

GREATER JACKSONVILLE

Paddling Guide



"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

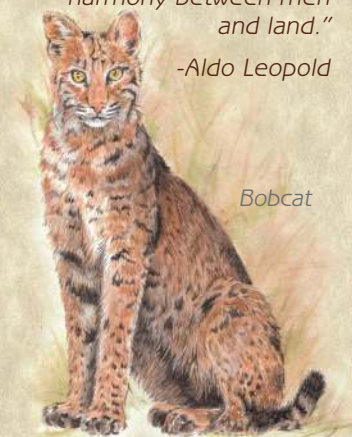
"A river seems a magic thing. A magic, moving, living part of the very earth itself."
-Laura Gilpin



Alligator

"Who hears the rippling of rivers will not utter 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

© Illustrations by
pattcross91@gmail.com 941.957.8594

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.



Diana Anderson

THE RIVER'S HISTORY – PAST TWO CENTURIES

Taking its Place in History

In 1821 Isaiah D. Hart, a Georgia plantation owner, moved to the narrow 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.



Diana Anderson

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." In 1998, 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 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.

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.

Many organizations in Northeast Florida work to keep the St. Johns River clean and thriving with plants 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.



Eric Buehner

POPULAR SPORT FISH

HABITAT: Channel edges on sandy bottoms near tidal passes and docks.

FISHING: Use live shrimp, sand fleas, sardines, pinfish or jigs bounced slowly along the bottom as you drift.

TIPS: All year.

SEASON: Minimum 12", 10 fish per person per day allowed.

FLOUNDER



HABITAT: Near docks and pilings, deeper holes in seagrass beds, oyster beds and channels during the warmest and coolest months.

FISHING: Use live shrimp fished on bottom or free-lined, soft-bodied jigs bounced slowly along bottom, or small gold spoons.

TIPS: All year.

SEASON: Not less than 18" or more than 27", 1 fish per person per day allowed.

REDFISH (RED DRUM)



HABITAT: Near bridges, docks, seawalls, pilings or any underwater structure.

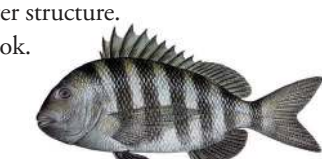
FISHING: Use live shrimp, sand fleas, or small crabs on small hook.

TIPS: Fish just off the bottom and on first tug, strike hard.

SEASON: All year.

SIZE: Minimum 12", 15 fish per person per day allowed.

SHEEPHEAD



HABITAT: Canals, tidal creeks, and other deep, warm waters in cool months; near tidal passes, mangrove fringe and along the beaches in warmer weather.

FISHING: Use live shrimp, small mullet, live pigfish, sardines, jigs or minnow-like lures, either free-lined or on a bobber.

TIPS: Closed December 1-February 28 and May 1-August 31.

SEASON: Not less than 28" or more than 33", 1 fish per person per day.

SNOOK



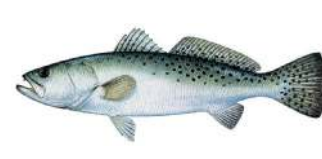
HABITAT: Seagrass beds during moderate water temperatures, deeper waters during warmer and cooler months.

FISHING: Use live shrimp, pigfish, soft-bodied jigs or minnow-like lures, either free-lined or on a bobber.

TIPS: Closed November-December.

SEASON: Not less than 15" or more than 20", 4 fish per person per day, only 1 fish per person may be more than 20".

SPOTTED SEATROUT



Fish illustrations by Diane Rome Peebles. Provided by the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission

Please note that fishing regulations change frequently; check with authorities for current size limits and closed seasons by visiting www.myfwc.com/fishing/saltwater/recreational/

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, Visit Jacksonville, Adventure Kayak Florida 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, areas 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).

THIS RULER IS TO SCALE. PLEASE CHECK LENGTH OF YOUR CATCH.