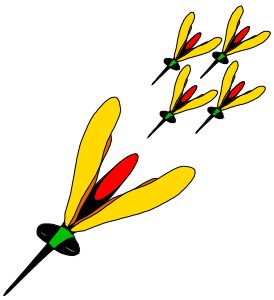
Friends of Congaree Swamp Newsletter

August, 1999

President's Path...



The Power of the Mosquito

Anyone who doubts the power of an individual has never turned off the lights at night, rolled over in bed quite comfortably, and then heard the buzz of a mosquito.

It is amazing what one little insect will have us do. Perhaps we suddenly find ourselves standing on the bed (lights now back on), swatting at the ceiling. Very unrelaxed and perhaps no longer sleepy. Well, such is individual power.

And likewise, some of you who read this are reluctant at this time of year to frequent the Swamp because of such things as that little mosquito or the heat. Yet, alas, that freed up portion of time could well be spent helping to strengthen the Friends group. How? By either volunteering on a Committee or asking a friend to become a FRIEND of Congaree Swamp. Your individual power can make it happen.

It doesn't take a Rockette, or a scientist, to realize that if everyone receiving this newsletter got a friend to join—well, we would have doubled our membership. So make that a project. It can often be done in air-conditioned comfort. And you will have the comfort of helping a young organization grow.

Sanctuary much,
LaBruce Alexander
President

Friends Request Congaree Budget Increase

On behalf of Friends of Congaree Swamp, President LaBruce Alexander has written to the South Carolina Congressional Delegation to request funding for additional staffing at Congaree Swamp National Monument. Following are excerpts from our letters:

"We seek your help to obtain a permanent operating budget increase of $120,000 for Congaree Swamp National Monument in the FY 2000 Interior Appropriations bill. This increase will fund three education and maintenance positions and other expenses associated with Congaree's education and administration building, projected for completion in October '99.

"The 1976 law that established Congaree Swamp National Monument cites 'education...of present and future generations' as a major purpose for the park. However, in recent years, many school groups were not accommodated at Congaree - due to lack of facilities and staffing. In 1997, for example, more than 300 groups could not be accommodated.

"Legislation in 1984 anticipated construction of an education building at Congaree Swamp. Through your leadership, Congaree's education building is now being constructed. With completion of this building in October '99 - much sooner than envisioned twelve months ago - the number of school groups and other visitors to Congaree Swamp will increase substantially.

"Accordingly, we seek your leadership to address Congaree's need for additional staffing. We believe this request for an increase of $120,000 in Congaree's operating budget merits your consideration - in light of education as a major purpose for the park, and in light of great cost savings (more than $3 million) achieved through highly successful partnerships to construct Congaree's education building and entrance road."

Responding to our letters, the congressional delegation has contacted Congaree Supt. Martha Bogle for additional details. Congress will work on FY 2000 appropriations between now and October 1, when the new fiscal year begins. Until then, the outcome of our request is unknown.

Bird Research at Congaree Swamp National Monument

John Cely, SC Department of Natural Resources

In 1937 Roger Tory Peterson, destined to become the most famous naturalist in the world, made a float trip down the Santee River in search of the nearly extinct Ivory-billed Woodpecker. Peterson failed to find the grand woodpecker (other parties later found it along the lower stretches of the River) in South Carolina, but he marveled at the large expanses of old-growth swamp forest bordering the muddy Santee and its tributaries. Peterson described sweet gums "fourteen feet in circumference, loblolly pines with a girth of sixteen feet, and cypresses with swollen buttresses that measured over thirty feet!" Peterson, as usual 50 years ahead of his time, also made a far-sighted observation that someone "should start taking bird censuses in an original river-swamp habitat before it is all gone." He suspected that bird populations would be greater in "original forest" than mature second-growth because the trees of virgin growth were so large and widely spaced that they formed their own edges.

Peterson's fears came to pass. In less than a generation, most old growth swamp forests of the South were logged, drained, cleared, or inundated by reservoirs - and knowledge of their bird populations and other biota went with them. That a few remnants like the Congaree and Audubon's Beidler Forest managed to survive into the latter 20th century is miraculous.

Shortly after the Congaree Swamp National Monument was established in 1976, some of us at the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources realized we had a rare opportunity to fulfill Roger Peterson's plea. In 1980 we began a long-term bird census of the Congaree on a 20-acre plot located near the old clubhouse. Initially we concentrated on breeding season censuses, but later conducted counts during winter as well. In 1989 Hurricane Hugo provided a unique opportunity to evaluate the effects of natural disturbance on bird populations. In 1991 we initiated a banding study on the plot as part of a nationwide effort to monitor bird productivity and survival in different habitats and regions across the country.

What have we learned in nearly 20 years of bird investigations at Congaree? We know that Congaree supports very high populations of woodpeckers and other cavity-nesting birds. Surely the Barred Owl and Pileated Woodpecker population must be among the most dense anywhere!

We also know that Congaree supports high songbird breeding densities, in a range of 6-8 birds per acre, of which nearly 75 percent are neotropical migrants like Northern Parula, Acadian Flycatcher, and Prothonotary Warbler. Neotropical migrants are those birds that breed in North America and migrate to the tropics in winter. Many conservationists are concerned about the long-term fates of neotropical migrants because of habitat losses and degredation on both wintering and breeding grounds.

The number of wintering birds at Congaree is just as impressive as during the breeding season.We found 32 species using the plot with densities up to 8 birds an acre, representing some of the highest recorded winter densities for any forest type in the eastern United States.

The number of wintering birds at Congaree is just as impressive as during the breeding season. We found 32 species using the plot with densities up to 8 birds an acre, representing some of the highest recorded winter densities for any forest type in the eastern United States. Winter is a critical survival period for birds and other wildlife. Shelter and abundant food, especially rich berry crops of holly, sugarberry, and poison ivy, are 2 key winter features at Congaree. We learned that during good years of acorn production, the dazzling Red-headed Woodpecker will overwinter in Congaree in large numbers, while during lean acorn years, it will disappear. On some days it appears that every robin from eastern North America is spending the winter at Congaree

Hurricane Hugo showed us how a bottomland

forest is managed under natural conditions. The storm blew down 12 large canopy trees on our plot as well as numerous smaller ones. The canopy gaps quickly filled in with cane and other shrub thickets. Within 2 years, 3 species not previously recorded were found on our plot: Indigo Bunting, Swainson's Warbler, and Kentucky Warbler. Not surprisingly all 3 are birds of thickets and dense shrubbery. Additionally, a large increase in numbers was noted after Hugo for 3 other shrub species: Hooded Warbler, White-eyed Vireo, and Carolina Wren.

We felt that Hurricane Hugo actually benefitted bird populations at Congaree (No species was missing from our pre-Hugo bird list.) by adding a new layer of vegetation - shrub thickets - that was in short supply before the storm. Now, nearly 10 years after Hugo, many of the canopy gaps have started filling in and the cane patches and other thickets are thinning out from excess shade. This probably explains most of the declines we are starting to see in Hooded Warblers, Indigo Buntings, White-eyed Vireos, and Kentucky Warblers. Within a few more years bird numbers and species may revert to pre-Hugo conditions.

Our bird work at Congaree illustrates the value of long-term studies. Recently Congaree Swamp National Monument was recognized as a continentally important bird area (IBA) by the American Bird Conservancy because of its documented high bird populations and value as a research site. The ultimate objective of our bird research at Congaree is helping the Park Service manage and protect an important natural resource. We also hope Roger Tory Peterson would be pleased.

Mark your calendars now!

2nd Annual Membership Meeting of Friends of Congaree Swamp

Sunday, October 3, 1999

Plan on joining us for a late afternoon meeting and picnic dinner at the swamp.

We will also have educational hikes, canoe trips, and a visit to the new education center.

More details to follow soon...

Hot Off The Press

Larry Edmond, SCOIS

The new teacher activity guide for Congaree Swamp National Monument had its debut before educators at the 1999 Education and Business Summit in Columbia, recently. Cruising the Congaree Natural History and Career Exploration Activities Guide was designed for teachers of elementary and middle school students. The publication is a joint production of the South Carolina Occupational Information Coordinating Committee (SCOICC) and the National Park Service.

Included in the guide are maps and directions to the Congaree Swamp National Monument and dozens of activities.

Developed by teachers, counselors and natural resource experts, each lesson plan provides all of the details for both in-class and field trip activities. Curriculum areas, activity duration, objectives, skills, procedures and learning outcomes are all clearly indicated for each lesson. The guide also includes games and nature activities that provide fun learning. Jobs found in the environmental sector, National Park Service, administration and other closely related fields are also explored. Career awareness and exploration objectives can be met while giving students a firm foundation in environmental concerns in their own backyard.

Teachers interested in obtaining a copy of the guide may contact the Superintendent, Congaree Swamp National Monument, 200 Caroline Sims Road, Hopkins, SC 29061; (803) 776-4396.

The Midlands Improving Math and Science (MIMS) hub is planning training sessions for the Fall to help Midlands area educators utilize this resource effectively.

Chapin Middle School Counselor, Jo Ellen Cook (center) and Congaree Swamp National Monument Superintendent, Martha Bogle (right) introduce educators to the new Cruising the Congaree teachers activity guide.

Tentatively October 8, 15 and 29 have been set as the dates for educators in the Midlands to participate in sessions that will provide orientation to the Congaree Swamp National Monument site as well as the new guide. The MIMS hub is one of 13 groups of schools organized under the S.C. Statewide Systemic Improvement Initiative to improve math and science programs. For information on the planned workshops, call (803) 737-3835.

Warbler Watches Wildflowers

FCS Board members John Cely and Richard Watkins were among the speakers at a "teachers creative session" on June 9 at Francis Beidler Forest. The session included presentations about wetlands, old-growth forest, plants, birds, and conservation.

During Jean Everett's slide-illustrated talk about plants and wildflowers of Beidler Forest, a male Hooded Warbler flew to the window of the visitors center meeting room - not once, but three times - and sat on the window ledge as the wildflower slides were shown.

The Hooded Warbler did not stay for John Cely's talk about birds, ...probably because the warbler was already knowledgeable about birds of Beidler Forest.

Membership Committee Report

Mary Beth Jeffords

There are now about 240 members of the Friends of Congaree Swamp. The Membership Committee hopes to increase this number.

A computer database has been set up and is being used to process member information, print mailing labels, renewal letters, etc. I have been setting up new things in the database as needs arise in order to do the necessary processing. Having the information computerized will enable us to handle a lot more members faster.

Annual membership renewal letters are being sent out each month now. Most of the existing members are renewing. This is encouraging!

Now that issues like membership categories, dues, etc. have been decided upon, the committee can now work on ways to really increase membership. The Board members have provided the names and addresses of prospective members, and the committee will be working on sending invitations to them to join Friends of Congaree Swamp.

The next committee meeting is being planned for early August. If you are interested in working with this committee, please give me a call, 803-782-5234.

Friends of Congaree Swamp First Annual Photo Contest

COMING TO A SWAMP NEAR YOU...NOW IS THE TIME TO START THINKING ABOUT OUR FIRST PHOTO CONTEST. OF COURSE, THE PHOTO CONTEST WILL ACCEPT PHOTOS RELATING TO ANY ASPECTS OF LIFE OR ACTIVITIES IN CONGAREE SWAMP NATIONAL MONUMENT.

THERE WILL BE A CHILDREN'S DIVISION AND AN ADULTS' DIVISION WITH TWO CATEGORIES IN EACH. ONE CATEGORY WILL BE THE NATURAL HISTORY OF CONGAREE SWAMP AND THE OTHER CATEGORY WILL BE HUMAN RELATED ACTIVITIES IN CONGAREE SWAMP.

WE WILL NEED PHOTOGRAPHS FROM ALL SEASONS DURING THE YEAR, SO START SEARCHING FOR THOSE OLD FAVORITES OR GET OUT TO CONGAREE SWAMP AND START MAKING NEW FAVORITES.

COMING SOON FROM A SWAMP NEAR YOU...WATCH OUT FOR MORE PHOTO CONTEST DETAILS IN YOUR NEXT NEWSLETTER.

An Outing Remembered...

...Recollections by Ann Timberlake, Ted Snyder, and Richard Watkins

October 25 and 26, 1999 will mark the 30th anniversary of Sierra Club's first Congaree Swamp outing. This outing was among the earliest steps in Sierra Club's efforts to preserve Congaree's old-growth bottomland hardwood forest. It led to the campaign of the 1970s, spearheaded by Jim Elder, which, in 1976, resulted in establishment of Congaree Swamp National Monument.

Sierra Club's 1969 outing was organized by Ted Snyder of Greenville and Ann Timberlake of Columbia. Consistent with Sierra Club's motto "to explore, enjoy, and preserve...," the outing was designed to acquaint members with Congaree's majestic old-growth forest ...about which they had heard, but had not yet seen.

This was an outing of the "local" group, which at that time encompassed all Sierra Club members in South Carolina and North Carolina. Accordingly, some persons traveled substantial distances to participate in the outing. In addition to Sierra Club members, students from the University of Georgia were at the swamp and joined the walks.

Biologist John V. Dennis from Massachusetts (now Maryland) led walks on both days. Also present was photographer Eliot Porter (now deceased) from New Mexico, a member of Sierra Club's Board of Directors. Six years later, in 1975, Dr. Porter's photographs were published in "Audubon" magazine - to illustrate Gary Soucie's superb article "Congaree: Great Trees or Coffee Tables?"

A sense of discovery - and wonder - was felt by the 75 persons who joined those 1969 walks to experience Congaree's big trees and wildlife. This being the first visit to Congaree for most participants, we had little idea where we were in the swamp as we trustingly followed our guide, ...who admitted having been lost in Congaree Swamp previously. One of the hikes led to the clubhouse, turned south, traversed an area of standing water and many cypress knees, then circled around to Cedar Creek, which we crossed in a variety of ways on down trees.

In high spirits after being asked repeatedly to identify a flower, John Dennis finally announced his eagerly-awaited expert identification: "That's the same little yellow flower we've been seeing all day."

On Saturday evening, about 30 hikers camped at the edge of the bluff, where today a parking area and boardwalk termini are situated. Jim and Parlea Park of Columbia and Ann Timberlake prepared a "gourmet" meal for the group, the main course being Jim's famous beef stroganoff.

Strolling under Congaree's towering moss-draped trees by the light of a full moon was an unforgettable experience - and one that fueled many of us during those long years of the early- and mid-1970s, when the future of Congaree's old-growth forest was very much in doubt.

Thirty years ago, Ted Snyder was Chairman of the Carolinas Group of Sierra Club. In 1978, he became national President of Sierra Club. Today, he resides in Walhalla, SC, and leads the Great Smoky Mountains Wilderness Advocates.

Thirty years ago, Ann Timberlake was a recent graduate of Tulane University and a new Sierra Club member. Today, she resides in Columbia, and is a Board member of Friends of Congaree Swamp.

Thirth years ago, Richard "Dick" Watkins attended the outing — his first visit to Congaree Swamp. In 1972, he was present at Jim Park's home, where the Sierra Club recruited Jim Elder to preserve Congaree's old-growth forest. Watkin volunteered to assist Elder. Today, Watkins spends much of his time on historical research.

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Officers: LaBruce Alexander, President
Carol Kososki, Vice-President
Richard Watkins, Secretary
Margaret Stilwell, Treasurer

At Large: John H. Temple
Marian Hampton
Susan DeFoe

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Kelvin Washington ..... (h) 803-353-1003
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Events:
Francis Robinson ..... (h) 803-254-6360
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Virginia Winn ..... (h) 803-787-1592
Research:
John Grego ..... (h) 803-783-9270
Strategic Planning:
Jim Prater ..... (h) 803-252-8499

Please call the committee chairman (above) if you wish to participate on a committee.

A Brief Biography

In the last issue we indicated who was new to the Friends of Congaree Swamp Board. This time we would like to give you a short biographical sketch of those new members.

Gregg Fagan is currently a broker with Merrill Lynch. Fagan is a member of the School Improvement Board for Lexington/Richland School District V and formerly a member of the Western North Carolina Regional Economic Board.

John Grego is an Associate Professor of Statistics at the University of South Carolina where he oversees the Department's consulting operations as the Director of the Statistical Laboratory. He was the Chairman of the Research Committee of the Friends of Congaree Swamp during 1998 and, in that capacity, worked in close collaboration with the Congaree Swamp National Monument's staff.

Marian Hampton is a retired Major with the US Army and holds a Masters Degree in Public Administration. She is a resident of Lower Richland County (Horrell Hill) and plans to serve on the newly formed Richland County Conservation Commission. Hampton presently serves on many boards and committees including Children Unlimited, Retired Military Counsel of Fort Jackson, Providence Home for Men, Veterans Administration Customer Services, and various committees for Clemson Extension. She is the immediate-past president of the Riverbanks Zoological Society.

John Temple is retired from the US Navy, as well as IBM. Both careers took him around the world. Temple moved to Columbia after retiring from IBM. He joined the volunteer ranks at Congaree Swamp National Monument in 1995 and has served as assistant volunteer coordinator for the park, where he has shown an unwavering commitment.

Kelvin Washington is an engineer at the SC Department of Transportation where he is involved in Pavement Management work on the state and federal level. He is fire chief of the Hopkins volunteer fire department, treasurer of Lower Richland Community Development Corp., and President of the Gadsden Parks Association.

Memorials and Honorariums

In memory of _____

In honor of _____

Sent by:

Name _____

Address _____

_____

Please notify:

Name _____

Adress _____

_____

Amount Enclosed: _____

Mail to: Friends of Congaree Swamp,
PO Box 7746, Columbia, SC 29202

Membership Application

Individuals & Families:

❑$15-34—Individual
❑$35-49—Family
❑$50-99—Advocate
❑$100-499—Partner
❑$500-999—Benefactor
❑$1000-up—Patron

Organizations, Businesses & Corporations

❑$50-99—Non-Profit Org.
❑$100-499—Affiliate
❑$500-999—Associate
❑$1000-up—Corporate

Amount Enclosed: $_____

Name:
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Address:
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Home Phone:
_(____)_____
Work Phone:
_(____)_____
Fax:
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E-Mail Address:
_____

The ***Friends of Conagree Swamp's*** newsletter is published quarterly. If you have an article or photographs you wish included please get them to the editor by the following schedule:

Jan 15th — 1st Quarter
Apr 15th — 2nd Quarter
July 15th — 3rd Quarter
Oct 15th — 4th Quarter

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August, 1999

Get a friend to be a "Friend."

Help us increase our membership!