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# News Release



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## **Island in the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge Identified as Most Remote Spot in Georgia**

Folkston, GA... Where is the most “off the beaten path” that you have travelled? Is it possible to escape the developed world of buildings and roadways, restaurants and highways? Rebecca & Ryan Means are two people who asked themselves this same question, and decided to do something about it. “We are trying to get the furthest from the developed, mechanized world as possible.” says Ryan of the family’s mission to discover the most remote locations in each state in the US. The mission is called Project Remote and they’ve been at it for a decade.

“We’ve both hungered to see the world and wild places and do amazing things together” says Ryan, of the family of three. His wife Rebecca and their daughter Skyla have visited and documented 37 remote locations in as many states across the US. The idea first budded in 2009 out of much more than an innate longing for adventure.

While walking down a crowded Florida beach solo in 2009, Ryan asked himself “how can I get as far away from this circus as possible?” Noticing humans have become more attached to worldly things/structures; living our busy lives detached from the natural world and absent of ‘wildness’, a word that Ryan mentions more than once in our conversation.

The couple is well aware that finding truly wild places has become harder in the United States. Rebecca and Ryan are conservation biologists by trade, so their interest in calculating remote locations runs deeper than seeking personal adventure. Rebecca and Ryan both work at the Coastal Plains Institute in the panhandle of Florida which is dedicated to wetland ecology research and education. Through Project Remote identified locations, they strive to document just how few truly remote spots there are in the United States. “It’s not just about us, people do not know how developed this country really is” explains Rebecca. And so, Project Remote was born and has since been thriving, with 37 documented locations in the contiguous US so far. The couple has been recognized both nationally and internationally as they share their findings of America’s remotest locations in the form of expedition journals, 360-degree photo documentation of the locations, and statistics on their findings through the Project Remote website and blog. Lately, Georgia’s been on their mind as the couple travelled to the state in April to document it’s wildest location.

They landed on Floyds Island in the Okefenokee Swamp, within the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge and designated National Wilderness Area. “We love the Wilderness Act” Ryan states for the family. And rightfully so, since 13 of their identified remote locations are in designated Wilderness Areas and 89% of their remote locations are located within protected public lands. Their Georgia remote location coordinates are on an island in the Okefenokee NWR that put them 7 miles from the nearest road.

They identify the most remote location in each state using Rebecca’s knowledge of Geographic Information System technology, which she’s been using for 20 years in her career. She also examines satellite images, public land and transportation files to identify roads and wherever there

is a scar on the landscape. “We were looking for quantitative remoteness in each state...a precise calculation with a precise set of coordinates”, that can be pinpointed on a map and fit their definition of a distance from “humans and their structures”.

And as different states were analyzed, the definition of “scars on the landscape” became muddy. “What about oil rigs or cell towers? Trails or ranger cabins?” adds Rebecca, reminiscing how the idea of remoteness became more and more complicated. Conclusively, the remotest location is defined by a geographical coordinate that is the farthest straight-line distance from a road or city/town. Additionally, these remote spots are on high, developable ground and can include islands.

It’s no surprise that the most remote spot in the state of Georgia landed them in the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge, the third largest National Wilderness Area east of the Mississippi. Their journey in the Okefenokee began at Stephen C. Foster State Park, where they camped one night and then at the break of dawn the next morning embarked on a 9-mile paddle to their location on Floyds Island. They were particularly excited for this remote location, because they are able to camp on the island with their overnight refuge camping permit. Ryan had previously visited the swamp 25 years before for a multiple night canoe trip but Rebecca had never been to the Okefenokee before.

It is also worth mentioning, that back in 2009 as Ryan and Rebecca were pinpointing these locations in the US, preparing to travel to them and embark on a larger journey that would take them into 37 states over the next ten years, they were new parents.

But for these lifelong adventurers, becoming parents didn’t slow them down. Skylia is now ten and has grown up more outdoor savvy than most people in their lifetime. Her parents are firm believers that outdoor exposure is an important part of having a fulfilled life. “It’s in our DNA” explains Ryan of their tendency to spend vacations and free time-not to mention their careers- outdoors, “she was going to be an outdoor child no matter what.” Skylia, with her favorite stuffed animal, joined them on their overnight canoe trip in the Okefenokee just as she has for every Project Remote location trip. They embrace the fact that Skylia will grow up familiar with and appreciative of the natural world. Aside from the unique childhood experiences Skylia has had on back-country adventures, Rebecca feels that raising Skylia while pursuing this family venture makes it all the more appropriate toward their mission for Project Remote. “Maybe we can inspire other folks, all the adventures don’t have to be over,” she states about the parenting experience which for her included nursing, carrying and caring for their daughter on many backcountry trips. “We thought we could do this with our kid, and we could. It’s not been very difficult”. Similarly, Ryan refers to these trips as “the greatest family experience, not necessarily the greatest wilderness experience” even as they explored some of the most wild locations in the country. The family’s mission for Project Remote is more than embarking on these adventures, it’s about sharing them, as Rebecca says, “Let’s get other people outside in remote areas”.

Become inspired to explore more remote and natural areas by reading about the Means’ adventure in the Okefenokee and other remote locations in their expedition journals at [www.ProjectRemote.com](http://www.ProjectRemote.com). And to book your next overnight camping trip in the Okefenokee on one of our platforms or at Floyds Island, where the Means’ camped, call the Permit Reservation number at 912-496-3331 between 7:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. Monday - Friday (excluding federal holidays), the fall is a perfect time to plan an overnight trip.

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