



"The activist is not the man who says the river is dirty. The activist is the man who cleans up the river."

-Ross Perot



Brown Pelican

"In the presence of nature, a wild delight runs through the man, in spite of real sorrows."

- Ralph Waldo Emerson



Bass

"In rivers, the water that you touch is the last of what has passed and the first of that which comes; so with present time."

- Leonardo da Vinci



Water Lilies

"One way to open your eyes is to ask yourself, 'What if I had never seen this before? What if I knew I would never see it again?'"

-Rachel Carson



Red Shoulder Hawk

"Never does nature say one thing and wisdom another."

-Juvenal



Garry

"A river seems a magic thing. A magic, moving, living part of the very earth itself."

-Laura Gilpin



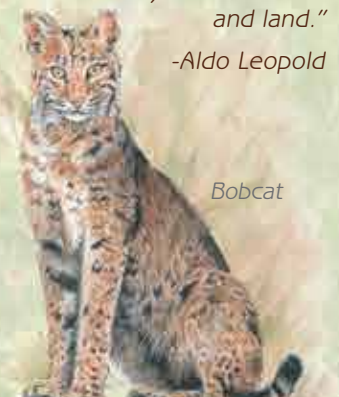
Alligator

"Who hears the rippling of rivers will not utterly despair of anything."

-Henry David Thoreau

"Conservation is a state of harmony between men and land."

-Aldo Leopold



Bobcat

"The richness I achieve comes from nature, the source of my inspiration."

-Claude Monet

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GREATER JACKSONVILLE Paddling Guide



Diana Anderson

THE STORY OF THE ST. JOHNS RIVER IN THE BEGINNING

The story of the St. Johns River began 100,000 years ago after rising land formations trapped part of the sea inland. The River as we know it today evolved somewhere between 5,000 to 7,500 years ago after the end of the Ice Age brought rising sea levels. Some of the earliest pottery fragments ever discovered in North America were found in the River on Tick Island near DeLeon Springs.

THE RIVER'S MANY NAMES

Before the arrival of Europeans, the Timucua, a sophisticated and complex civilization, called the St. Johns River the Welaka or "the river of lakes." The first to officially map the River, a Spanish seaman, dubbed the River "Rio de Corrientes" or "River of Currents." After the French and Jean Ribault arrived in 1562 they called the River "La Riviere du Mai" or "the River of May" because they anchored on May 1. A few years later the Spanish marched north from St. Augustine and captured Ft. Caroline, renaming the river "Rio de San Juan" which the English later translated to our current name, The St. Johns River.

FAMOUS CHARACTERS AND VISITORS

When Jean Ribault and the French arrived in May of 1562 they met the powerful Timucua chief, Saturiwa, on the banks of the River near its mouth. Ribault sent Renee Laudonierre to establish Ft. Caroline on the River in 1564, but that French settlement was wiped out by Spanish Commander Pedro Menendez in 1565 in a surprise attack. Menendez later executed Ribault after finding him shipwrecked on Matanzas Inlet.

In 1763 England acquired Florida, and King George III later sent botanist John Bartram and his son William to explore. William spent much of his time on the River and eventually published a book titled Travels, a classic American nature text.

McGirts Creek, a tributary, is named for the infamous thief and plunderer Dan McGirts, who, during the Revolutionary War, fled his regiment and joined forces with the Rangers of British East Florida. From there, he set up a camp along the river and raided any and all patriot settlements he could get his hands on. After the war, McGirts robbed indiscriminately.

Between the years of 1803 and 1821 Zephaniah Kingsley established several plantations along the St. Johns River. Kingsley was a maritime merchant, a shipbuilder and a slave owner. He married his African slave, Anna Madgigaine Jai Kingsley, and in 1811 freed Anna and gave her responsibilities for his plantations. One can still visit the plantation she ran on the banks of the Ft. George River.

In 1867 Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of Uncle Tom's Cabin, and her husband established a winter home in Mandarin along the River. Inspired by the natural beauty of her home there, Stowe published Palmetto Leaves. A few years later in 1890, Henry Flagler constructed one of the first railroad bridges across the St. Johns River.

In 1942 Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings' book, Cross Creek, included one chapter primarily about the River. She wrote, "If I could have, to hold forever, one brief place of time and beauty, I think I might choose the night on the high lonely bank above the St. Johns River."

In 1977 Jacksonville Mayor Hans Tanzler water-skied in the downtown area of the River to bring attention to the government spending money to clean up the St. Johns during an event dubbed "River Day."



Andy Miller



Eric Berginger

THE RIVER'S HISTORY – PAST TWO CENTURIES

Taking its Place in History

In 1821 Isaiah D. Hart, a Georgia plantation owner, moved to the narrowest spot of the St. Johns River. Then known as "Cowford" because cows were transported by ferry across the river, the area was renamed Jacksonville in 1822 when Hart began to layout the plans for the town, naming it after General Andrew Jackson, the provisional governor of the Florida Territory.

The small community elected William J. Mills as its first mayor in 1832. The north bank of the river began to thrive and became a center of commerce by exporting cotton, lumber, oranges and vegetables, also receiving manufactured goods from the North. Florida became a state in 1845 and Jacksonville officially became a city in 1859.

The Civil War did not leave Jacksonville unscathed and the River was the backdrop for a number of hostilities. In 1864 alone, more than twelve ships were sunk. The most famous, the Maple Leaf, was destroyed by a Confederate mine just offshore at Mandarin Point. The boat had been a luxury paddlewheel boat, 173 feet in length, taken over by the Union as a supply ship. The wreckage was discovered in 1984 by an expedition team, submerged under twenty feet of water and seven feet of mud. Local dentist Keith Holland excavated the boat from 1987 through 1994, finding thousands of Civil War artifacts. In 1994 the shipwreck was designated a National Historic Landmark.



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THREATS TO THE RIVER

By the late 1800s, logging had become a major industry along the St. Johns River. Sawmills on Six Mile Creek and Trout Creek were just two of about a dozen mills in the Jacksonville area.

The arrival of the saw mills on the bank of the river was associated with both the prosperity of an early Industrial Revolution and the notorious odoriferous fumes commonly associated with millwork.

In the 1890s, dredging of the St. Johns River channel began to allow larger boats to pass through and port. This project led to Jacksonville becoming one of the major ports on the East Coast and to the creation of the small dredge island, Mill Cove.

For many years the River was used as an industrial dumping ground, even for raw sewage. In 1969 a state pollution official described Jacksonville as "the cesspool of Florida." Twenty years after Mayor Tanzler's waterskiing show in 1977, the local state's attorney's office conducted an undercover investigation called "Operation River Rat" which focused on the pollution of the

St. Johns River. The investigation led to several arrests and steep fines after videotapes depicted people dumping toxins into the River.

CELEBRATIONS OF THE RIVER

In 2008 the prestigious environmental organization American Rivers listed the St. Johns as "an endangered American River" primarily due to governmental permits allowing millions of gallons of River water to be withdrawn "to fuel unprecedented growth and development" in central Florida.

In 1921, the first automobile bridge was constructed over the River. Originally called the St. Johns River Bridge, it was later named the Acosta Bridge. Now, nearly 100 years later, Jacksonville is the most bridged section of the St. Johns River with seven major automotive bridges: Dames Point, Mathews, Hart, Main Street, Acosta, Fuller Warren and the Buckman.

President Clinton designated the St. Johns River as an American Heritage River in 1998. It is the only river in Florida and one of fourteen in the country to receive the honored designation. In 2012 the St. Johns was designated as one of the nation's "Great Waters," a prestigious recognition previously given to such water bodies as Chesapeake Bay and the Everglades.

Many organizations in Northeast Florida work to keep the St. Johns River clean and thriving with plant and animal life, as well as safe and enjoyable for our recreation. To ensure this effort for current and future generations we also need your help! If you see a threat to the quality or integrity of the St. Johns River, please contact the Public Trust Environmental Legal Institute of Florida at 904.247.1972 or www.publictrustlaw.org.



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This paddling guide is brought to you by the Public Trust Environmental Legal Institute of Florida, Inc. (Public Trust), in partnership with the City of Jacksonville and Durbin Creek Wilderness Society.

The mission of the Public Trust is the zealous protection of the Preservation Project properties as well as other federal and state protected lands and waters, and the promotion of the use and enjoyment of these natural areas. More extensive information about the trails, history and ecology of this area, as well as accessible parks to visit, interesting features, critters, tides, printable maps and links to partner and other websites may be found at:

www.greaterjacksonvillepaddlingguide.org

Copies of this guide may be requested from the Public Trust or its partners (or via the website).