns. There are a number of first and second magnitude springs that upwell just off shore along the paddling trails, most notably near Spring Creek, and are connected to the Wakulla Springs.

Oyster Bars

Oyster bars (colonies of oysters) thrive where the salinity is between 15 and 30 parts per thousand. They can't survive in fresh water and, in saltier water, they are attacked by predators and diseases. Oyster bars provide a habitat for a multitude of invertebrates and fish. At low tide, shorebirds, wading birds, raccoons, and even bears help themselves. Oyster bars tend to be intertidal reefs accessible only during parts of each day. The Bay provides ecosystem services of great benefit to the area, including water filtration and oyster harvesting.





Goose Creek Bay Paddling Trail



Overview:

Begin at Shell Point Beach. Paddle east along the shore past Walker Creek and Live Oak Island. Follow the shoreline of the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge to explore Goose Creek Bay and creeks. End at Wakulla Beach Boat Ramp.

Considerations:

There is open water at the beginning, which can be choppy in windy conditions. Goose Creek Bay is sheltered. Best taken on an incoming tide.

Focus:

Photography, birdwatching, fishing. This is a very scenic route, with many inlets such as Shepherd's Spring, to explore.

Distance:

6 miles, 3 hours.

Put In:

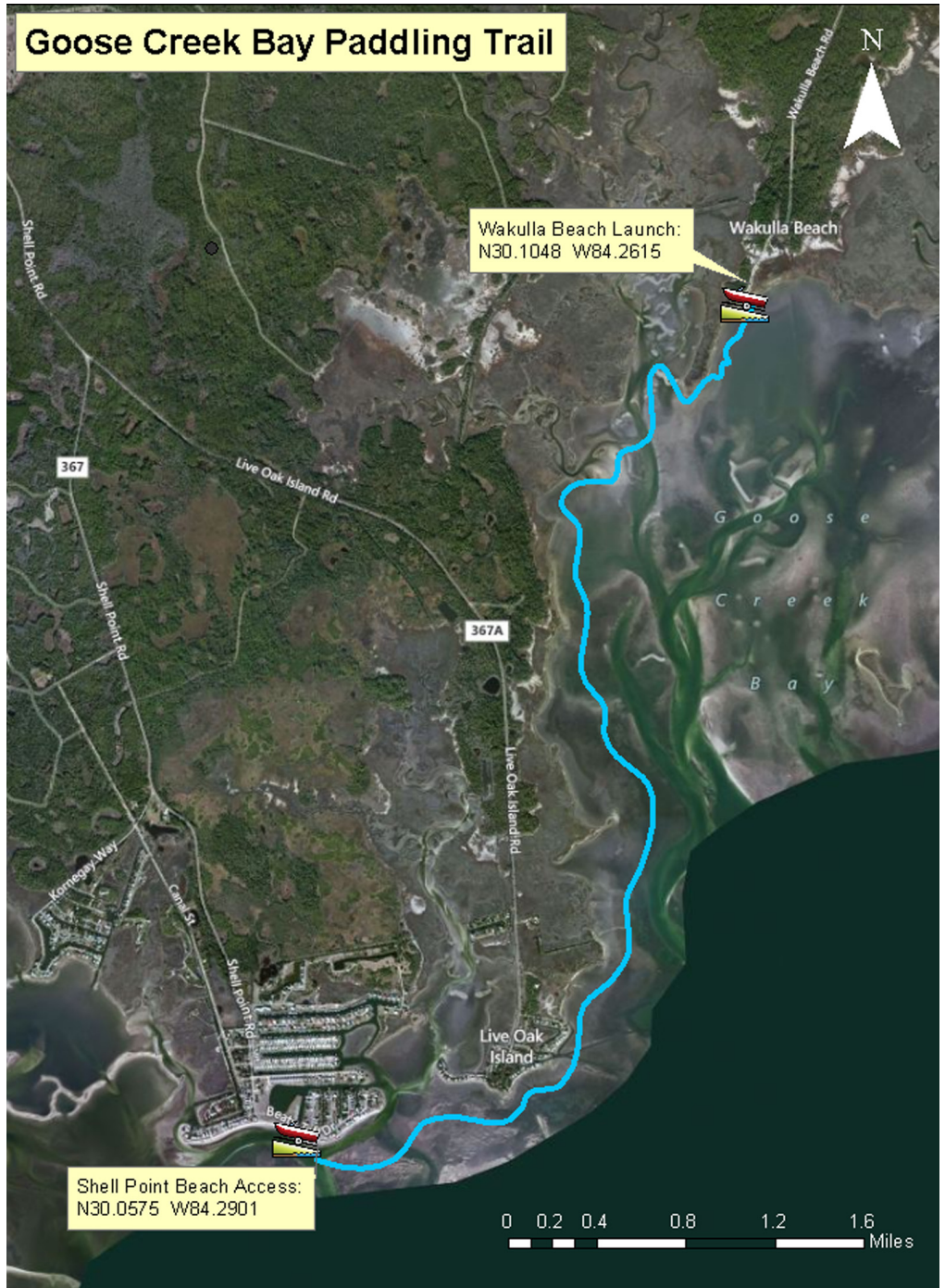
Continue east on US 98. Before crossing the Wakulla River, turn right (south) onto Wakulla Beach Road. This is a graded, dirt road through the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge. The beach and boat launch is at the end of the road. There is interpretation and parking.

Take Out:

Continue east on US 98. Before crossing the Wakulla River, turn right (south) onto Wakulla Beach Road. This is a graded, dirt road through the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge. The beach and boat launch is at the end of the road. There is interpretation and parking.

Expertise:

Intermediate and up.



Wakulla Beach Land Development Company

State Senator Henry N. Walker, Sr., owner and operator of the Wakulla Times and a prominent merchant, rancher, and politician, also created a modern highway system in the 1920s. Wakulla Beach, with an abundance of game, was envisioned to attract sportsmen and settlers to the new East Goose Creek community. Relying on local knowledge of long-time Black residents, the bay's famous mullet run employed "spotters" from their Hyde Park community, adjacent to East Goose Creek. A few houses survive as in-holdings in today's St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge. East Goose Creek and the three hotels, as well as any earlier traces of human presence, have faded into memory.

Hyde Park

Confusion reigned at the end of the second Spanish Period in 1819. Indians and black Spaniards living near the shore and north along the Wakulla River faced a new reality: slavery, Indian removal and American laws. Hyde Park, a traditional black enclave servicing the needs of the Spanish fort and trading posts along the Wakulla River, developed into a proud community now mostly hidden by the dense new-growth forests. Legend has it that Creek Prophet Hillis Hadjo (Prophet Francis) accompanied British soldiers to London, taking along his son to request help against encroaching Americans. His daughter Millie saved an American soldier and was rewarded with a Congressional Medal of Honor. Many Blacks escaped American advances to this hidden area from the Apalachicola River in the 1800s. They learned the ways of subsistence from the remaining Creek-Seminoles, passing this knowledge on to later arriving white fishers.

Shell Point

Historically described as high land ideal for recreational purposes, Shell Point was a high shell midden and fishery. It was dredged in the 1950s to create canals and a marina basin. Along the eroding beach, one occasionally finds relics of peoples living here thousands of years ago. The area

is known for its over-abundance of archaeological sites. Most of Shell Point today is a planned coastal community favored by sailors, with a public beach. None of the former middens, fishery, nor the 20th-century motel, marina, and restaurants, exist. Public facilities include parking, picnic pavilion, and restrooms. On windy days this is a popular spot for sailing and wind surfing.

Bottle-Nosed Dolphins (Porpoise)

Dolphins are mammals, which nurse their young. They are common in Apalachee Bay and can grow to 8 feet in length and weigh between 430-600 lbs. Dolphins search for food through a use of sonar called "ecolocation." They send out clicks, and echoes come back. They also hunt in groups and drive prey onto mud banks. They eat between 15-30 lbs. of fish and other sealife each day. Calving season



usually peaks in May and Dolphins normally have just one calf about every two to three years. The calves are about 3-1/2 to 4 ft. long and weigh a little over 40 lbs. They will suckle from their mother for 1-1/2 to 2 years and swim with her for another 3-8 years. The calf "surfs" in the mother's slipstream as they swim so it can keep up. Dolphins communicate with a variety of sounds like clicks, moans, whistles, and squeaks...not through their mouth, but their "blowhole" in the top of their head. Adult males hang out by themselves or with one or two dolphin buddies while females and calves mingle with groups of close to 15 others.





Indian Point Paddling Trail



Overview:

Begin at Wakulla Beach Boat Ramp. Paddle east, behind John's Island, passing islands topped with Sabal Palms, into the protected waters of Big Pass. Enter the St. Marks River at Indian Point and continue upriver to the city of St. Marks. End at St. Marks Boat Ramp.

Considerations:

This route is in protected waters, except for the short distance between John's Island and Big Pass. It should be taken on an incoming tide, which will make the stretch up the St. Marks River much easier. Reverse the trip on an outgoing tide.

Focus:

Fishing for Sea Trout and Red Fish is excellent near shore and there is ample opportunity to explore the inlets along the way.

Distance:

8.7 miles, 4.5 hours.

Put In:

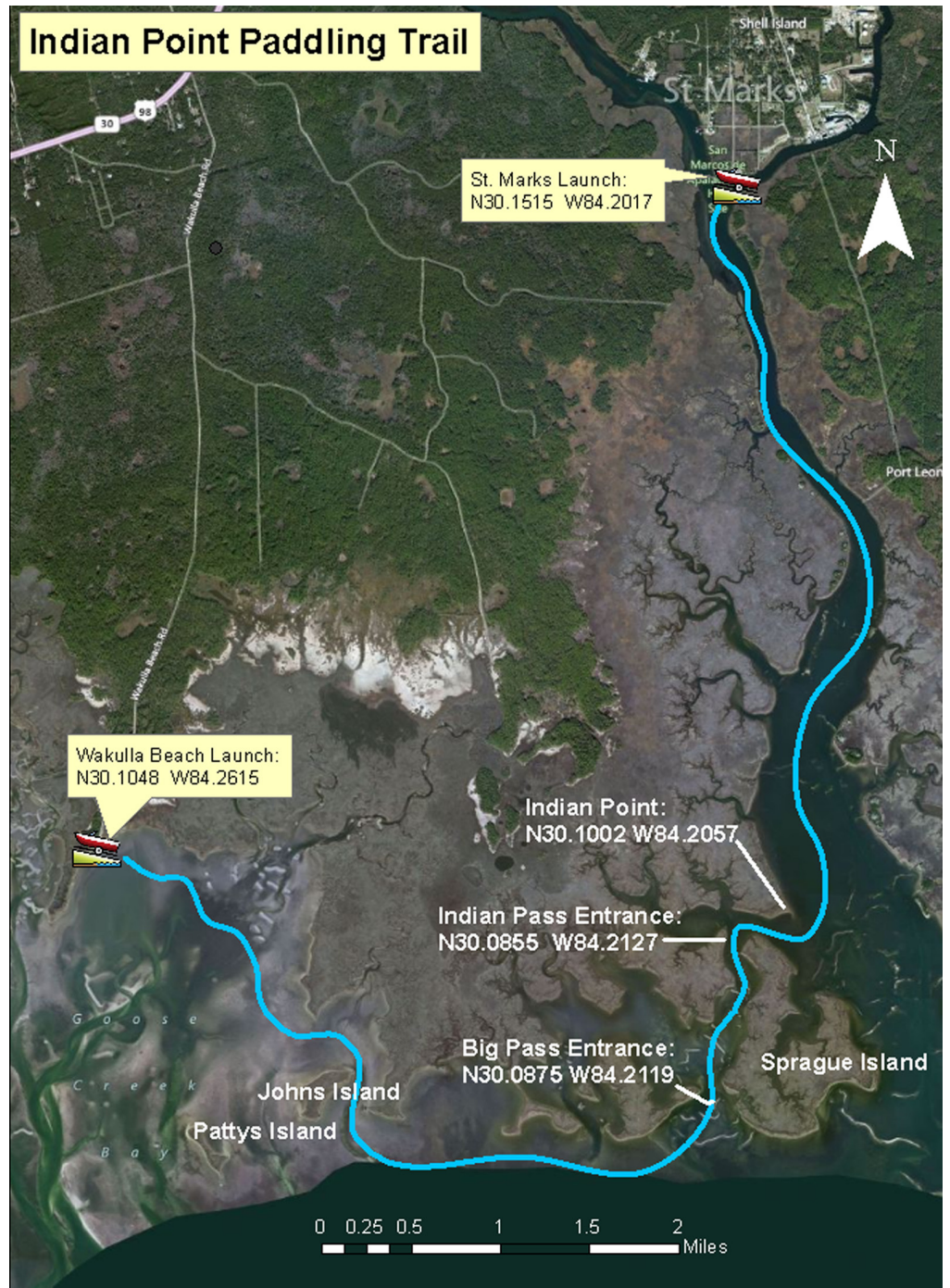
Continue east on US 98. Before crossing the Wakulla River, turn right (south) onto Wakulla Beach Road. This is a graded, dirt road through the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge. The beach and boat launch is at the end of the road. There is interpretation and parking.

Take Out:

From Wakulla Beach Road, continue east on US Highway 98. Turn south at the intersection with Port Leon Dr. (SR 363) to the City of St. Marks. Follow signs to San Marcos de Apalache Historical State Park, which is before the city park, with boat launch, restrooms, pavilion, trash cans, and parking. Put in on the grass next to the ramp.

Expertise:

Intermediate and up.



Apalachee Indians

Apalachee Indians in the 16th century vigorously resisted European advances into their lands. Disease spread to native people after Spanish Conquistadors Pánfilo de Narváez in 1528 and Hernando de Soto in 1539 arrived with hundreds of explorers, livestock, smallpox, and measles. Believing that Spanish Catholic friars had some kind of magic against diseases, friars were invited into native communities to establish small missions. The string of missions between St. Augustine and Tallahassee relied on natives for food and labor; some were enslaved. Many were Christianized. British colonial attacks on Spanish Florida in the 1700s obliterated the missions and most of the Apalachee Indians.



City of St. Marks

St. Marks is one of the oldest ports in Florida with a history that can speak of Apalachee Indians, Spaniards, Britons, generals, devastation, wars, industrialization, and tenacity. In the 18th and 19th centuries, thousands of deer and cow hides, cotton, tallow and other local goods were stored in warehouses along the shallow St. Marks River. Its strategic location served Spanish inland missions and rancheros. This sheltered location provided a safe place for a Spanish fort at the confluence of the rivers, the Fuerte San Marcos de Apalache, now a state historic park.

Warehouses filled as goods arrived on the first railroad from Tallahassee to St. Marks (and Port Leon). The location was known to early Spanish explorers who sailed from the vicinity near the lighthouse in 1528, only to disappear at sea, except for four, including Narvaez's treasurer Cabeza de Vaca. As settlers moved in after 1821 to establish Magnolia upriver, they had all but forgotten Gen. Andrew Jackson's attack on the fort and hanging of two British subjects in 1818. A U.S.

Customs House was built in 1837. St. Marks took shape as hurricanes obliterated Port Leon, but particularly after the Civil War. A fire destroyed the business section in 1868. The destroyed warehouses were not rebuilt.

Today the city retains much of its 1950s charm with lodging, gas, marinas, restaurants, city parks, guides, a state park, and recreational trail to Tallahassee along the old railroad right-of-way.

Salt Works

Hundreds of small salt works dotted this shoreline during the American Civil War, 1861-1865. Sea water was boiled for Confederate contraband such as beef and fish to fill the urgent need for salt. Sites were isolated to be difficult to locate and approach.

Union picket ships spotted smoke at day and fires at night. Raids were a constant menace. In 1864 one Union raiding party, supported by shelling from the USS Tahoma, destroyed "seven miles" of saltworks between the St. Marks lighthouse westward to Goose Creek and Shell Point. Millions of dollars were lost to financiers who employed enslaved people to build and operate many of these works. White workers in the salt business were exempt from military service.

Clapper Rail

Many of the salt marsh's inhabitants are seldom seen. However, you can't miss hearing the clack-clack-clacking of Clapper Rails. Clapper Rails are 14.5" long, with a wingspan of 19". They are large, long-necked, and long-billed brownish birds. Their neck and chest are greyish with back and wingtips streaked with black. Watch for them along the edge of the marsh grass as they weave in and out looking for food.





Port Leon Loop Paddling Trail

Overview:

Begin at the St. Marks Riverfront Park and Boat Ramp. Paddle downstream following the left (east) bank of the river to access Port Leon Creek. Explore this beautiful winding course to the old town of Port Leon. The trail ends where the train trestle spanned the creek, evidenced now by a few remaining trestle ties. Return back to the St. Marks City Boat Ramp to complete the loop trail.

Considerations:

It would be best to begin the trip on an outgoing tide and return on an incoming tide.

Focus:

Wildlife viewing. Paddlers will encounter Alligators perched on mashed-down reed beds along the winding creek.

Distance:

3.6 miles, 2 hours. It is 1.5 miles from the launch to Port Leon Creek. One can paddle about .3 mile upstream before the trail ends at the old train trestle.

Put In/Take Out:

St. Marks Riverfront Park and Launch. From US Highway 98, turn south at the intersection with Port Leon Dr. (SR 363) toward the City of St. Marks. Follow signs to San Marcos de Apalache Historical State Park, which is adjacent to the park with restrooms, pavilions, trash cans, and parking. Put in at the grassy area next to the boat ramp.

Expertise:

Beginner and up.



Hurricanes

Since the 1800s, over one hundred hurricanes have passed over or near Apalachee Bay. Some of the most damaging that have been recorded were: October 1842; September 1843; August 1851; September 18, 1873; Hurricane Opal in October



1995; Hurricane George in September 1998; and Hurricane Dennis in July 2005. Ann Dudley, the first woman keeper at St. Marks Lighthouse, lost most of her worldly possessions in

the hurricane of 1851. Her losses totaled around \$1,100, but her petition to Congress for compensation went unheeded.

Port Leon

Port Leon was a veritable “boom town” with a hotel, taverns, and train depot awaiting travelers arriving by sea after 1838. The town was built near “Spanish Hole” to accommodate large ships after Magnolia upriver succumbed to yellow fever. Port Leon was Wakulla County’s seat in 1843. The storm surge from the 1843 hurricane destroyed the town and the railroad bridge across the St. Marks River. Residents quickly built a New Port Leon upriver; today it is called Newport.

Port Life & Trade

Apalachee Bay’s Paddling Trail follows vital Spanish supply routes established in the 17th and 18th centuries. As early as 1539, De Soto’s cartographer began mapping the confluence of the rivers and the bay westward. William

Augustus Bowles, several hundred Indians, and other whites attacked the Spanish fort in 1800. Bowles, the self-declared Director of the Muskogee Nation, enjoyed his victory for 5 weeks. Spanish warships from Mobile and Pensacola came after Bowles, who escaped to Miccosukee. Steamboats arrived after 1829 and, as long as river travel was expedient, steamboats plied the waters until the mid-1930s. They transported mail, cotton, timber, naval stores, and people between Apalachicola, St. Marks, and Tampa.

Tallahassee-St. Marks Railroad

The Tallahassee-St. Marks Railroad was chartered in 1834 and in operation by 1836, placing it among the first railroads in Florida. It was operated by mule and later converted for use by steam engines. The railroad remained in operation for 147 years. Territorial Governor Richard Call extended the Tallahassee-St. Marks rail line to Port Leon in 1839 as the Tallahassee to Port Leon railroad’s president. Through the early 1900s, the Tallahassee-St. Marks Railroad transported cotton from the plantation belt to the St. Marks Port for shipment to textile mills in England and New England. In 1984, its railbed became the Tallahassee-St. Marks Historic Railroad State Trail, Florida’s first designated state “rail to trail.”

Alligators

Alligators (*Alligator mississippiensis*) abound in the area as living fossils, having survived for over 200 million years. Although alligators have a heavy body and a slow metabolism, they are capable of short bursts of speed, especially in very short lunges. In Florida, it is illegal to feed wild alligators at any time. If fed, the alligators will eventually lose their fear of humans, thereby becoming a greater danger as they associate people with food. When startled, they will slide from the bank into the water for safety. The best rule to follow is always give them plenty of room. Do not approach them, as they may have a nest or young nearby. An attack on a kayaker or boater is extremely rare. However, having a small dog on board is not recommended, as it represents a food source and thus creates interest on the part of the gator. Alligators are harvested through a lottery system, with meat being available at local seafood stores. Considered a delicacy, Alligator meat is also on the menu at most local restaurants.





St. Marks River to Lighthouse Paddling Trail

Overview:

Begin at the St. Marks Boat Ramp. Paddle downstream following the left (east) bank, passing limestone rock islands and continuous stands of marsh grass bordering the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge. Stop for lunch or a break at Apalachee Point/Rock Island. Upon entering Apalachee Bay, follow the shoreline to the St. Marks Lighthouse. Take out at the St. Marks Lighthouse parking lot.

Considerations:

Take this trip on an outgoing tide. The water in the Bay is shallow, but can be choppy in windy conditions.

Focus:

Fishing and photography.

Distance:

6 miles, 3 hours. It is 4.1 miles to the entrance of Apalachee Bay

Put In:

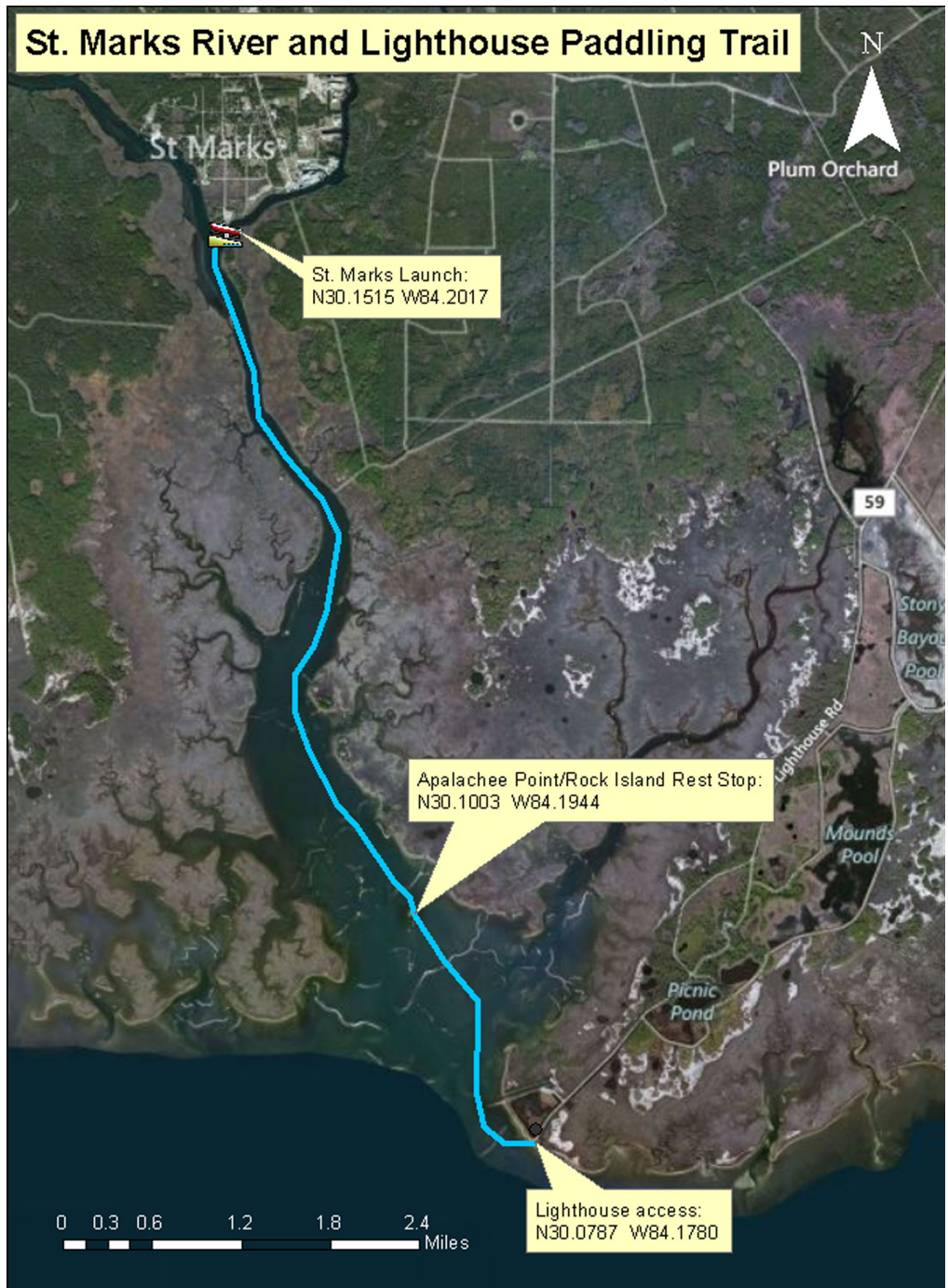
St. Marks Riverfront Park and Launch. From US Highway 98, turn south at the intersection with Port Leon Dr. (SR 363) toward the City of St. Marks. Follow signs to San Marcos de Apalache Historical State Park, which is adjacent to the launch, with restrooms, pavilions, trash cans, and parking. Put in at the grassy area next to the boat ramp.

Take Out:

St. Marks Lighthouse parking lot. Continue east on US Highway 98, passing the community of Newport, and crossing the St. Marks River. Turn south (right) onto CR 59 (Lighthouse Drive) and continue through the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge to the lighthouse at the end of the road. At high tide, take out here or at low tide at the boat ramp accessed by the waterway west of the lighthouse.

Expertise:

Intermediate and up.

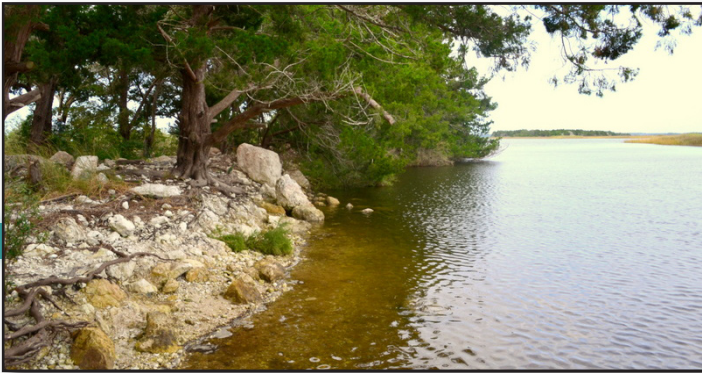


Limestone quarries

Within the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge, almost opposite Port Leon's location, are the remnants of Spanish limestone quarries. The quarries were guarded by one of the New World's earliest aids to navigation: a two-story fort with a tower atop which fires showed seafarers the way into the "Apalachy River." These quarries provided the stone to build the Spanish Fuerte San Marcos de Apalache.

Spoil Islands

Dredging material is deposited in and around the mouth of the St. Marks River. The river is passable to very large barges bringing oil from New Orleans into St. Marks. These islands offer shelter, and during World War II were lookouts for armed artillery keeping an eye on German gunboats and submarines roaming the Gulf of Mexico. The U.S.



Army Corps of Engineers dredged the St. Marks River on numerous occasions, widening the river to accommodate large oil barges. Most of the oil tank farms in St. Marks have disappeared. Rocks on the side of the river are from these dredging operations.

St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge

Covering more than 68,000 acres of land and 31,000 acres of bay, the Refuge is internationally recognized for its more



than 300 species of birds. Renowned for its excellent birding – especially migratory waterfowl in fall and winter months – viewing is best at Refuge ponds along the road. The Refuge

has outstanding nature trails and viewing platforms, as well as colorful displays of wildflowers with Monarch and other butterfly migrations in spring and fall.

St. Marks Lighthouse

The St. Marks Lighthouse, dating to 1829, was rebuilt several times due to poor construction, beach erosion, and hurricane damage. Standing 85 feet high on a 12-foot base of limestone rocks from nearby quarries, the light was automated in 1960 and still guides mariners.



Architect: Winslow Lewis.

Builder: Benjamin Beal and Jairus Thayer (first tower); Calvin Knowlton (second and third towers). Conical brick tower constructed of brick and iron; 88 feet high, 80 steps. Lighted in 1831 and 1842. Current electric light can be seen for up to 15 miles.

Original lens: fifteen Lewis Argand lamps with fourteen-inch reflectors; Winslow Lewis (1831). Present lens: Fourth-order fixed Fresnel lens; Henry-LePaute (1867).

Focal plane: 82 feet.

Other buildings: attached 1871 keeper's dwelling. Lighthouses suffered damage from both Union and Confederate troops during the Civil War. If attack appeared imminent, valuable items such as lenses were hidden for fear that Union troops would damage or destroy them. Dwellings and towers were often pressed into service as a barracks, fortress, or lookout tower. The St. Marks Lighthouse was bombarded by Union ships and the tower stairs burned to prevent Confederates from using it as a lookout post. It was reported that, at the end of the war, retreating Confederates tried unsuccessfully to destroy the tower by setting off charges in its foundation.