**Ocmulgee-2 River Trip:**

(December 1st – 5th, 2017)

*Jimmy Thompson (Jackson Cuda 14’)*

*Preston Lewis (Jackson Cuda 14’)*

*Michael Semple (Jackson Kraken 15.5’)*

*Arin Christensen (Old Town Predator 13’)*

**Half Moon Landing - Abbeville 🡺 Highway 135 Bridge - Uvalda (90.25 miles)**

Day 1: (*Friday*) 21 miles

Awoke: 0445hrs

Breakfast: 0600hrs

Embarked: 0915hrs

Break: None

Lunch: 1215-1215hrs (on sandbar)

Break: 1415-1430hrs

Ending Time: 1545hrs

Dinner: 1800hrs

Sleep Time: 2130hrs

* Everyone planned to meet the morning of launch at my home except for Preston, he plans to meet us at the launch and leave his vehicle there while we paddle.
* Semple arrived 20 minutes late due to morning traffic from Newnan to McDonough, so it goes. Somehow his seat-strap was misplaced the day before as we loaded his kayak/gear onto the trailer. Thankfully Arin had an extra strap for him to use.
* Despite our best efforts to get an early start at 0530hrs we had to wait outside of McDonalds to get breakfast until 0600hrs for them to open. Kinda makes any tardiness a non-issue.
* We had a pleasant drive down to Abbeville (2.0hrs). Semple slept in the back as he works late most nights.
* We contacted and hired “Three Rivers Outdoors” to shuttle my truck & trailer from the launch, secure it for the week, and meet us at the extraction. It was a bit expensive at $150 for the assistance but worth it in the end. Scott the owner is a great guy, I hope he’s able to join us on future trips.
* Upon arrival we were all delighted to see the river moving as rapidly as it was. We were all concerned the flow would be very slow thereby reducing our ability to put in miles with better efficiency.
* The tree-fall on this river was minimal except for a few turns that you must pay attention on.
* There are sugar-sand beaches at three out of five turns. Finding a suitable campsite was surely not a daunting task as was on the Ocmulgee-1 River Trip where bluffs plagued our attempts to find a nightly home.
* We camped on an oxbow that night under a full moon, more specifically the “Super Moon”. It made my night-shot time lapse photos appear like it was daytime… odd.
* I ate chopped steak marinated with teriyaki and instant mashed potatoes.
* We made a sizeable campfire and reflected on the day prior to going to bed.

 *Sunrise: 0626hrs*

*Air Temp: 64-78° average*

 *Water Temp: 56.5°*

 *Barometer: 1032*

 *Wind Speed: 4mph (East)*

 *Water Gauge: 1.9’*

 *Drift Speed: 1.5mph*

 *Water Clarity: 2.5’*

 *Cloud Cover: Partial*

 *Sunset: 1804hrs*

Day 2: (*Saturday*) 18 miles, 39 miles overall

Awoke: 0630hrs

Breakfast: 0715hrs

Embarked: 0915hrs

Break: None

Lunch: 1115-1130hrs

Break: None

Ending Time: 1430hrs

Dinner: 1830hrs

Sleep Time: 2130hrs

* Although I slept great in my larger Snugpak Scorpion-2 tent, I found myself really limited and constrained when trying to deflate and roll-up my Klymit sleeping pad. I’m now in the market for a larger tent.
* We saw two boats while paddling today.
* We stopped on a sandbar next to an immature oxbow cut. The treefall was painfully reminiscent of the St. Mary’s River Trip we took in May-2016. I called Arin & Semple over to view the carnage and they both seemed glad to have not been on that trip!
* As we made our way around the oxbow we saw a very large alligator on the left side of the river. I actually passed the beast as I was focusing on an approaching vessel’s wake. It was only when the guys in the boat exalted “Look at that big gator” that I turned and looked. It was about a 12 footer. FYI this was around mile marker 31.25 on our river maps for this trip and mile marker 135 on the published Ocmulgee River Map #6.
* The remainder of the day was fairly uneventful as we laid-up a few miles before Mobley’s Bluff Landing and found a good campsite.

*Sunrise: 0626hrs*

*Air Temp: 52-73° average*

 *Water Temp: 57.5°*

 *Barometer: 1034*

 *Wind Speed: 3mph (West-Northwest)*

 *Water Gauge: 1.75’*

 *Drift Speed: 1.5-2.0mph*

 *Water Clarity: 2.0’*

 *Cloud Cover: Clear*

 *Sunset: 1804hrs*

Day 3: (*Sunday*) 22 miles, 61 miles overall

Awoke: 0630hrs

Breakfast: 0730hrs

Embarked: 0845hrs

Break: None

Lunch: 1100-1115hrs

Break: None

Ending Time: 1500hrs

Dinner: 1800hrs

Sleep Time: 2245hrs

* We woke up this morning to everything covered in dew. This trip more so than any previous trip has been vexed with dew. So much so it’s as though it rained yet it hasn’t.
* We made it to Mobley’s Bluff Landing around 0900hrs. All reports suggest this is a solid location for resupply… WRONG! The ramp is nearly 30-35*°* inclined, the restroom facilities are locked in a fenced in “campground” which is by reservation only with no number listed. There’s a ram-shackled hut that is straight out of a horror movie with “Bait Shop” painted on the eave. To top it off, there is no bait, shelter, restrooms, showers, or anything else as listed to be accessible. Do not consider this as a resupply of any kind.
* The remainder of the day was uneventful day.

*Sunrise: 0627hrs*

*Air Temp: 49-63° average*

 *Water Temp: 58°*

 *Barometer: 1036*

 *Wind Speed: 10mph (East)*

 *Water Gauge: 1.75’*

 *Drift Speed: 1.5mph*

 *Water Clarity: 1.5’*

 *Cloud Cover: Overcast*

 *Sunset: 1805hrs*

Day 4: (*Monday*) 17.25 miles, 78.25 miles overall

Awoke: 0715hrs

Breakfast: 0745hrs

Embarked: 0845hrs

Break: 1045-1100hrs

Lunch: 1400-1430hrs (in camp)

Break: None

Ending Time: 1530hrs

Dinner: 1830hrs

Sleep Time: 2100hrs

* We packed up our gear and headed down the river in need a beer run. Thankfully Lumber City is just a few miles away.
* We saw a large tombstone-like structure at MacRae’s Landing which is on the left side of the river. We stopped to investigate and read an interesting story about “The Last Raft” which entailed a group of men who, in honor of their predecessors, floated a large barge of cut timber from MacRae’s Landing all the way down to Darien, GA! That was a heck of a feat for sure!
* As we approached Lumber City we could smell the aroma of fresh cut wood. I fancy myself as a decent carpenter and it was a welcomed scent as it has been a while since I’ve made anything in my shop.
* As you enter Lumber City you’ll also notice an ominous mechanical-humming sound. That’s the lumber processing facility which Lumber City is named for.
* Alas we rounded the last turn to Lumber City and saw the trestle bridge that has captured my attention for many years now. It has a very interesting appearance with an operator’s shack at the top which is used to engage the rotating mechanism used to open/close the bridge for river traffic.
* Arin and I decided to make a beer run. It only seemed fair since Preston doesn’t really drink and Semple was recovering from foot surgery.
* We left these two at the boat ramp and ventured into town. We had a tough time finding suitable beer as we went looking for decent canned beer. The package store that I’ve seen many times having traveled through Lumber City had closed so we had to walk further into this one-horse town. Everyone we encountered was very pleasant. On a side note, Arin and I almost succumbed to our hunger pangs as we were weakened by the succulent smell of smoked BBQ. The locals told us of a famous BBQ spot just up the road. I later learned it’s called “Stinson’s BBQ” which is hailed as “Best in the South” by Trip Advisor. I will find out next time I travel through Lumber City.
* Arin & I settled for a roller hot-dog at the Flash Foods as we were bringing two back for Preston anyways.
* We walked to a liquor store on the opposite side of Highway 341 to get our libations.
* Once loaded up in our kayaks we paddled another hour or so and made camp for the night.

*Sunrise: 0627hrs*

*Air Temp: 49-75° average*

 *Water Temp: 57°*

 *Barometer: 1039*

 *Wind Speed: 4mph (East)*

 *Water Gauge: 1.5’*

 *Drift Speed: 1.5mph*

 *Water Clarity: 1.5’*

 *Cloud Cover: Partial*

*Sunset: 1805hrs*

Day 5: (*Tuesday*) 12 miles, 90.25 miles overall

Awoke: 0630hrs

Breakfast: 0730hrs

Embarked: 0815

Break: None

Lunch: None

Break: None

Ending Time: 1115hrs

Dinner: None

Sleep Time: None

* Whoa Nelly…. Last night was a terrible night’s sleep. I’m not sure if it was the roller hot-dog or what but around 0045hrs I became violently ill. My stomach began to murmur and my guts began to bubble. I knew I wouldn’t be able to make it through the night. Needless to say it was a rough one.
* As we awoke I felt much better. We all met by the fire like we do each morning. Some had already packed the contents of their tents and were walking them to their kayaks as they retrieved other items they wanted for breakfast.
* We hit the river earlier than any other morning this trip and began our day.
* We made it to the confluence of the Ocmulgee and the Oconee Rivers around 1045hrs. Here these two form the Altamaha River which was my first kayaking expedition. It was less than expected or I’ve read about given the water levels. However, I’d take easy peasy over tumultuous anytime.
* We made it to Uvalda before noon where my truck & trailer were waiting on us. We all shook hands having completed another successful trip and loaded up for the 2.5 hour drive home. We detoured through Abbeville to Preston could retrieve his truck which was still there unharmed.

*Sunrise: 0629hrs*

*Air Temp: 55-81° average*

 *Water Temp: 58.5°*

 *Barometer: 1038*

 *Wind Speed: 2mph (West)*

 *Water Gauge: 1.5’*

 *Drift Speed: 1.5mph*

 *Water Clarity: 1.5‘*

 *Cloud Cover: Overcast*

*Sunset: 1805hrs*

Conclusion:

The trip was a really made by all of the sandbars. The scenery was slightly above average compared to what we’ve seen in the past mainly due to the fall foliage. We averaged 18.05 miles a day as we paddled down the river. The Nemo Riff-15 cold weather sleeping bag was a welcomed change as the temps were cool but not really cold, I definitely wouldn’t have been comfortable in my lightweight Kelty-40. The biggest thing again to take away from the trip is for me to do a better job at creating and plotting the maps we use. This trip I plotted the route on the outside of every turn as opposed to the inside of every turn. This listed the total length to be 95 miles yet the actual paddled miles was 90.25 miles. I’ll be sure to plot it down the middle on future planning.

Things to do differently…

1. I have since purchased a Big Agnes Tumble-2 tent.
2. Arin is actively looking to get a Jackson Cuda-14’ for future expeditions.