Friends of Congaree Swamp
News

www.friendsofcongaree.org Winter 2014

Save the date

Trail work day

Our **Saturday, Feb. 22,** work-day theme is Yellow-throated Warbler, and we will be listening for these early migrants on the trail. We will be clearing our adopted trails —Boardwalk, Sims Trail, Weston Lake Loop Trail, Oakridge Trail—and others of fallen limbs, switch cane, flotsam, and intruding branches.

We will meet at the Visitor Center at 9 a.m. and finish in the early afternoon. Work gloves, light hiking boots, water and a snack are recommended. If you have loppers, long-handled shears or bow saws, bring them along. Gear will be provided if you do not have any.

Contact John Grego, jrgrego@sc.rr.com or 803-331-3366, if interested.

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Congaree Swamp loses preservation champion

We are saddened that Walter Bristow, former state senator and judge, passed away in November 2013 at the age of 89 years.

Bristow and Sen. Hyman Rubin filibustered for three days during the 1976 Senate debate on the preservation of Congaree Swamp's old-growth forest.

The following text is reprinted from the October 1999 Friends of Congaree Swamp newsletter. Ann Timberlake delivered these remarks when Friends presented the Order of the Cypress award to Bristow and Rubin at the Friends annual meeting in October 1999.

Walter Bristow

Try as we might to adopt written criteria for any honorary award, that award is always best defined by the nature of its recipients. I therefore can't think of any better way to define this new Order of the Cypress than by looking to the example and character of these men whom we are honoring today.

In years to come, there are many others to whom we will want to award the Order of the Cypress because this majestic forest was saved only through the combined efforts of hundreds of people—one of whom, Harry Hampton, will be honored with the naming of the new visitor center now under construction.

If we were to spotlight a turning point in the four years of intense campaigning to save the swamp, we might focus upon the spring of 1976. The successful "Congaree Action Now Rally" in the fall of 1975 set the stage for the campaign to flex its grassroots strength in the political arena. Bills to establish a Congaree Swamp National Monument were soon introduced in Congress.

Knowing that state political sentiment would affect the upcoming Congressional hearings on Congaree, Sen. Marion Gressette, the

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President's Corner

Dr. John Grego

Officers elected

The Friends of Congaree Swamp Board elected the following officers in December: John Grego, president; Sharon Kelly, vice president; Kate Hartley, secretary; and Dennis Poole, treasurer. Our long-time secretary, Carol Kososki, has stepped down, though she will continue to serve as a member of our Executive Committee.

Carol Kososki

Even though Carol's role in Friends is hardly diminished, this is a fitting time to acknowledge her long service to our organization.

Carol contributes in countless other ways to conservation, planning and sustainability in the Midlands, particularly in her current and past leadership roles on the Richland County Conservation Commission, Gills Creek Watershed Association Executive Committee, Transportation Penny Advisory Committee, and Richland County Site Development Roundtable.

See America poster project

If you've visited other national parks, you've likely noticed, and possibly purchased, WPA (Work Projects Administration) prints of national parks. These posters were produced from 1936 to 1940 by the Federal Art Project, a section of the WPA. Some posters were produced to promote the Ranger Naturalist Service, others promoted the parks as a free government service, and others promoted the parks' efforts to preserve wildlife. The U.S. Travel Bureau sponsored See America posters that featured travel tourism, including the national parks.

I'm sure many people have thought similar posters featuring Congaree National Park would be a great idea. Fortunately, the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) and Creative Action Network have teamed up to make it a reality. As part of the See America Project, artists can submit posters to be sold on Creative Action Network's website (www.seeamericaproject.com). The posters should include the slogan See America, feature each park's name, and be inspired by the original WPA poster styles. The artists receive 40 percent of the profits, which I've been reassured is a reasonable return.

If you have friends who are graphic artists, please encourage them to submit Congaree National Park posters, and if you're not artistically inclined, support the NPCA by buying a poster of Congaree National Park. Be the first in your neighborhood to collect an entire set!

McCords Ferry study

Though our role during the public comment period for the replacement of the Norfolk Southern railroad bridge over the Congaree River ended in 2011, an interesting postscript to the project ended only recently. Because portions of the bridge structure to be replaced were historic, the S.C. Archives and History State Historic Preservation Office requested mitigation for their removal. Consequently, a Memorandum of Agreement was signed between U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (the permitting agency), the Historic Preservation Office, and Norfolk Southern Railway Corp. As part of the agreement, the Norfolk Southern agreed to fund a report on transportation in the railway corridor.

A draft study of the report focused exclusively

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Friends of Congaree Swamp advocates for Congaree National Park and its unique environment.
Dr. John Grego, President Sharon H. Kelly, Editor

New display banners at welcome centers

If you're traveling on the state's interstates between April and September, look for displays promoting Congaree National Park at the welcome centers at Exit 66 (Fort Mill) on I-77 and Exit 2 (Landrum) on I-26.

Funded with a $3,500 Hospitality Tax grant and a 50 percent in-kind and cash match from Friends, the displays feature an image taken by James and Jenny Tarpley, the park's Artists-in-Residence last fall.

We worked with Kristin O'Hara of the S.C. Parks, Recreation and Tourism Department to select displays and sites and park Chief Interpretive Ranger Lauren Gurniewicz to develop designs.

Thanks to board members Kevin Fisher for sharing his expertise and Virginia Winn for finalizing the layouts of both the horizontal and vertical displays.

President's Corner

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on McCords Ferry. It was presented to the Historic Preservation Office in August 2013, and Dick Watkins organized a critique of the study. While others contributed, their efforts were dwarfed by Dick's meticulous documentation of source material on plats, deeds and the legislative record surrounding establishment of the ferry. Dick's final set of comments was submitted to the Historic Preservation Office in November 2013.

While the comments were uncontested, almost none were incorporated into the final report. Regardless of the final disposition of the report, we have a much better understanding of McCord's Ferry history, which should prove useful in the park's interpretation of the McCords Ferry trail.

Land acquisition funding

You may have read news of Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell's visit to the Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge in November 2013. Though news coverage focused on her reaction to coastal erosion, her visit was actually a good omen for a years-long regional effort to protect Southeastern forests. Our hopes were confirmed when the FY 2015 federal budget was recently released.

Among other projects in the Southeast, Congaree National Park received $1.428 million for land acquisition through the Land and Water Conservation Fund!

The park has sought this funding for several years, originally as a partner in the Longleaf Pine Focal Area (see our Fall 2011 newsletter), one of two South Carolina projects that was part of the Department of Interior's America's Great Outdoors Initiative. The South Carolina project was incorporated into a regional effort, but the difficult funding environment meant that none of the regional projects were funded.

This year, besides funding for the park, Waccamaw National Wildlife Refuge and Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge in South Carolina also received appropriations through the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

The park will use the lion's share of its funds to acquire the 263-acre "Johnston-Phillips" tract, a triangular plot bounded by the Congaree River to the south, U.S. 601 to the east, and Bates Old River to the west.

This parcel was part of the 2003 Congressionally authorized boundary expansion and provides convenient river access from the U.S. 601 boat landing.

Bird count expands to new territory

The 2013 Christmas Bird Count bears a little explanation. We added coverage of a couple private properties to the count, including a property with some extraordinary waterfowl habitat just north of Bates Old River and properties in Calhoun County owned by Dick Watkins and Luther Wannamaker, our annual meeting hosts. With some unusual additions from our regular parties, we ended up with 109 species, smashing our previous record of 97 species from 2012.

Winter Wren

Many of our new species were seen at the waterfowl habitat—Tundra Swan, Gadwall, American Black Duck, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail, Redhead and Sandhill Crane. Cathy and Carl Miller found a Sedge Wren and Red-breasted Merganser on Dick Watkins' and Luther Wannamaker's properties; Lex Glover saw a Snow Goose fly overhead on the Singleton property in Calhoun County; and Miriam Oudejans and Warren Steckle found a Yellow Warbler on the Riverstone Tract.

Rain and high water threatened the count. Fortunately, the rain ended by dawn, though early morning owling was disrupted. While surface trails in the park were open, a couple parties had to fight the water. A special thanks to George McCoy and Richard Sasnett, who covered the river in a jon boat under high water conditions, and to Brad Dalton, who swung on a grapevine across a 25-foot gut to make his way home back from Sampson Island!

This has been a great year for Red-headed Woodpecker at the park. Though we did not break our record count, John Cely and Laura McCormick heard or saw an extraordinary 60 Red-headed Woodpeckers along the Western Boundary. We did have record counts for a couple woodlands species—Blue-headed Vireo and Red-bellied Woodpecker, though most of our record counts were waterfowl or species that prefer successional habitat. The eye-popping total for Wood Duck is not a misprint and will certainly be the highest count in the country this year.

Here is our list of 36 participants. Thanks, ya'll!

Ron Ahle, John Ball III, Molly Bonnell, John Cely, Brad Dalton, Steve Dennis, Caroline Eastman, Corinne Fenner, Dennis Forsythe, Lex Glover, John Grego, Kate Hartley, Judy Hurley, Jon Manchester, Laura McCormick, George McCoy, Steve McInnis, Susan McInnis, Carl Miller, Cathy Miller, Ann Nolte, Kathleen O'Grady (co-organizer), Miriam Oudejans, Joe Meekins, Jean Prothro, Richard Sasnett, Donna Slyce, Warren Steckle, Alice Steinke, Sudie Thomas, Cindy Tufford, Dan Tufford, Patricia Voelker, Luther Wannamaker, Dick Watkins and David Womack.

New to the count

Snow Goose 1
Tundra Swan 14
Gadwall 1200
American Black Duck 67
Blue-winged Teal 28
Northern Shoveler 250
Northern Pintail 8
Redhead 1
Red-breasted Merganser 1
Sandhill Crane 2
King Rail 3
Sedge Wren 1
Yellow Warbler 1

Record counts

Double-crested Cormorant 103
Black Vulture 224
Wood Duck 15,158
American Wigeon 394
Mallard 414
Green-winged Teal 1450
Ring-necked Duck 3001
Lesser Scaup 2
Hooded Merganser 17
Ruddy Duck 4
Bald Eagle 5
Northern Harrier 11
Coopers Hawk 6
Wilson's Snipe 250
American Woodcock 16
Ring-billed Gull 150
Red-bellied Woodpecker 206

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Save the date

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Back to the bluffs

On **Saturday, March 1,** Friends will be returning to the south bank of the Congaree River for a hike along the beautiful Congaree Bluffs that offer stunning views of the Congaree National Park and surroundings. This hike, from 9:30 a.m. until 12:30 p.m. will be similar to the one we did back in October for our annual meeting, except the foliage will be gone and the views will be better.

The hike will take advantage of two recent acquisitions by Friends board member Richard Watkins—the Peterkin tract and the adjoining Friday and Brown tracts. With the purchase of these connected parcels, Dick has protected almost three quarters of a mile of land along the south bank of the Congaree, land that is critical to the protection of the park view shed.

The round trip hike will be no more than two miles; along the way we will stop at the African-American Goodin cemetery at the top of the bluff.

Bring a lunch if you like to enjoy along with the fine weather that always accompanies Friends field trips. Contact John Cely to register, jecely@sc.rr.com or 803-782-7450.

Directions: Take Bluff Road east to US 601 and turn right. Follow US 601 south, cross the Congaree River, then travel 1.9 miles and turn right on Adams Road (S-9-80) at the first paved intersection after crossing the river. Follow Adams Road east for 0.4 miles and turn right on Lang Syne Road. Follow Lang Syne Road north for 2.6 miles and take a sharp left at the intersection with unpaved Wise Road. Follow Wise Road for 0.5 miles then look for the unpaved road on the right (unsigned Moye Lane); a couple mailboxes mark the intersection. It will cross the railroad track (the crossing has no signals—be careful), then run parallel to the tracks before turning north along a hedge of cedar trees. Follow Moye Lane for 0.5 miles and park along the road.

Aquatic critters hike

Join us **Saturday, April 12,** to discover the wide variety of Congaree National Park's aquatic life most visitors never see or experience.

The hike, from 8:30 a.m. to noon, will be led by Dr. Jim Bulak, researcher coordinator at the S.C. Department of Natural Resource's Fisheries Research lab in Eastover. He will organize a team to electrofish Cedar Creek at the canoe/kayak landing, and we will also visit sites along the Kingsnake Trail that encompass a number of other aquatic habitats.

Spotted sunfish

We will stop at these sites and collect and discuss the fish, crayfish, insects, salamanders and other critters that inhabit the water. We usually have a macroinvertebrate specialist along to assist with identifications.

Inspection of the specimens at Cedar Creek will take more than an hour. The rest of the hike will be mostly on-trail, but we will stop at aquatic sites along the way and enjoy other spring sights and sounds along the Kingsnake Trail.

Participants should be in moderate physical shape. Bring water and insect repellant; long pants are recommended. Jogging shoes or light hiking boots are appropriate. If participants wish to assist with sampling, wading shoes or boots would be helpful.

This hike is limited to the first 25 people to sign up. We will meet at the Visitor Center and carpool to the start of the Kingsnake Trail off South Cedar Creek Road, where we will meet up with researchers collecting samples in Cedar Creek.

Contact John Grego, jrgrego@sc.rr.com or 803-331-3366.

Dawn chorus

One of the most important resources of Congaree National Park is its large numbers of breeding birds, including many neotropical migrants—species that breed in North America but go south in the winter to Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean or South America.

Robin Carter, who passed away in 2008, did

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Bird count

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Blue-headed Vireo 30
Blue Jay 139
Brown Thrasher 27
Northern Parula 1
Eastern Towhee 192

Species and count

Anhinga 7
Great Blue Heron 18
Turkey Vulture 144
Canada Goose 8
Red-shouldered Hawk 24
Red-tailed Hawk 12
American Kestrel 20
Wild Turkey 17
Northern Bobwhite 7
Virginia Rail 1
Killdeer 36
Greater Yellowlegs 2
Rock Pigeon 13
Eurasian Collared-Dove 3
Mourning Dove 500
Common Ground Dove 1
Eastern Screech-Owl 4
Barred Owl 29
Great Horned Owl 5
Belted Kingfisher 4
Red-headed Woodpecker 146
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker 79
Downy Woodpecker 49

Ruby-crowned Kinglet

Hairy Woodpecker 9
Northern Flicker 201
Pileated Woodpecker 105
Eastern Phoebe 99
Loggerhead Shrike 17
White-eyed Vireo 4
American Crow 189
Fish Crow 2
Carolina Chickadee 183
Tufted Titmouse 174
White-breasted Nuthatch 29
Brown-headed Nuthatch 72
Brown Creeper 10
Carolina Wren 213
House Wren 9
Winter Wren 56
Marsh Wren 1
Golden-crowned Kinglet 297
Ruby-crowned Kinglet 508
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher 1
Eastern Bluebird 77
Hermit Thrush 83
American Robin 544
Gray Catbird 3
Northern Mockingbird 36
European Starling 23
American Pipit 76
Cedar Waxwing 185
Orange-crowned Warbler 4
Yellow-rumped Warbler 247
Pine Warbler 120
Black-and-white Warbler 7
Common Yellowthroat 8
Chipping Sparrow 379
Field Sparrow 5
Vesper Sparrow 1
Savannah Sparrow 63
Fox Sparrow 13
Song Sparrow 183
Swamp Sparrow 30
White-throated Sparrow 496
White-crowned Sparrow 1
Dark-eyed Junco 93
Northern Cardinal 328
Red-winged Blackbird 6112
Eastern Meadowlark 66
Common Grackle 6831
Brown-headed Cowbird 1
House Finch 6
American Goldfinch 220
House Sparrow 6

Save the date

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more than anyone to promote birding at Congaree National Park. He established most of the annual birding events at the park, maintained a 20-year database of Congaree bird reports, and turned enthusiastically to sound recording at the park late in his birding career.

To celebrate and continue Robin's legacy, Donna Slyce will lead the Robin Carter Dawn Chorus Walk on **Sunday, May 4.** The Dawn Chorus Walk at Congaree National Park was started by Robin in 2005 and we now celebrate the event with the rest of the world on International Dawn Chorus Day. Though International Dawn Chorus Day is popular overseas, Congaree National Park is the only site in North America that consistently participates in this event.

We will meet at the Visitor Center at 5:30 a.m. to hear the pre-dawn sounds of owls, nightjars and migrating thrushes before the main event, which begins half an hour before sunrise. We can reasonably expect to hear as many as 40 species of birds calling. Bird song experts will be on hand to help you identify what you hear, or you can just listen and take in the experience.

As an additional incentive, the Dawn Chorus hike will be followed by a free breakfast at 7:30 a.m., organized and prepared by Friends' board members. The breakfast menu changes slightly from year to year, but will include shrimp and creamy grits, bacon/date and cherry/orange scones, cheddar drop biscuits, a breakfast strata, fresh fruit, juice and lots of coffee.

Contact John Grego at jrgrego@sc.rr.com or call 803-331-3366.

Champion

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Senate's senior member, introduced in February, 1976, a resolution (S. 744) which opposed the use of condemnation proceedings as a vehicle to obtain federal or state acquisition of Congaree.

As sentiments in the State House approached the boiling point, legislators were entertained at the old hunting lodge in the heart of the Swamp.

That evening, Sen. Rubin walked outside for some fresh air and made a momentous decision. Jim Elder remembers the senator calling later that night. Rubin said he remembered the presentation Elder had made to the delegation about one and a half years earlier and he explained how seeing the giant trees in the full moonlight that night had affected him. Rubin said to Jim, "It is a moral imperative that we save these trees; to do otherwise would be a sacrilege."

Meanwhile Bristow, in the Senate since 1958, had concluded that the swamp was a "natural heritage which should be preserved for our children and their children." With a love for the outdoors instilled by Harry Hampton, Bristow teamed with Rubin to stand up for the swamp.

For three days in April they filibustered with courage and conviction. Newspaper headlines indicate the flavor of the debate, with "Swamp Owners Oppose Preserve" and "Rubin Supports Swamp Preserve Saying 'Nothing In This State Compares'," followed by "Gressette Questions Preserve" and "Poetic Bristow turns to Verse for Filibuster" or "Bristow waxed poetic today as he recited Kilmer's 'Trees' on the Senate Floor". At one point Bristow was also recorded as saying "I have a few more pearls to cast to you" and then more seriously he surmised "this resolution would let the fate of this forest of champions rest upon the bosoms of the foresters."

After three days, Elder remembers Rubin and Bristow saying they'd done all they could; they didn't have the votes to stop the resolution but they would salvage what they could. Desperate for a way to change its meaning, they negotiated with Gressette and added one significant word, "intimidation," to the resolution. The Senate finally went on record opposing acquisition through "condemnation or intimidation." The resolution barely passed with a recorded vote of 15-12, and the compromise was hailed as a victory for the swamp forces.

A week later, at the first Congressional hearing in Washington, Rep. Roy Taylor made a point of noting for the record that the federal government never resorted to intimidation to acquire property. The Richland County delegation supported acquisition of the swamp in a letter to the House Committee and Sen. Rubin and Rep. Bill Campbell personally testified at the Senate Committee hearing later that August.

Salvaging the situation in the Senate, standing up for preservation of the Congaree against great odds, Sens. Bristow and Rubin deserve our respect, admiration, appreciation and honor.

At a critical juncture in the campaign to save the swamp, they unselfishly stepped forward on their own initiative and did their part. Let their example guide us as we continue to protect this natural legacy with scenery as rare on this earth as any moonscape.

Swampfest! art contest

For the second year in a row, Friends joined Southeast Rural Community Outreach (SERCO) to sponsor the SwampFest! 2013 student art competion at the park. We donated $250 toward the $50 prizes awarded to first place winners in grades K–8. The entries were displayed at the Harry Hampton Visitor Center after the contest.

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Join Friends of Congaree Swamp today!

Yes, I would like to support conservation of Congaree Swamp for future generations. Enclosed is my tax deductible contribution of $ _____ . Please make your check payable to Friends of Congaree Swamp.

_____ $15 Individual _____ $50 Advocate _____ $500 Benefactor _____ $50 Nonprofit Org.
_____ $35 Family _____ $100 Partner _____ $1000 Patron _____ $1000 Corporate

_____ New Member _____ Renewal

Name(s): _____
Mailing Address: _____
City: _____ State: ____ Zip: _____
Hm Phone: (___) _____ Wk Phone: (___) _____
E-mail: _____

I would like to work on the following committee(s):

_____ Field Trips _____ Fundraising
_____ Public Relations _____ Membership
_____ Education _____ Advocacy
_____ Events _____ Newsletter
_____ Research _____ Other: _____

Please keep your email address current to receive special notices about new field trips and other events, scheduling changes, and acknowledgements.

In addition to my membership, I would like to give $ _____ as a donation to Friends of Congaree Swamp:
In Memory of: _____
In Honor of: _____
As a Gift Membership to: _____

Please provide contact information so we can inform the person or family:
Name: _____
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Thank You For Supporting Friends of Congaree Swamp!

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