GCA
GEORGIA CANOEING ASSOCIATION
P. O. Box 611, Winston, GA 30187

THE EDDY LINE

VOLUME 53 NO. 1 JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2018

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CONGRATULATIONS, OLIVIA!
Bronze Medal winner at the ICF World Freestyle Event

Photos courtesy of Todd McGinnis.

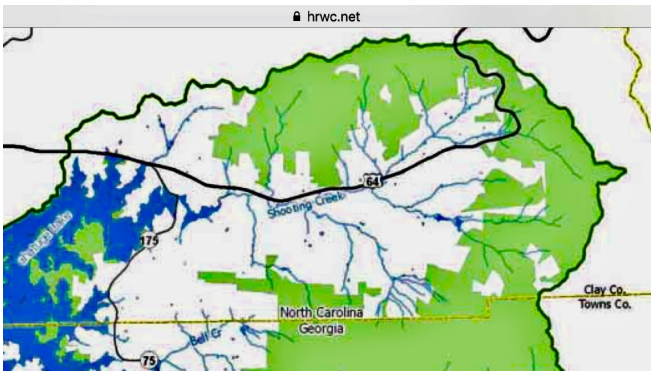
Shooting Creek Exploration Report

Story and photos by Roger Nott, GCA Exploration Chairman

Shooting Creek drains the southeastern third of Clay County, North Carolina, and small portions of Towns County, Georgia, in the neighborhood of Hightower Bald. It originates at the confluence of Thompson and Mill creeks and Muskrat Branch just upstream of Old U. S. Highway 64 about 10 road miles east of Hayesville, North Carolina, and flows west through a narrow mountain valley for 5.6 miles along Highway 64 and Old Highway 64 through the 175 year-old community of Shooting Creek, NC. Thereafter, it crosses south of Old Highway 64 and empties into Lake Chatuge. In this journey it drops about 200 feet, an average gradient of 35.7 feet per mile, similar to the 35.1'/mile gradient of the Nantahala from its Powerhouse to Wesser. The Shooting Creek watershed provides twenty-three percent of the Lake's drainage area.

Before Lake Chatuge was filled in 1942, Shooting Creek continued for another five and a half miles before emptying into the Hiwassee River. Its gradient in the first half of this lost reach continued at an average of about 35'/mile until it passed close to the steep northeast side of Jackrabbit Mountain and then slacked somewhat.

From the Chatuge Dam the Shooting Creek watershed is encircled, going clockwise, by the watersheds of the Hiwassee to the west, Tusquitee Creek to the northwest, the Nantahala to the northeast, the Tallullah to the east, Hightower Creek to the southeast and Bell Creek to the South.



Shooting Creek Watershed

Dramatic views of the Shooting Creek valley can be seen to the southwest of Glade Gap in Chunky Gal Mountain from the Shooting Creek Vista along Hwy. 64, and to the west from the Appalachian Trail when it first enters North Carolina from Georgia, between Courthouse Bald and White Oak Stamp.

The Lake Chatuge Dam was constructed in 1942 by the TVA a few hundred feet downstream of Shooting Creek's confluence with the Hiwassee River, at a point about two miles southeast of Hayesville. Thereby, Clay County lost what at the time was estimated to be one-third of its best agricultural land. About 500 families were evicted, mostly from the lower Shooting Creek Valley.

The name "Chatuge" in the Cherokee language means "confluence," and it was the

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Hiwassee's confluence with Shooting Creek that gave Lake Chatuge its name. The local people were told by government agents that the dam was necessary to provide power for the aluminum industry to support the war effort. However, a single turbine hydroelectric plant, with the smallest capacity of any such TVA plant, was not built until 1954. The Lake is now authorized for power, water storage, flood control, and downstream navigation in the Tennessee River, and, most recently, for recreation.

The land along Shooting Creek was allotted to, and developed by, European settlers, predominantly of Scotch-Irish descent, in 40 to 160 acre plots in the decade after the Treaty of New Echota and the consequent Cherokee Removal in 1838. Most of these allotments were converted into small subsistence farms. I found some of these still intact but most of the land along the Creek is now covered with early second-growth forest, interspersed with frequent canebrakes and modest, but mostly well-kept residences and second homes. One farm on river right between my third and fourth mile has been converted into a small RV park.

Though the entire Shooting Creek watershed upstream of the Lake is within the U. S. Forest Service Boundary, all of the land along the creek remains in private ownership. However, most of the watershed area feeding the Creek is protected USFS land. I thus found the Creek's water quality excellent, even after recent heavy rain. I have been interested in exploring Shooting Creek for many years but could find no descriptions of it in any paddling guidebooks, club newsletters or online websites. I found the USGS Shooting Creek, N. C. topographical map very helpful and encouraging.

On the afternoon of October 22, 2017, following racing in the Southeasterns and a lovely lunch at River's End with GCA life member Jim Ledvinka, I found myself still itching to paddle, most especially something new on my way back to Georgia. Consequently, I drove to the NC Hwy. 175 bridge over the Shooting Creek arm of Lake Chatuge. From there I paddled upstream 1.2 attractive lake miles to the head of the lake at Old Hwy. 64 and about three-tenths of a mile further upstream. There, I found an attractive, and apparently quite boatable, natural stream with frequent rapids but there was insufficient flow and time to ascend further.

Head of upstream navigation

A week later, on October 29, I drove to the Clay County area again, this time with all the nearby streams pleasantly full following about

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an inch and a half of rain in the previous 24 hours. I hoped to link up with Christine Blumberg and a friend after they finished a low-water run of Fires Creek but brought along my road bike in case I had to set my own shuttle.

While I waited for Christine to call, I explored Bell Creek in Towns County, Georgia. I found enough water in the lower creek near GA Hwy. 75 and its merger into Lake Chatuge but no good public access upstream. I then drove to my intended take-out at the Old Hwy. 64 bridge over Shooting Creek, one mile east of NC Hwy. 175, which is the northern continuation of Georgia Hwy. 75 north of Hiawassee. I found the creek pleasantly full and inviting and the lake about six feet down, allowing the flow to extend past this bridge.

Downstream view into Lake Chatuge from my take-out at the Old Hwy. 64 bridge

There is an old, inactive gauging station but no active online or staff gauge on the Creek. Nearby USGS gauges read 3.47/141 cfs at the Hiawassee, 2.67/231 cfs at the Upper Tallulah, and 1.86/344 cfs at the Nantahala near Rainbow Springs.

It was now after 3 p.m., so I prepared to paddle alone. As I was chaining my bike at the Old Hwy. 64 bridge take-out Christine called but was uncertain whether or not she could persuade her companion to join me. We decided that I would search for possible put-ins and she would call me back. I drove east along Old Hwy. 64 and settled on the third bridge, 3.9 road miles upstream, along East Vineyard Road, a couple of hundred feet north of (new) Hwy. 64. The Creek here was small, swift and shallow but the access and parking was easy.

Upstream view from the East Vineyard bridge

There was no cell phone service, however, and I hadn't heard again from Christine. She later told me that they were cold and hungry and had opted not to join me. The wind was blowing light snow over 20 mph in the trees overhead but the day was still mostly

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sunny and the wind was seldom noticeable at water level.

I finally put in at 3:40 p.m. in high spirits. Delightful, technical class I-II rapids began immediately and never were out of my sight the whole 4.3 mile trip. However, I encountered a downed tree blocking the entire flow in less than 200 yards and began second guessing my choice of put-in. Luckily, I easily dragged my sixteen foot Buffalo Canoe up the low left bank and past the tree and got back underway in less than two minutes. I was, nevertheless, quite glad to welcome the inflow of three good sized creeks in the next quarter mile and several others soon afterwards. Thereafter, the flow was blocked only once, by a fallen but still living tree in a rare slack spot. This one was very easily pulled over and would be submerged with a little higher water.

One of about a half-dozen surfing spots

I rate my water level as on the border between low and medium and perhaps ideal for this type of creek: high enough to avoid all the rocks and to maintain a spritely speed, but low enough so as not to wash out the predominantly small rapids and insure a slalom-like maneuvering challenge. On the other hand, higher water would provide most surfing opportunities, but these would always be fairly scarce.

I chose to scout once, at narrow spot where the stream drops about 6-7 feet and which at normal flows is best scouted and, if desired, lined on river left. There is a wire fence blocking scouting and portage on the right.

This was the largest drop and can be run on the far right

I found Shooting Creek a most delightful little stream, very much like its neighbors, Tusquitee and Hightower creeks, though its overall gradient is somewhat higher. It is a miniature Nantahala, though the riparian flora is much less pristine. I encountered a couple of great blue herons and quite a few geese and ducks, some of which were clustered

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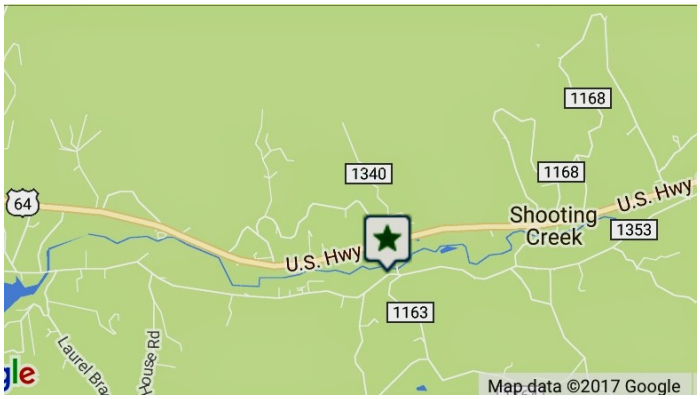
around stream-side residences where they were no doubt sometimes fed. Perhaps, due to the cold weather, I saw no people and also no "No Trespassing" signs. Nevertheless, I'd advise paddlers on this small stream to maintain a low profile to avoid landowner conflict on this less-travelled little gem.—*EL*



Map of the 4.3 mile stretch I ran beginning near the "H" on the picture's right edge

Tonya Bechtler, Champion of River Protection and Access

By Mark Wilson

At the GCA holiday party in December, Tonya Bechtler was awarded the "Champion of River Protection and Access" award. Tonya was very honored to receive this awared from the GCA. She has worked years for River & Watershed health issues.

In 2014 she worked with Georgia River Network to form the Yellow River Water Trail. As Founder of the Trail and Past Chairman, she introduced to others, a passion for River Health and Recreation. She publicized River trash issues, organized many cleanups, and grew the Yellow River Water Trail into a recognized recreational destination. She works with Georgia Water Coalition on encouraging the GA Legislators to 'Do Right' by the environment and the recreation public, who enjoy fishing and paddle sports.

Currently, she is doggedly fighting to keep Coal Ash from being imported into GA from other States, and having it buried in Municipal Landfills, which are unfortunately frequently sited near rivers. Tonya works hard to oppose Newton County's landfill expansion plans, and to have the landfill closed, since it is mostly un-lined and near the river. She is also still a Director on the YRWT Board, head of Outreach. Due to her efforts, Paddle Georgia is planning to include a long stretch of the Yellow River in the 2018 expedition.
- *EL*

Tonya Bechtler is presented her award by GCA Treasurer, Vincent Payne

Cumberland Island Trip Report

Story and photos by Lisa Haskell

The first weekend of December, 2017, Keith and I participated in the Georgia River Network's Hidden Gems paddle to Cumberland Island. Paddling out to the island to camp was a really cool adventure but our trip really started a day early. Since we had to be at the boat ramp in St. Mary's at 9:00 am on Friday we drove to St. Mary's on Thursday and spent the night in the Riverview Hotel. It was very picturesque and quaint and is supposedly haunted. We weren't in one of the two haunted rooms though and experienced no unexpected events.

The next morning we went to breakfast at a little diner down the street along with a few other paddlers. We dropped our boats and gear off at the Meeting Street boat ramp and then went to the Cumberland Island Visitor Center to register. Then we had to drop our camping gear off at the ferry dock and get back to the boat ramp for the mandatory safety meeting. We launched from the Meeting Street boat ramp, paddled up the St. Mary's river to Cumberland Sound and then crossed the sound to Cumberland Island. We launched at 11:15 am with the plan of riding the tide out on the river and hitting Cumberland Sound at slack tide. We did fairly well with this – it took 1 hour and 45 minutes to paddle 6.67 miles over to Dungeness Dock. The weather today was unusual for December. We had just a small bit of drizzle in the morning and then the sun came out and it warmed up to 70 degrees with winds at 3 mph from the west. There was no wind and the crossing was very calm.

Georgia River Network had lined up safety for us. They had four guides in kayaks on the water and four motor boats: one in front, one on either side and one in back. They literally herded us across the sound. I have to admit this was good for visibility (the big boats being able to see us, that is). We landed at Dungeness Dock where there is a small beach. We carried the boats up past the high tide area and formed a large sunburst by the putting all of the bows together in the center. This way they were able to run a cable lock through all of the boats.

The paddle today was not terribly difficult since we timed the tides correctly and there was no wind or chop. There is, however, no place to stop and the middle of the channel

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is not the place to lollygag because there are large boats that come through there. It is also near King's Bay Naval Base where the Trident submarines are housed so you have to be on the lookout for subs as well.

Our camping gear was taken across on the ferry which was very fortunate because it is quite a bit of a walk from the Dungeness

Dock to Sea Camp where we were camping. It is another hike from the Sea Camp Ranger Office where the ferry lands to the campsites. There are a few wagons that can be used to carry gear to the campsites. Some people had packed in backpacking frames and others had their own foldup carts. Without those you will want to use one of the park's carts and they can be hard to find.

GRN provided us with sack lunches for the trip over and dinner that night was a seafood boil. Since Cumberland Island is a pack it out camp we took reusable plates, silverware and cups to use. All trash must be packed back off of the island so that is something important to consider when planning meals. The campground does have potable water, toilets and showers but only cold water is available. Some people took solar showers and used them to heat up water which they could add to the cold water to make showering more comfortable.

On day two of the trip we met at Group North campsite for breakfast, then headed to the Sea Camp Ranger Station for the

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Lands and Legacies Tour. This was a six-hour tour by van that goes all the way up to North Cumberland Island. We saw Plum Orchard, the Stafford gravesite, the Settlement and the church where John Kennedy, Jr. got married. We then went to Dungeness to look at the ruins and saw where Lucy Carnegie and her children are buried. It was a very informative tour – the guide spoke for the entire time and gave us a lot of information on the island, its history and its inhabitants. I highly recommend it.

On day three of the Cumberland Island trip we got up and packed things up early because we were supposed to have everything to the dock area by 10:00 am. I went looking for a cart so we could transport our gear to the dock but the last cart was taken just as I arrived. After a bit of a wait, we finally got our gear to the dock. We then had to wait for the ferry to arrive so that we could load gear. The weather today was much cooler than the last two days and it was very overcast the entire day. We were originally supposed to launch at 1:00 pm but we heard one of our guides saying that it would probably be better to leave about an hour later than that based on the tides. I guess they were just worried about making sure we had time for the crossing so they had us launch at 1:15 pm. The weather was cloudy, 66 degrees and had 8 mph winds from Northeast. The wind wasn't high enough to cause whitecaps or big waves but it definitely caused my boat to weathercock so I had to use my skeg on the way back. This time I think we launched a bit early. We did okay with slack tide on the sound crossing but the tide hadn't quite turned by the time we reached the river and there for a bit we didn't make much progress. Today our pace was slower and it took us 2 hours and 36 minutes for the crossing. When we got back to the Meeting Street ramp we loaded the cars up and then picked up our camping gear from the ferry dock in St. Mary's. This was a very busy weekend but paddling to Cumberland Island and camping there was really a neat thing to do. I definitely recommend doing it.—*EL*

KEEP YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS CURRENT

Each month numerous "copies" of the pdf version of *The Eddy Line* bounce back due to bad or outdated email addresses. If an email to you bounces back, you will be deleted from the recipient list until we get an updated email address.

When the GCA receives a mail failure notice in response to an email to you on the GCA email list, you will be automatically unsubscribed by the listserve software. If your email changes, please "unsubscribe" and re-subscribe with your new address.

TRIP AND EVENT SCHEDULE

Stone Mountain Roll Practice: Wade Walker YMCA, 2nd and 4th Wednesday of each month, January through April, 7-9pm.

Peachtree City Roll Practice: Kedron Aquatic Center, 5-7pm.
Next sessions: January 21, February 4, February 18 and March 4

Macon Roll practice: Wednesdays, 7:00pm at Wesleyan College

Trip Coordinator Clinic: March 31, 2018 on the Nantahala River. Contact Jimmy Jones for more information.

Please see the GCA Calendar for details, updates, and to sign up at www.gapaddle.com.
For any questions or class suggestions, e-mail **gapaddletraining@gmail.com**.

Thinking of joining a paddling trip?

When deciding to join a GCA trip, whether an "official" trip posted on the website, or a pop-up trip posted on the Facebook page, please keep the following bit of river etiquette in mind:

Always check with the trip coordinator before inviting a guest to come along on the trip with you, especially if your guest is an inexperienced paddler. This is to insure the skill level of your guest matches the targeted skill level of the group. Many pop-up trips will not have safety boaters., and it's considered rude to expect the other paddlers in the group to be responsible for an unexpected paddler. Please don't put the trip coordinator in the uncomfortable position of having to turn someone away because their experience level doesn't match that of the group.

Your Trip Could Be Listed in This Space — email Cruisemaster James Wright at jwrightnmaul@hotmail.com

KEY TO GCA SKILL LEVELS
Flat Water - no current will be encountered; safe for new paddlers.
Beginner - mild current, occasional Class I ripples; new paddlers can learn basic river techniques.
Trained Beginner - moving water with Class 1-2 rapids; basic strokes and bracing skills needed.
Intermediate - rapids up to Class 3; eddying and ferrying skills needed; kayakers need solid roll.
Advanced - rapids up to Class 4; excellent boat control and self-rescue skills required.

Signing Up: Call the trip coordinator listed to sign up for trips. Most trip coordinators will move a trip to an alternate venue if the water levels and conditions for a particular trip are not favorable. Call early in the week to ensure you get a spot on the trip, and in consideration for the coordinators, PLEASE avoid calling late in the evening.
Training Trips are a combination of recreation and training designed for those boaters who have completed a formal training clinic and would like some on-the-river time with instructors practicing what was learned in the clinic and expanding skill levels.
Canoe Camping Trips are multi-day trips, generally on flat or mild water, with at least one night of camping. For details on a scheduled trip, call the trip coordinator. To arrange a trip, call Vincent Payne at 770.834.8263.
To Volunteer To Lead Trips: Email Cruisemaster Lesley Symington at lslysym@mindspring.com. As usual, we need trip coordinators for all types of trips, from flatwater to Class 5 whitewater. Our excellent trip schedule depends on the efforts of volunteers, so get involved and sign up to coordinate a trip on your favorite river today! The GCA needs YOU!
Chattooga Trips are limited to 12 boats on ANY section on ANY trip, club trip or private (USFS regulation). Boating is prohibited above the Highway 28 bridge. Your cooperation in protecting this National Wild and Scenic River is appreciated.
Roll Practice: see gapaddle.com for information.

SUPPORT OUR ADVERTISERS

The GCA web site now features a "GCA Supporters" web page with links to those who support GCA financially by advertising in *The Eddy Line*. Help those who help us — patronize our advertisers. And when you do, let them know you saw their *Eddy Line* ad and appreciate their support. Thanks!

Keeping In Touch

To contact the GCA, write Georgia Canoeing Association, Inc., P.O. Box 611, Winston, GA 30187.

Groupmail: GCA maintains a group email list to help members share information of general interest. To sign up, send an e-mail to gcalist-subscribe@yahoogroups.com.

Website: Information about GCA, forms (including membership application and GCA waiver form), a link to the GCA Store and links to *Eddy Line* advertisers are all at http://www.gapaddle.com.

Facebook: Visit the GCA Facebook page for photos, video, trip reports, or to join an upcoming impromptu trip.

ALL ABOUT THE EDDY LINE

The Eddy Line, the official GCA newsletter, is available in print or pdf format. To subscribe, contact Vincent Payne at 404.629.5376 or Vincent.payne9354@gmail.com, or mail your request to P.O. Box 611, Winston, GA 30187.

Submissions/Advertising: All submissions and advertising should be sent to *The Eddy Line*, at: **EddyLineEditor@gmail.com**.

Deadline: The deadline for all submissions, classified ads and commercial ads is the 20th of the previous month (e.g. August 20 for the September/October issue).

The Eddy Line, © 2018, is published bi-monthly as the official newsletter of the Georgia Canoeing Association, Inc., publication address: 9354 Grapevine Drive, Winston, GA 30187. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *The Eddy Line*, c/o Georgia Canoeing Association, P.O. Box 611, Winston, GA 30187.

THE EDDY LINE

GEORGIA CANOEING ASSOCIATION, INC.

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Winston, Georgia 30187

WE'RE ON THE WEB:
www.gapaddle.com

The purpose of the GCA is to have fun and promote safety while paddling.

GCA is a member-operated paddling club with over 500 family and corporate memberships comprising more than 1500 Individuals. Canoeists and Kayakers of all ages and paddling abilities are equally welcome. Some of our mutual interests include whitewater river running, creeking and playboating, river and lake touring, sea kayaking, paddle camp outs and competition and racing activities. We espouse conservation, environmental and river access issues as well as boating safety and skills development. Group paddling, training and social activities of all kinds are conducted throughout the year thanks to the volunteer efforts of our many members and friends. Membership is NOT limited to Georgia residents.