

# Swamp Island Drive, Okefenokee WMA

Report by Carol Nourse

IN THIS ISSUE:

Pilgrimage News - P4

Upcoming

Field Trips -

More

Ρ7

Editor's note: A trip report on one of the last trips of the 2014 Pilgrimage to Okefenokee.

Still interested in a little more botanizing on Sunday morning, ten of us made several stops along Swamp Island Drive, and finished with a stroll out the boardwalk to Owl's Roost Tower overlooking Chesser Prairie. First stop was at the Canal Digger's Trail, where in 1891 a futile attempt to connect the Suwannee Canal to the St. Mary's River had been made.

We tried our hand at identifying shrubs in the heath family; shiny blueberry (*Vaccinium myrsinites*), Darrow's blueberry (*Vaccinium darrowii*), dangleberry (*Gaylussacia frondosa var. tomentosa*), and staggerbush (*Lyonia ferruginea*). We sniffed the leaves of wax myrtle (*Myrica cerifera*) to enjoy its fragrance.



We puzzled over a bay tree until Frank French showed us that the leaves of this one, sweetbay (*Magnolia virginiana*), are glaucous on the underside.

As the trail dipped to cross the canal ditch we found robust populations of the cinnamon fern (*Osmunda cinnamomea*) and netted chain fern (*Woodwardia areolata*) and the leaves of green- or white-arrow arum (*Peltandra* sp.).

Dwarf butterwort, (*Pinguicula pumila*) Photo by Hugh and Carol Nourse

Continued on page 2

# Swamp Island Drive Field Trip (cont'd from page 1)

An alligator was sunning on the far bank of the borrow pond farther along the road. Here we found both candy weed (*Polygala lutea*) and bachelor's button (*Polygala nana*). Red chokeberry (*Aronia arbutifolia*) was full of fluffy white flower clusters. Across the road from the borrow pond, red -cockaded woodpecker nest trees have been marked with a white ring. We looked up the trunk of the nearest one to find the nest cavity.

From there we skipped to the sign post for station #6, a recently burned area where several stems of Oceola's plume, or crow poison (*Stenanthium densum*) were blooming.



Pinguicula caerulea

At station #7 flowers of yellow butterwort (Pinguicula lutea) were conspicuous and at station #8 we found both blue butterwort (Pinguicula caerulea) and dwarf butterwort (Pinguicula pumila). Sundews (Drosera brevifolia), carnivorous plant а like the butterworts, shared the damp ground with bog buttons (Lachnocaulon anceps). St. Peter'swort (Hypericum tetrapetalum) and yellow stargrass (Hypoxis wrightii) were also in bloom.



Polygala nana, all photos by Hugh and Carol Nourse



Hypericum tetrapetalum

#### 2

## Okefenokee Swamp 2014 Pilgrimage

At a long water-filled borrow ditch, complete with resident alligator, we found the leaves of hooded pitcherplant (*Sarracenia minor*) and parrot pitcherplant (*Sarracenia psittacina*). Parrot pitcherplant leaves lie flat on the ground so that they can capture both flying insects during dry periods and waterborne prey when flooded. According to a local radio report, even a small fish had been found in one of the leaves. Floating bladderwort (*Utricularia inflata*) spread across the water surface, and the leaves of grassy arrowhead (*Sagittaria graminea*) emerged from the surface. We puzzled over some leaves with no conclusion, but later Hugh determined they were pickerelweed (*Pontederia cordata*).



Pontederia cordata

As we started on the boardwalk we located the pond cypress (*Taxodium ascendens*) being used as support by a climbing heath (*Pieris phillyreifolia*). The stem of the heath is hidden in the cracks of the cypress bark, so that the flowering branches of the heath appear to be growing out of the tree. Farther along, areas with hundreds of burned skeletons of hardwood trees attested to the heat of the



Pieris phillyreifolia on Taxodium ascendens

wildfire of 2011. Smaller plants were recovering well, with thickets of hurrah bush (*Lyonia lucida*) draped with blaspheme vine (*Smilax laurifolia*). A single golden club (*Orontium aquaticum*) grew next to the boardwalk but through the telescope masses of them could be seen farther away in open water of the prairie. From Owl's Roost Tower we could get a close up view of pond cypresses festooned with spanish moss (*Tillandsia usneoides*) and a wide expanse of Chesser Prairie with its floating islands of vegetation. Some stayed to do a little birding from the tower, others said goodbye to Okefenokee at the end of another great wildflower pilgrimage.

## A Magnificent Evening Cruise

By Maureen Donohue

The first night of the Pilgrimage in Waycross, I entered the Okefenokee for the first time. When I signed up for this boat trip, I envisioned a brilliant sunset with ribbons of gold and orange as a backdrop for a somber swamp. Luckily it was not to be.



The evening sky was soft and subtle. The colors were muted neutrals that hinted at the charms of the swamp. As we boarded the boat with our guide, Chip Campbell, I noticed the shades of gray all around and wondered what, if anything, we would see. As we edged our way through the channel, Chip told us he had grown up and lived near the swamp all his life. He told us good stories of swamp people he had known.

The grayish white mist in the background set off the outline of dark trees and vines around us. Chip explained that a few years back, a friend of his had lost his way in the Okefenokee and tried to get back to civilization on his own. Many cuts and scrapes later, his friends finally found him.

As the story ended, the channel opened to the wide expanse of Okefenokee. This view gave us a sense of its size even though we couldn't see it all. Chip shut the boat's motor off, so we could hear the sound of the swamp better.

Continued on next page

# At the Okefenokee Swamp 2014 Pilgrimage

At first we noticed many birds, a few we could recognize either by their loud calls or their outlines in trees or in flight: an owl, a bittern, a cormorant, swallowtail kites and an egret or two were all enjoying a last flyby before settling down for the night.

The swamp definitely wasn't quiet. The frogs, and perhaps, other creatures were calling. I could only identify a bull frog, but I enjoyed all of them. Together they made a symphony of sounds with many levels of high and low notes - a very busy night of spring courting sounds.

Chip pointed out where there was a large group of the beautiful southern blue flag iris (*Iris virginica*), a common plant in the Okefenokee. Unlike most botanical trips, we could not see the various parts of the plants, only the group as a whole. In the coming days we would see them close up everywhere.



Iris virginica, photo by Hal Massie



Orontium aquaticum, photo by Ellen Honeycutt

We thought we were too early to see the golden club (*Orontium aquaticum*), but they were there too, in full bloom.

In the next few days, we would get to know the flora and fauna of the Okefenokee and all its natural communities better in sunshine and daylight. But that first night's mist and the calling frogs will stay with me as a grand introduction.

# **Pictures from the 2014 Pilgrimage**



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Chaptalia tomentosa

Field trip 9 to Cedar Hammock participants (Credit: Hal Massie)

Cators were everywhere (E. Honeycutt)

- Crotalaria rotundifolia



Sisyrinchium angustifolium

Canoes on field trip 9 to Cedar Hammock (Credit: Hal Massie)

Low country boil on Friday night (Ellen Honeycutt)

6

# **Upcoming Field Trips**

		1	
Date	Description	Directions	Leader
May 10	Historic Kettle Creek Battlefield	Directions: Meet at the battleground: GPS	Joseph Harris
10:00 AM	This is an ecologically diverse mixed hardwood site protected for 100 years and undisturbed for 200 years. Spring flowers	coordinates are <b>33.690796 N; 82.884563</b> <b>W</b> or Google for directions. It is in the city of Washington in Wilkes County	jharriswafia @nuz.net
	include butterfly pea, Indian pink, climbing milkweed, trillium, Atamasco lily, paw paw	Difficulty: Moderate.	706-678-2818
	and others. We do explore a one-mile hike around the hill in full sun and deep shade area.		
	Following the hike a military historian will discuss the 1779 battle and a geologist will briefly review the geology of the area. Lunch is possible at the nearby Café of the Fitzpatrick Hotel or bring your own (picnic tables are available).		
May 10	Flint River Canoe Trip and Shoals Spider	Location: We will meet at the Flint River	Jerry
8:30 AM	Lilies Walk	Outdoor Center 4429 Woodland Road, Thomaston, GA 30286 at 8:30 a.m. There	Hightower
Note early start time	This beautiful river offers an interesting array of flora due to the Coastal Plain – Piedmont interface. This float begins at Sprewell Bluff and winds along a five mile section ending at the outfitters.	is a small shuttle fee. Bring your own boat or rent canoes and kayaks from the outfitters. If you would like more information on rentals or to reserve a canoe or kayak please call Flint River Outdoor Center at 706-647-2633.	jerryhightower @hotmail.com 404-953-9331
	PRE-REGISTRATION REQUIRED. Please contact Jerry Hightower at 404-953-9331 or jerryhightower@hotmail.com if you are planning on joining this trip.		
May 11	Bartram Trail – Buckeye Creek	Meet: At the front parking lot area of Ingles	John and Tee
10:00 AM	The Bartram Trail-Buckeye Creek trail is a	Grocery in Clayton (176 U.S. Hwy 441, Clayton) to carpool to the trail head.	Brower
Note: this is a	moderate-to-strenuous 5-mile round trip on a good trail. Botanical highlights include purple-	Facilities: None on trail	706-782-1064
Sunday	spotted mandarin, shooting star, and large purple <i>Phacelia</i> . Many other typical spring mountain flora will be in flower and there are	<b>Difficulty:</b> Moderate to strenuous, 5 miles.	
	great views from a rocky outcrop.	<b>Bring:</b> Lunch, snacks, & water. Remember to dress for the weather and wear comfortable hiking shoes. Dress in layers so that you can adjust to changes in the temperature and your activity level. You may wish to bring binoculars, hand lens, notebook, and camera	

See early May field trips on the website and bigger descriptions of some trips.

# **Upcoming Field Trips**

Date	Description	Directions	Leader
May 17	McIntosh County South Townsend WMA Sand Hills Near Plum Orchard Cemetery	Location: We will meet in Darien at the Darien Outlet Mall located at the	James Holland & Bobby
9:00 AM		intersection of I-95 and GA Highway 251 (Exit 49), in the parking lot of the Ruby	Hattaway
Note early start time	There are a number of rare plant species on site such as scurf hoary-pea ( <i>Tephrosia</i> <i>chrysophylla</i> ), trailing milkvine ( <i>Matelea</i> <i>pubiflora</i> ), and pondspice ( <i>Litsea aestivalis</i> ), along with many other species of sandhill communities, such as maroon sandhills	Tuesday's Restaurant in the outlet mall at 9:00 A.M. From there we will consolidate into a caravan to travel to the site about 20-	botanikman@ gmail.com
		25 minutes away. This trip is expected to last about three hours total.	912-481-3011 (cell)
	spurge ( <i>Euphorbia exserta</i> ), dollarleaf snout	Facilities: None	
	bean ( <i>Rhynchosia reniformis</i> ), sandhill lupine ( <i>Lupinus villosus</i> ), sundial lupine ( <i>Lupinus</i>	Difficulty: Easy	
	<i>perennis</i> ), deerberry ( <i>Vaccinium stamineum</i> ), Queen's delight ( <i>Stillingia sylvatica</i> ), small- flowered pawpaw ( <i>Asimina parviflora</i> ), and many more.	<b>Bring:</b> Water, snacks, note books, cameras, binoculars (optional), and insect repellent. Wear some kind of head gear and dress for a warm south Georgia climate.	
May 18	Chestatee River Float	See website for details	Jerry
10:00			Hightower
Note: this is a Sunday	<b>PRE-REGISTRATION REQUIRED.</b> Please contact Jerry Hightower at 404-953-9331 or jerryhightower@hotmail.com if you are		jerryhightower @hotmail.com
	planning on joining this trip.		404-953-9331
May 24	Pitcherplants and Chaffseed	See website for details	Tom Patrick
10:00 AM			tom.patrick@ dnr.state.ga.us
May 24	Wild Edibles Workshop and Walk	Location: Chattahoochee River	Jerry
9:00 AM	Join us for breakfast on the upper deck of the	Environmental Education Center, 8615 Barnwell Road, Johns Creek, Georgia	Hightower
Note early start time	lodge at the Chattahoochee River Environmental Education Center. Hot coffee, tea, cereal, muffins, and baked eggs will be	30022. 678-538-1200. For directions see: http://www.nps.gov/chat/index.htm	jerryhightower @hotmail.com
	offered followed by a brief slide program and discussion of wild edibles found in the	Facilities: Yes	678-538-1245
	Chattahoochee River corridor of Georgia's piedmont and mountains. We will closely examine some edibles, followed by a bring- your-own lunch. After lunch, we will leisurely walk the grounds of the Lodge and Lutra Loop Trail seeking wild edibles.	<b>Difficulty:</b> Leisurely walk of less than two miles.	770-206-0338
		<b>Bring:</b> Please bring your own lunch to enjoy on the upper deck with its views of River Glen Pond and the Choestoe Meadow. Sunscreen, a hat, and water are	
	PRE-REGISTRATION REQUIRED. Limit 30 persons. Reservations are required: contact Jerry 404-953-9331 or email.	recommended as well as camera, binoculars, guide books, hand lens, notebook, and pen.	

8

# **Upcoming Field Trips**

Date	Description	Directions	Leader
May 24 9:30 AM Note early start time	Arkaquah Trail on Brasstown Mountain A wide range of plant communities from GA's highest elevation to the ultramafic area at Track Rock Gap. We should see Vasey's trillium ( <i>Trillium vaseyi</i> ), and pink lady's slipper ( <i>Cypripedium acaule</i> ), Cumberland rhododendron ( <i>Rhododendron bakeri</i> ). One year in early May, we had six species of trilliums! We might find flowering rock harlequin ( <i>Capnoides sempervirens</i> ) and American columbo ( <i>Frasera caroliniensis</i> ).	<ul> <li>Directions: Brasstown Bald parking area. Brasstown Bald is a National Forest Recreation Area, so a parking fee is required. Please pay at the entrance booth. Parking is extremely limited at Track Rock Gap, so we will shuttle a few vehicles and leave them there.</li> <li>Facilities: At meeting place only. Difficulty: The Arkaquah Trail is very strenuous.</li> <li>Bring: Lunch, water, camera, etc.</li> </ul>	Hal Massie massiefarm @aol.com 478-957-6095
May 25 9:30 AM Note: This is a Sunday with an early start time	Roadside Botanizing in the Cohutta Mountains We will drive along the Forest Service roads stopping to look at flowers on the way. There will be several short excursions from the cars, always along the road. We can expect to find several trilliums, whorled milkweed ( <i>Asclepias quadrifolia</i> ), wild geranium ( <i>Geranium maculatum</i> ), Solomon's seal ( <i>Polygonatum biflorum</i> ), lily-of-the-valley ( <i>Convallaria majuscula</i> ), wood betony ( <i>Pedicularis canadensis</i> ), fire pink ( <i>Silene virginica</i> ), and much more. The last couple of years, the Indian pink ( <i>Spigelia marilandica</i> ) has been very nice.	<ul> <li>Directions: Take I-575/ GA 515 north to East Ellijay to turn onto GA 52 west and go through Ellijay. About 5 miles west of the Ellijay Square on GA 52, turn right on Gates Chapel Rd. When pavement ends at a fork, take Wilderness Trail/ FR 90 (the right fork – almost straight ahead). The meeting location is approximately 1 mile in on FR 90, the right side of the road. Carpooling is encouraged to minimize our parking footprint on the narrow unpaved roads.</li> <li>Difficulty: Easy, probably all within 500 feet of cars.</li> <li>Facilities: None</li> <li>Bring: Lunch, water, bug spray.</li> </ul>	Rich Reaves rich.reaves @att.net 770-827-5186
May 26 10:00 AM Note: This is a Monday	Reed Branch Preserve (The Nature Conservancy) Reed Branch Wet Meadow is a Nature Conservancy Preserve that protects the only natural population of Federally Endangered green pitcher plant, <i>Sarracenia oreophila</i> , in Georgia. It is also the last remaining example in Georgia of a low mountain bog. During this spring visit, we should see the pitcher plant in bloom, along with other early spring species. The bog was burned in October 2013, so we will get a firsthand look at the response to fire. This is an easy walk.	<ul> <li>Directions: Take US 76 to Hiawassee. In Hiawassee, turn north on GA 75 and go approximately 3 miles to Mull Rd., which will be on the left. Almost immediately after turning left onto Mull Road, there will be a parking area on the left just behind a gate.</li> <li>Facilities: There are no facilities at the Reed Branch preserve.</li> <li>Bring: Camera, hat (no shade on site), hand lens, lunch to eat at vehicles.</li> </ul>	Hal Massie massiefarm @aol.com 478-957-6095

# **Upcoming Field Trips**

Date	Description	Directions	Leader
Dale	Description	Directions	Leauer
May 31 10:00 AM	Chattahoochee River NRA We will float a three-mile section of the river from Powers Island to Paces Mill at US Hwy 41. There are three mild Class 1.5 rapids suitable for beginners along this part of the river. The Palisades have narrow floodplains and steep ridges rising to over 1,000 feet. The area offers a great diversity of habitats and includes oak-hickory forest, steep north- facing slopes, mesic ravine forest, and floodplain forest. Pre-registration with trip leader is required; see email above on right.	<ul> <li>Location: Meet at Powers Island, 5862</li> <li>Interstate North Pkwy., Sandy Springs at 10:00</li> <li>AM to unload equipment. We will then take the majority of the vehicles to Paces Mill and shuttle the drivers back to Powers Island. Please let Jerry know if you have a multi-passenger vehicle and could help with the shuttle. \$3</li> <li>parking fee at the Recreation Area unless you have an annual pass.</li> <li>Facilities: At Powers Island, our lunch stop, and at Paces Mill.</li> <li>Bring: Canoe or kayak. Lunch, sunscreen, hat, rain gear, and water. Day bag, camera, binoculars, and hand lens are recommended.</li> </ul>	Jerry Hightower @hotmail.com 678-538-1200 404-953-9331
Jun 1 10:00 AM	Slaughter Mountain We will make a one way loop from Lake Winfield Scott over the summit of Slaughter Mountain and, via the Duncan Ridge Trail, continue on to Wolfpen Gap. Like nearby Blood Mtn, Slaughter is a high elevation rocky summit (4,338 ft) with many notable species. Plants that we hope to encounter include <i>Sibbaldiopsis tridentata</i> (three- toothed cinquefoil), <i>Paronychia argyrocoma</i> (silverling) – both characteristic species of Appalachian mountain summits. We also hope to see <i>Sorbus americana</i> (mountain- ash) and high elevation red oak communities. Moderately difficult, 4.5 mile uphill hike. Limit 12 people—email to confirm.	<ul> <li>Directions: We will meet at Wolfpen Gap and leave enough vehicles to ferry drivers back to their cars at Lake Winfield Scott, where we will begin the hike. This gap is located on GA Hwy 180 about 3.4 mi W of junc with US 19 (near Vogel State Park and Sosebee Cove), or about 8 miles E of the junc of GA 180 with GA 60 in Suches. There is a parking area for the Duncan Ridge Trail at the top of the Gap on the N side of GA 180.</li> <li>Facilities: at Lake Winfield Scott.</li> <li>Bring: Lunch, snacks, &amp; water. Remember to dress for the weather and wear comfortable hiking shoes. Optional: binoculars, hand lens, notebook, camera.</li> </ul>	Tom Govus tgovus@ ellijay.com 706-669-1491
Jun 7 10:00 AM	Coosa Prairies We will visit the Coosa Prairies, a Nature Conservancy conservation easement of 929 acres. These remnant prairie sites in extreme western Floyd Co. are listed as the rarest habitat in Georgia by the Nature Conservancy. Some of the many wildflowers we hope to see include: prairie milkweed ( <i>Asclepias hirtella</i> ), climbing milkvine ( <i>Matelea obliqua</i> ), scaly blazing star ( <i>Liatris</i> <i>squarrosa</i> ), Mohr's barbara's buttons ( <i>Marshallia mohrii</i> ), prairie coneflower ( <i>Ratibida pinnata</i> ), wavyleaf purple coneflower ( <i>Echinacea simulata</i> ), and many, many more. Easy , mostly flat terrain, 1-2 miles.	<ul> <li>Directions: Take I-75 north to the second Cartersville exit (exit 290, GA 20). The sign says Rome / Canton. Turn left (west) on Ga. 20.</li> <li>Follow Ga. 20 and then US 411 to Rome, around 20 miles. In Rome, Ga. 20 and US 411 will split. Follow US 411 (left fork) toward Cave Spring. At 2nd traffic light turn right (stay on US 411) and follow all the way to Cave Spring. At traffic light in Cave Spring, go straight, cross bridge and immediately turn left into Rolator Park. Meet at parking area for cave on right.</li> <li>Facilities: Meeting site only</li> <li>Bring: Lunch to eat near cars, not carried on walk; plenty of water; bug spray.</li> </ul>	Richard and Teresa Ware gabotany@ comcast.net 706-232-3435 - (cell) 706-766 -5143 - (cell) 706-766-4228

# Upcoming Field Trips

Date	Description	Directions	Leader
Jun 8 10:00 AM	Chickamauga Cedar Glades, Chickamauga National Battlefield Park This is our second field trip here this spring, home to Cedar Glades, one of Georgia's rarest habitats. In the glades, the thin layer of soil covering a limestone bedrock restricts trees to red cedars growing at the edge of the glades and in cracks between the rocks. The wildflowers include some found nowhere else in Georgia. Those we will see should be completely different than what we saw just two months ago. They include: Gattinger's prairie clover, <i>Dalea gattingeri</i> ; downy wood mint, <i>Blephilia ciliata</i> , white-leaf leatherflower, <i>Clematis glaucophylla</i> , Glade St Johnswort , <i>Hypericum dolabriforme</i> , and Carolina buckthorn, <i>Frangulum carolinianum</i> .	<ul> <li>Directions: From I-75: At Exit 350, take Battlefield Parkway (Georgia Hy 2) west for 7 miles to Fort Oglethorpe. Turn left at Lafayette Road (US Hy 27 south). Go one mile south on Lafayette Road to the park entrance and visitor center on the right. Note: although there is construction occurring on the outside of the park office building, the office, facilities and parking lots are open as usual. GPS address: 3370 LaFayette Road, Fort Oglethorpe, GA</li> <li>Facilities: In office.</li> <li>Bring: Lunch to eat at a picnic area in the park. Pick up a copy of the excellent park trail map in the office, if desired.</li> </ul>	Mike Christison & Richard Ware mikepaddler@ aol.com gabotany@ comcast.net Mike: 770-596- 3564 Richard: 706- 766-5143
Jun 14 10:00 AM	Blue Ridge Natural Communities Workshop: Whitley Gap and Dukes Creek This workshop will explore Blue Ridge natural communities in two sites that provide beautiful settings and excellent examples of the environmental factors at work. At Whitley Gap on Wild Cat Mountain, we will explore variants of Blue Ridge montane oak and high elevation outcrop communities. At Duke's Creek, we will explore seepage, mesic cove (acidic variant), and spray cliff communities. This hike is moderate.	<ul> <li>Directions: From downtown Helen, take GA. Hwy. 17/Unicoi Turnpike north approximately 1.3 miles. Turn left (southwest) onto Ga. Hwy. 75 Alt.; proceed about 2.3 miles. Turn right onto Ga. Hwy 348/Richard B. Russell Scenic Hwy and proceed about 7 miles to parking for the trail on the right. Meet at the parking area at Hog Pen Gap.</li> <li>Facilities: At Dukes Creek.</li> <li>Bring: Lunch, snacks, &amp; water. Remember to dress for the weather and wear comfortable hiking shoes. You may wish to bring binoculars, hand lens, notebook, and camera.</li> </ul>	Leslie Edwards edwa1616@ bellsouth.net 404-915-9944
Jun 21 10:00 AM	<b>Big Hammock Natural Area</b> The natural area is on ancient sand dunes in the Altamaha River floodplain. The trip plan is to follow a 1.3 mile trail. Our path will take us through a number of different plant communities or habitats which are controlled by such factors as available water and fire. Among other interesting plants we will definitely see Georgia plume ( <i>Elliottia</i> <i>racemosa</i> ). The natural area is home to the largest known population of this rare plant. This shrub or small tree normally blooms there in June, but there are no guarantees. This is an easy to moderate hike.	<ul> <li>Directions: The area is located 12 miles SW of Glennville. From Glennville, take GA 144 for about 6 miles to an intersection known as five points. At the stop sign, veer to the left and continue (still on 144) for about another 3.5 miles to Mack Phillips Rd. Take a left onto that road and travel 1.8 miles to the parking area on the right.</li> <li>Facilities: none at the natural area.</li> <li>Bring: Lunch, snacks, &amp; water. Insect repellent and tick spray are also advisable. Good walking shoes, long pants, and a hat would also be appropriate. We should be in the shade most of the time.</li> </ul>	Bobby Hattaway botanikman@ gmail.com 912-481-3011 (cell)

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