

Georgia offers outdoors

clubs

Enthusiasts can earn T-shirts for achievements in hiking, mountain biking, paddling

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Some people need a nudge to get off the couch and get outdoors.

Consider the three programs at Georgia's state parks — part of the park system's "Get Outdoors Georgia" series — the prodding you need.

"We were looking for a way to promote the parks and just get people outdoors," said Kim Hatcher, the public affairs coordinator for Georgia State Parks & Historic Sites, about the reason for starting the activity clubs. "We're finding people of all ages are doing it."

The programs are: the Canyon Climbers Club for hikers, the Muddy Spokes club for mountain bikers and the Park Paddlers Club for kayaking and canoeing enthusiasts.

"The Canyon Climbers is



GEORGIA STATE PARKS photo

The paddling route at George L. Smith State Park is on a 412-acre mill pond with Spanish moss-draped trees and still waters.

our most popular," Hatcher said, "because people don't need equipment and you can do all the requirements in four parks."

To earn a Canyon Climbers T-shirt, hikers need to climb trails at Amicalola Falls, Providence Canyon, Tallulah Gorge and Cloudland Canyon.

The "mud-splattered" T-shirt for those who ride all 69 miles of biking trails at 11 Georgia state parks is a little more difficult to earn, Hatcher said.

"So far, only four people have sent in their cards to say they've done that," she said. "For mountain biking, some of those trails are

more challenging."

The Park Paddlers Club was recently added to the Get Outdoors Georgia series. It requires individuals or families to paddle 22 miles of water trails at six state parks.

The routes involve fairly easy paddling on a reservoir, a mill pond, a swamp

JOIN THE CLUB

■ To attempt to complete the requirements for any of the three clubs that are part of the Georgia parks' "Get Outdoors Georgia" series, buy a \$10 membership card and then get going. For more information, visit: www.GetOutdoorsGeorgia.org

■ The Georgia State Parks & Historic Sites system includes 63 parks across the state, many of them within easy driving distance from the Upstate. For more information on park locations and activities, visit: <http://gastateparks.org>

and along a tidal river.

"None of those involve whitewater, so anyone should be capable of doing that," she said. "The longest one is a four-mile loop."

The family nature of the clubs came home to Hatcher recently when she received a phone call from a family wondering if T-shirts are available in children's sizes. She said the hikes and paddling routes can be completed by whole families, while the mountain biking trails require a little more skill level and would be best attempted by older children and teens.

BREAKING OUT



GEORGIA STATE PARKS

Paddlers can take a 1-mile tour of a 28-acre spring-fed lake at Magnolia Springs State Park in Millen, Ga.