

Alabama TRAVELGRAM

News from the Alabama Bureau of Tourism & Travel

Don Siegelman, Governor

Mark D. Berson, Director

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VOL. 19, NO. 2

Alabama Tourism Bash Brings State, Industry Leaders Together April 3

The Alabama Tourism Partnership, a consortium of six statewide organizations working together to heighten public awareness of tourism's importance to the Alabama economy and its growth potential, is taking its message to state leaders.

On April 3 in Montgomery, ATP will host the Alabama Tourism Bash at the RSA Activity Center on Dexter Avenue. The event will last from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Constitutional officers, Senate and House members, Cabinet heads, and members of the Alabama Commerce Commission have all received special invitations to attend. Convention and visitors bureaus have also invited local officials.

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HIKE AMERICA ALABAMA:

An Atlas of Alabama's Greatest Hiking Adventures. Joe Cuhaj. Published October 2000. 349 pages with photos and maps. Globe-Pequot Press, 1-800-962-0973.

Those looking for a place to hike where the terrain and geography are unique, exciting, and diverse will find Alabama the place to go.

Hike America Alabama describes over 48 hikes in the state — from the summits of the last of the Appalachian Mountain chain, to deep and wild canyons, to the rivers of central Alabama.



Hikers can walk along the beaches of Gulf Shores to view a variety of endangered species of wildlife; visit towering waterfalls at the Sipsey Wilderness; or climb rocky mountain cliffs.

Each profile includes an overview of the hike; descriptions of points of interest; a locator map; and a profile map showing the elevation gain/loss and where steeper sections of the hike occur.

Joe Cuhaj is an Alabama transplant from New Jersey. He is a full-time systems programmer and an active outdoor enthusiast.

Birmingham, AL

News

Birmingham
Met Area

Sunday

SUN 198,827

JUN 3, 2001



LUCE

N1028

PRESS CLIPPINGS

State hiking guide grew from rejected project

Daphne's Joe Cuhaj had no plans to create the definitive guide to hiking in Alabama. The assignment of a lifetime just fell into his lap.

"I was trying to sell a CD-ROM about Alabama outdoors and I was turned down by 10 publishers," said Cuhaj, whose new book *Hike America Alabama* is now on bookstore shelves. "One of the publishers said he wasn't interested in my CD, but wanted to know if I was interested in doing a hiking book."

Virginia-based Globe Pequot Press, which publishes an array of outdoors guides, had decided to publish a hiking guide for each of the U.S. states. Alabama and Oregon were chosen to be the first.

Cuhaj, an avid hiker, jumped at the chance. He says the book was a seven-month-long labor of love.

"It was a lot of work and a lot of traveling, but a wonderful experience," Cuhaj said.

Using suggestions from hikers across the state, as well as hiking dozens of trails on his own, Cuhaj came up with a list of Alabama's top 48 hiking trails, as well as 16 honorable-mention trails. The book is divided into four geographic regions of the state.

Complete information can be found for each hike. That includes information on how to get there, maps of the trails, descriptions of highlights, mileage, history and charts showing elevation.

"When it comes to hiking, Alabama has a little bit of everything," Cuhaj said. "It has canyons, mountains and beaches. You have trails at the Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge that are a flat walk on the beach and you have the Rock Garden Trail (Cheaha State Park) where you just about need to be a mountain climber."

The Bee Branch Trail, an 11-mile hike in the Sipsey Wilderness Area, is Cuhaj's favorite hike in the state. The combination of the trail's history plus its caves, canyons and waterfalls easily makes it the state's premier hike, he said.

Cuhaj's paperback book is \$17.95 and can be found in major bookstores across the state. It can also be ordered online at Amazon.com.

Mike Bolton

EASTERN SHORE WEEKEND

Arts & Entertainment

Premier guide to hiking Alabama released

Submitted by Joe Cuhaj

Scientists say that Alabama is one of the most ecologically diverse locations in the country. The state has a wide variety of rare species of wildlife and plant life.

The landscapes run the gambit from mountains to canyons to wetlands, and the best way to view all of this is on foot by taking to one of the state's many hiking trails.

Falcon Books has released the third edition of the popular book, *Hiking Alabama*.

Written by Daphne resident Joe Cuhaj, the book takes hikers of all stripes to some of the best and most beautiful trails in the state.

According to the book's author, there is a trail for everyone in the book.

"I was limited to presenting the 50 best hikes in the state, a tough assignment," Cuhaj says. "So I went about it with the idea that I would find something for everyone,

easy hikes for beginners and longer, tougher treks for the seasoned hiker. This is by no means a definitive book on the subject. The purpose is to get people out on the trail and to explore the state. Hopefully they'll take the book and discover what else the state has to offer when it comes to hiking and backpacking."

The question Cuhaj is always asked is what is his favorite hike, a question he has a tough time answering.

"Every hike in Alabama has something special to offer and is unique in its own way. There are breathtaking canyons in the north, spectacular mountains and waterfalls in the central region and tranquil wetlands and beaches in the south. Take your pick."

The first edition was released in 2000. Cuhaj had to hike almost 100 trails before paring the original list down. Revisiting many of the trails for this edition,



Cuhaj found some disturbing scenes.

"I revisited many of the trails in south Alabama from the first edition, and most of them were severely damaged from the hurricanes of the past few years. Some of the trails were nowhere to be found."

Cuhaj volunteers with a statewide hiking organiza-

tion, the Alabama Hiking Trail Society, whose mission is to promote, protect, develop and maintain trails in the state. Along with AHTS, Cuhaj helped to reopen hurricane ravaged hiking trails at Little River State Forest in Atmore (formerly Claude D. Kelley State Park), and is getting ready to do the same at Blakeley State Historic State Park.

In 2006, he was named the Southern Volunteer of the Year by the American Hiking Society.

Since the release of the first edition of *Hiking Alabama*, Cuhaj has penned two other books.

Paddling Alabama is a guide to canoe trips in the state. Co-authored with Curt Burdick, the book was published by Falcon Books.

Cuhaj also co-authored a book about the history of baseball in Mobile. As he puts it, "the book is cleverly titled *Baseball in Mobile*."

Written with Tamra

Carraway the book chronicles the history of the sport in the Port City since the late 1800s.

Cuhaj is also a freelance writer having penned numerous articles on a variety of subjects.

You can find out more about his work at www.joe-cuhaj.com.

Hiking Alabama is currently available at all local bookstores.

Huntsville, AL

Times
Huntsville
Met Area

Sunday

SUN 79,915

JUL 29, 2001



N96329

LUCE

PRESS CLIPPINGS

Guide to Alabama hiking covers the ground thoroughly

Book discusses 65 trails, their flora and fauna, and has maps

"Hike America: Alabama"

By Joe Cuhaj; Globe Pequot Press, \$17.95, 368 pages.

By JOHN EHINGER
Editorial Page Editor
john@hntimes.com

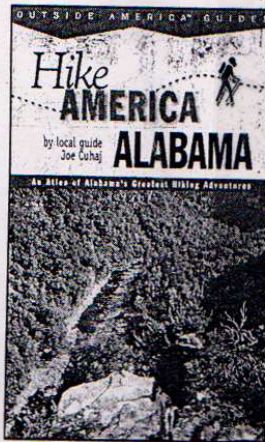
Alabama has had guidebooks devoted to its hiking trails, but it has never had one as comprehensive as this new volume by Joe Cuhaj, published as part of Globe Pequot Press's Hike America series.

How comprehensive? In addition to discussing 65 hiking trails, Cuhaj's guide offers an overview of flora and fauna, a chapter on hiking in general, tips on taking dogs on the trail, a list of hiking-equipment stores, and an appendix of outdoor organizations and how to get in touch with them.

But as they say in the Ginsu knife commercials, wait, there's more. A map accompanies each trail. So does a trail elevation profile and a locator map. If you have a DeLorme atlas, Cuhaj accommodates you with the appropriate page and grid numbers.

And if, like most hikers, you have some interest in what a particular area is all about, there are sections about the communities and their key components and attractions.

The book is filled with Cuhaj's photographs. While he seems a better-than-adequate photographer, the publisher's black-and-white reproductions do not do the images justice. They often seem flat and washed out.



the highlighted route, use a different numbering system, which may confuse hikers unfamiliar with the park.

■ In the list of hiking-equipment stores, one mentioned locally is a traditional sporting goods store and carries little hiking equipment. Of the three or four stores that do carry such equipment, none is included.

■ One omission bothered me greatly. The guide makes no mention of the Chief Ladiga Trail, a 33-mile rails-to-trails conversion that runs from Jacksonville to Piedmont. One regional map shows the trail, but it is ignored otherwise. And this in a book whose back cover blurb proclaims it to be not just a hiking guide to Alabama but a guide to "Alabama by foot."

Even so, this is an ambitious undertaking. If the guide proves popular, as I think it will, there will be opportunities to correct these and other

Daphne man turns his love of nature into a writing career

By **DAN MURTAUGH**
Staff Reporter

DAPHNE — In 1999, Joe Cuhaj made a CD-ROM about Beatles memorabilia and sent it out to several publishers.

The CD-ROM was never much of a success — copyright laws saw to that — but nonetheless it changed Cuhaj's life.

One of the publishers Cuhaj sent the CD-ROM to called Cuhaj and asked if he was interested in something a little different than making a computer program.

The publisher, Globe Pequot, had a series of hiking guides and needed someone to write a book about hiking in Alabama. Cuhaj, an avid outdoorsman and a life-long closeted writer, jumped at the chance.

A year later, Cuhaj's first book was published. Since then he's published two more, and has two others currently in the works.

"It's hard to believe," he said. "It's kind of freaky how it all began, an then it just snowballed."

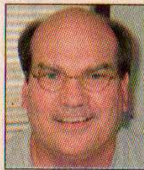
Cuhaj, who lives and works in Daphne, hasn't yet given up his day job as a software programmer. But his true passion is writing, he said.

"I think about (being a full-time writer)," he said. "Unfortunately, it doesn't work that way."

Cuhaj has written two books about hiking in Alabama — his most recent, "Hiking Alabama," hit shelves in January. He also co-wrote a canoeing guide with Curt Burdick, called "Paddling Alabama."

In January, Arcadia Publishing will put out "Baseball in Mobile," which Cuhaj co-wrote with Tamra Carraway-Hinckle. And Cuhaj is just putting the fi-

Get to Know Joe Cuhaj



Birthplace: Patterson, N.J.

Hometown: Daphne

Family: Wife, Maggie; daughter; Kellie

Occupation: Software programmer

Hobbies: Hiking, canoeing, writing

nal touches on a collection of short stories, which will be his first foray into the world of fiction.

Cuhaj's budding career as an author has allowed him to bring together his three favorite hobbies: hiking, canoeing and writing.

He said he first fell in love with the outdoors growing up in upstate New Jersey.

"Bear Mountain State Park was right behind my house," he said.

He grew up hiking the Appalachian Trail with a group of friends, and their love of nature eventually led them to rent out canoes and paddle through the streams and rivers near their homes.

That passion continued when he moved to the Eastern Shore with his wife, Maggie. He

hiked and canoed every trail he describes in his books, taking pictures and mapping out trails.

For his first book, he spent every weekend for six months hiking various trails throughout Alabama. At first he took his wife with him on the trips, although that soon ended after a trip to the Sipsey River in northwest Alabama.

"The river was really clear, it looked like it was six inches deep," he said. "Well, it wasn't. She was waist deep, and the

water was freezing cold. She never came back after that."

Writing the nonfiction books about hiking, canoeing and baseball gave Cuhaj the confidence to finish his book of fictional short stories. He describes the stories as warm, humorous coming-of-age tales in the vein of Jean Shepherd, who wrote "A Christmas Story."

"The novel has been around for years, but I figured I could never do it," he said. "Then (after writing the other books), I realized, well maybe I can do it."

Cuhaj also loves sports, and he announced high school football and college baseball games on the radio in the Eastern Shore. After doing that for several years, he switched to programming software at the behest of his wife, Maggie.

"My wife made me get a real job," he said.

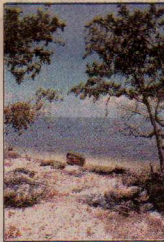
'HIKE AMERICA: ALABAMA'

Nature inspires Daphne hiking enthusiast to document state's trails

By LORI MOORE
Staff Reporter



Joe Cuhaj, of Daphne, hiked at least 60 trails to prepare for his book "Hiking America: Alabama," he said. The book, available at most major book stores, features maps, attractions and history of hiking trails across the state.



Scheduled to be released in September, Joe Cuhaj's next book, "Paddling Alabama," will be co-authored with fellow Daphne resident Curt Burdick, Cuhaj said. Here, a canoe rests on the shores of Navy Cove in Baldwin County.

Nature is not always something to be taken for granted. It can provide for us a connection with our world and a path to peace, relaxation and even just plain fun.

Joe Cuhaj, 43, of Daphne, has taken his love for the outdoors and mapped it to guide others through the natural wonders of Alabama.

Cuhaj's book, "Hike America: Alabama" gives novices and experienced hikers alike a peek at the state's best trails and some clues to what makes them worth seeing.

Cuhaj grew up hiking the mountain trails in New York and around his home of Mahwah, New Jersey, where he honed a love of the outdoors.

After working on several CD-ROMs on hiking and other subjects, Cuhaj worked with a publishing company to get the information on paper, he said.

Research for the book went far beyond libraries and encyclopedias, as Cuhaj hiked as many as 60 trails, narrowing the list down to 48 for the final copy, he said.

The traveling alone took six to seven months. He hiked many trails on long weekends, and since so many of them intersect, he was often able to take in two or more in one trip, he said.

Not only did Cuhaj map out his every turn on the trails, he also documented the history behind several of them and listed other attractions and conveniences such as restaurants around the trails.

"I talked to several park rangers and local people," he said. "Everybody was really nice and willing to help; to point the way."

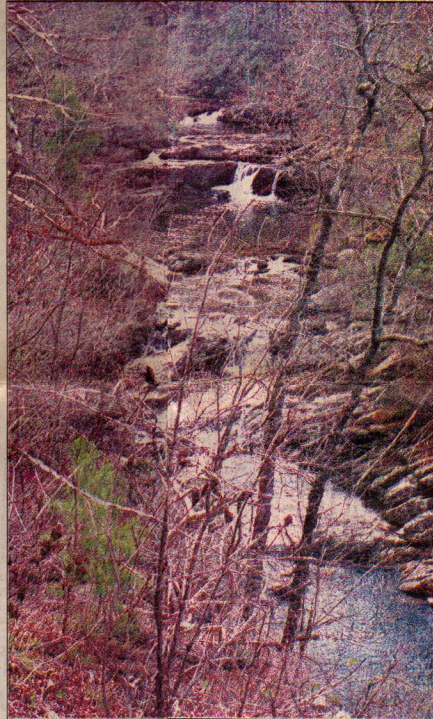
After marking all the trails from his standpoint, his publishers made high-quality maps of the landscape and paths, he said.

The peacefulness of nature keeps drawing Cuhaj back.

"It's just quiet, and I enjoy the wildlife," he said. "Especially up in north Alabama. I just keep wanting to go back."

Cuhaj's wife, Maggie, who has

Please see "Paddling" Page 2



Joe Cuhaj's book provides maps and details of the hiking trails in Alabama as well as photos of various sites. Photos such as this one of the Chinnabee Creek on the Chinnabee Siler Trail in Central-Talladega National Forest bring the trails to life for the readers.

'Paddling America' is set to be released in September

Continued from Page 1

family in the area, and daughter, Kellie, went on several of the trails with him, with Kellie taking some of the photos for the book.

One experience that sticks out for Cuhaj was the "attack of the armadillos," he said. He saw a pack of the creatures looking for food, took a couple of pictures of them and as he turned away, they began to chase him, he said.

Cuhaj is in the process of writing a book with

another Daphne resident Curt Burdick. "Paddling America" is set to be released in September, Cuhaj said.

For research, the duo kayaked and canoed at least 30 rivers and coastal waterways of the state to offer the best advice for fellow paddlers.

When not writing, Cuhaj is a systems programmer for Adams Software in Daphne, working with automotive software for service departments.

He and his family moved to Baldwin County about nine years ago.

"I like the open space. It's wide open out here," he said.

The land is perfect for the other love of Cuhaj and his family — horses.

"Hike America: Alabama" is available at most major book stores and on-line at sites such as Amazon.com, Cuhaj said.

When the paddling book comes out, he hopes to have some book signings to kick things off. He enjoyed several such sessions following the release of his first book, he said.

Troy, AL
Messenger

Wednesday

D 3,700

JUL 25, 2001



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LUCE

PRESS CLIPPINGS

Book Review

Hiking trails mapped out in book

Dave (Doc) Kirby, PD and reviewer—this review was aired 7/9/01 as a "Book Bit", a daily review show promoting literacy on WTBF AM/FM.

"Hike America/ALABAMA - an atlas of Alabama's greatest hiking adventures"—by local guide Joe Cuhaj (Globe Pequot Press)

Did you know that there are almost 50 excellent hiking trails in Alabama, and 16 others deserving honorable mention? Of those six trails and two honorable mentions are found in southeast Alabama! Most are in the Conecuh National Forest southeast of Andalusia; the Open Pond Trail, Five Runs Loop Trail, North Loop Trail, Conecuh Trail, and Frank Jackson State Park, which is north of Andalusia.

The others are Wildlife Drive and Eufaula Wildlife Refuge Nature Trail, in Eufaula (naturally), and the Chattahoochee Trail southeast of Dothan. This handy atlas contains a hike summary, directions getting there, length, difficulty rating, trail surface, lay of the land, nearest town, even canine compatibility for each trail! Then follows history and geography of each trail, and point by point hike along the trail.

You'll see trails in four areas of the state; Gulf Coast (which includes the USS Alabama Historical Trail in Mobile, which I've hiked with a Boy Scout Troop); Southeast

Alabama, which we discussed earlier; Central Alabama (which includes more historical trails and Scout hikes), and Northern Alabama, where the elevation gets much higher and the hiking more challenging. A section on preparing for hikes is very important, too (and I wish I had been able to read it before some of those Scout hikes). By the way, it also talks about the equipment you need,

first aid supplies, and hiking with kids and dogs.

For novice or seasoned hiker, this new guidebook by Joe Cuhaj and Globe Pequot Press making enjoying Alabama's scenic variety and beauty so much easier.

The author lives in Daphne (Alabama) with wife, daughter and pets.

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Dave (Doc) Kirby, PD and reviewer---this review was aired 7/9/01 as a "Book Bit", a daily review show promoting literacy on WTBF-AM/FM

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