



Friends of Congaree Swamp News

www.friendsofcongarree.org

Spring 2014

Save the date

Butterfly identification training

Learn to identify the beautiful butterflies that grace our environment. An introduction to the butterflies of Congaree featuring a PowerPoint presentation and a short hike to practice new skills will be held on **Saturday, June 14**, from 9:30 until 11:30 p.m. Meet at the Harry Hampton Visitor Center.

Butterfly count

Join the 40th annual North American Butterfly Association's butterfly count Saturday, June 21, from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Participants will conduct a day of field observations counting butterflies along the trail system and within various habitats of Congaree

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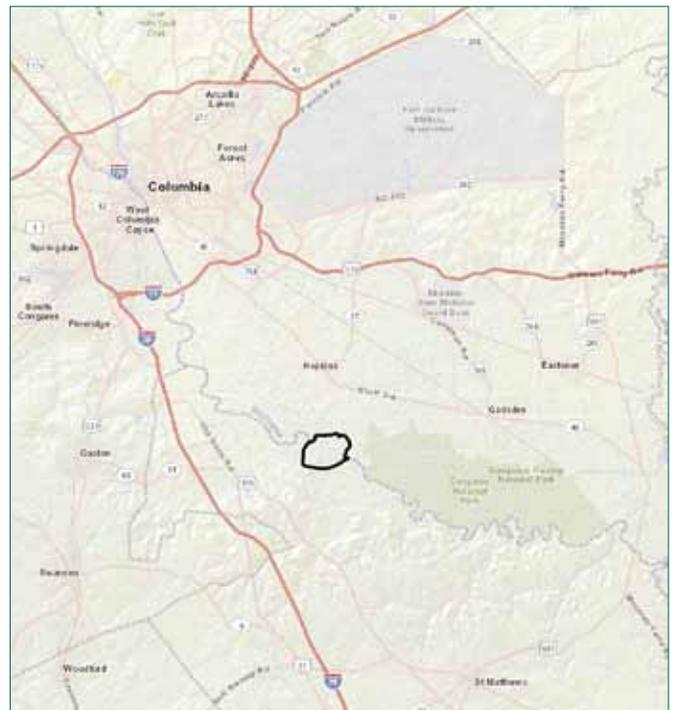
Mill Creek to be used as a wetlands mitigation bank

Richland County has applied to use part of the 1,749 acres it purchased from Mill Creek Partnership in February as a wetlands mitigation bank.

The tract was the site of the 2010 Friends' annual meeting where we were guests of W.D. Morris, one of Mill Creek's co-owners.

Friends' board members visited the site in June 2011 with Terri Hogan, Congaree National Park's resource manager, at Morris's invitation.

Under the permit held by Mill Creek Mitigation Holdings LLC, the 1,314-acre stream and wetland mitigation bank would be used largely to offset wetland



Wetlands mitigation bank area outlined in black

impacts from construction projects Richland County will build with proceeds from the penny transportation tax.

It would not only preserve wetlands, but includes substantial opportunities for wetlands restoration, which is highly favored by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Specifically, the bank

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President's Corner

Dr. John Grego

Trail-clearing



Erin takes a break for lunch during the trail clearing

We completed our 10th year of quarterly trail-clearings in March with the most difficult trail-clearing we have ever faced after the February ice storm caused tremendous damage at the park.

I'd like to acknowledge a young woman, Erin Scott, who was there to help, just as she and her father, Dr.

David Scott, a biology professor at S.C. State University, have helped with most of our trail-clearings since Erin was 11 years old.

Erin applied to S.C. Governor's School for Science and Math earlier this school year and recently found out that she was accepted, citing

her service work as a member of Friends of Congaree Swamp as a contributing factor. We wish her well at Governor's School and hope to see her at the park, schedule permitting.

CBC wrap-up

Results are in from more than 2,300 Christmas Bird Count circles and the Congaree Swamp CBC was first nationally in 2013-2014 for two species: Wood Duck and Pileated Woodpecker.

We recorded several other top ten species counts, including some of the most iconic species of the park's floodplain forests.

We counted 15,158 Wood Ducks to place first and 105 Pileated Woodpeckers to win first place two years in a row.

We were third with 192 Eastern Towhees and fourth with 79 Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, 29 Barred Owls and 201 Northern (Yellow-shafted) Flickers.

A total of 146 Red-headed Woodpeckers put us in fifth place nationally, but first east of the Mississippi River. We also ranked fifth with 250 Wilson's Snipes.

Fifty-six Winter Wrens put us in sixth place, 30 Blue-headed Vireos in seventh place, and 508 Ruby-crowned Kinglets in eighth place nationally but first east of the Mississippi River.

Hospitality Tax update

In our last newsletter, we shared designs for welcome center displays funded through Friends of Congaree Swamp and a Richland County Hospitality Tax Grant.

At the time, we planned displays at only two welcome centers—I-26 at Landrum and I-77 at Fort Mill. Since then, the board felt strongly that a display was necessary at I-20 at North Augusta, and voted to approve funds for a third display.

The displays were installed April 1 and should be visible through September 30. We have already received positive responses from a park service regional exotic plant management team that happened upon the display, as well as S.C. Parks, Recreation and Tourism staff themselves.

Please be sure to look out for these displays when you're traveling.

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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

Event promotes Lower Richland heritage



Harriet Barber House

FOCUS: Lower Richland, a three-day event promoting the Lower Richland County Heritage Corridor, will be held June 19-21.

Activities are designed for visitors as well as those interested in historical preservation/conservation, tourism, economic development and agricultural education. The event is free but registration is requested at sercoevents@gmail.com or (803) 261-5596.

A **Juneteenth Reception** will kick off the event June 19 from 6 until 9 p.m. at the historic Harriet Barber House near Hopkins. This restored home originally was owned by ex-slaves and is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Renowned artist Jonathan Green will be the special guest.

Gems of the Lower Richland Heritage Corridor will begin at 9 a.m. on June 20. The five tour options are: Historic Sites; Congaree National Park; Equestrian Outing; Plantation and Farms; and Historic Cemeteries.

A **Farm-to-Table Feast** offering locally grown foods will be served from 12:30 until 3 p.m. on the grounds of the historic Wavering Place Plantation.

Group activities will be held June

21 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Youth Education Field Day.

Youth and educators will meet at the Harriet Barber House and travel to Congaree National Park for hikes on the boardwalk, storytelling and a view of the film “Congaree Tales.”

Participants will return to the Harriet Barber House for activities including a local history skit, hayrides, exploring historical inventions, and a display of farm tools from the past in addition to demonstrations of soap making, corn grinding, potato banking and a take-away agricultural project.

Workshops and Expo. Visitors, local historians, and preservation/conservation enthusiasts will meet at St.

John Baptist Church Wellness Center in Hopkins for displays, demonstrations and discussions on promoting the Lower Richland Heritage Corridor.

Lunch will be served at 1 p.m. on the grounds of the Harriet Barber House.

The event is sponsored by South East Rural Community Outreach (SERCO) through a Richland County Hospitality Tax Grant and supported by the Richland County Conservation Commission.



Wavering Place

Landfill pollution concerns remain

Pollution concerns at Richland County's Northeast Landfill remain after an unsuccessful effort in 2011 by Friends of Congaree Swamp and other organizations to keep the landfill from operating beyond its original 2018 closure date. Pollution from the landfill could affect the Wateree River upstream of Congaree National Park's eastern boundary.

Volatile organic compounds were found in six wells at five different sites in November 2012 and May 2013. In 2011-12, volatile organic compounds were found at four different well sites for each monitoring period. Two of the wells with excessive levels of pollutants are supposed to be "delineation wells" that are near the down-gradient edge of groundwater contamination. Other wells with excessive levels of groundwater contamination are near or on the boundary of the property.

It's troubling to see groundwater pollution so far from the active landfill cells and so close to the Wateree River floodplain and adjoining properties. It would be helpful to include additional delineation wells to investigate whether groundwater contamination has moved farther down gradient.

After persistent pollution had been reported at a well on the site boundary, the S.C. Department of Health and

Environmental Control ordered landfill owner Republic Services to prepare a Groundwater Monitoring Plan for the well in December 2011. Republic Services installed additional wells and found pollution at all three down-gradient wells. They resampled the farthest down-gradient well and found a pollutant at its threshold level, but decided that the pollution could not extend beyond it.

It's unclear why they would reach that conclusion given that they initially found contamination at the well *above* the threshold, then detected contamination *at* the threshold when it was resampled.

The landfill accepted 170,000 tons of waste in 2013, less than the 187,000 tons of waste it accepted for each of the two previous years. Most categories of waste are stable, though the landfill accepted much less process waste, such as lubricants, cleaners, etc., than in previous years. The amount of contaminated soil from Lexington County increased from 24,000 tons in 2012 to 40,000 tons in 2013, though the source of this large quantity of contaminated soil has yet to be identified.

An extensive system of gas extraction wells collects landfill gasses and then flares them. Monitoring of explosive gasses along the boundary of

the landfill showed that the methane gas concentration in the landfill can exceed the lower explosive limit set by DHEC, particularly along the northwestern and southwestern boundary of the site.

The gas extraction system seems to be helping to control the problem at some of the wells, but it is difficult to reconcile continued high readings from gas monitoring probes with the idea that DHEC is adequately addressing the problem. The landfill gas should be no more than 5 percent methane by volume, but readings above that are common, and a couple wells have chronically high levels. There were methane readings above 50 percent last year, 10 times higher than the permitted amount.

Just as in last year's report, Northeast Landfill's consultants simply note that the readings for some wells "were above" 5 percent by volume and that the current gas extraction system is "in place," which understates the extent of the problem and suggests the gas extraction system is not fully effective.

We are concerned that these violations seem to have become the status quo. It remains to be seen whether a plan is in place to resolve these violations or whether they will continue indefinitely.



Dawn Chorus

FOCS President John Grego and Caroline Eastman chat after enjoying breakfast at the 10th anniversary of the Robin Carter Dawn Chorus Walk on May 4, International Dawn Chorus Day. Eastman is the widow of Robin Carter, who led the walks from 2005 until he passed away in 2008. Donna Slyce has led the walks since 2009, while Grego, Virginia Winn and Sharon Kelly co-organized the breakfast. Birds identified at the Dawn Chorus are combined with other bird sightings throughout the day for the park's Spring North American Migration Count. About 20 people participated in this year's hike.

Mitigation

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would restore 15,520 linear feet of stream and 267 acres of wetlands. In addition, it would preserve 14,164 linear feet of stream and 662 acres of wetlands. None of the property is under a conservation easement.

Friends of Congaree Swamp strongly supports the bank application. In the past, projects with wetlands impacts in Richland County purchased mitigation credits in banks in watersheds outside the county, so we were gratified to see a proposal for a mitigation bank that would specifically benefit Richland County for projects that affect wetlands in the county.

Some of the restoration may seem counterintuitive. During the 2011 visit, we

took a boat trip on Dead River (also known as Hodges Lake). While we enjoyed the "green pond" aspect of this wetland, these artificial wetlands were not serving their original hydrological functions. We wrote in support of the effort to restore the old river meander through the removal of the dam and water control structures on Dead River. Such an effort is completely consistent with past efforts at Congaree National Park to remove embankments and other water control structures.

As wetlands enhancement, the bank plans to remove several stands of planted loblolly pine on the tract, and replant these plots with more appropriate floodplain hardwood species. We noted in our public comments that most of the property was cut

in recent years and that some areas identified strictly for wetlands preservation may actually provide opportunities for wetlands enhancement through replanting. There may also be opportunities for enhancement through replanting after removal of invasive species.

A former Wood Duck pond on the site has apparently attracted Wood Stork and the bank has proposed managing the pond for wildlife habitat. Wood Stork have been observed numerous times at Congaree National Park, though much less frequently west of the park. We supported these efforts to manage the pond, but also saw the wisdom of a restoration that returns the pond to a more natural state.

Morris originally approached Congressman Joe

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New membership incentives

Friends of Congaree Swamp will be offering membership incentives for new and renewing members. Burgundy or khaki caps, khaki visors, or gold, teal or red bandanas with an inset of a portion of John Cely's map will be available for renewals at \$35 or higher. Anyone renewing at \$100 or higher will receive a copy of Chick Gaddy and John Cely's book, "The Natural History of Congaree Swamp." Make your selection on your next renewal form.



Save the date

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National Park. The count will last until about 4:30 p.m., weather permitting. Please come for all or just part of the day. We will meet at 9:30 a.m. at the Harry Hampton Visitor Center.

All ages and experience levels are welcome. These programs are free, but space is limited. Advance reservations are requested.

Appropriate clothing is required of all participants, including long-pants and closed-toed shoes that attach to the feet. Sun protection, bug spray, water, snacks, and a sack lunch for the June 21 event are recommended.

Binoculars are recommended as well, but not required. A limited supply of

binoculars will be available for use during these programs and may be reserved ahead of time at the front desk.

For more information contact David Shelley, education coordinator of the Old-Growth Bottomland Forest Research and Education Center, at david_shelley@nps.gov or (803) 647-3966, or Frank Henning, director of the Old-Growth Bottomland Forest Research and Education Center, at frank_henning@nps.gov or (803) 647-3963.



Hackberry Emperor

Mitigation

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Wilson, Friends of Congaree Swamp and Congaree National Park in August 2009 to explore the possibility of selling the property to the Department of the Interior as part of Congaree National Park. This would be a long-term goal for the mitigation bank and would require a congressional authorization for a boundary expansion.

An expansion would require a boundary expansion study, which involves extensive documentation of on-site resources.

We do see the opportunity for convergence here, since many of the studies necessary for the property to become a mitigation bank would provide important documentation necessary for a boundary expansion study.

Weston Lake trail guide coming soon

Quite some time ago, Friends of Congaree Swamp conceived a project to create a series of trail guides for Congaree National Park. The project was motivated in part by need—the park only has a guide for the Boardwalk Trail—and in part by our experiences when visiting other parks.

It is not uncommon to find not just a single trail guide, but multiple trail guides available at national park visitor centers or online. Since Congaree already had a guide for the Boardwalk Trail, it seemed natural to select the Weston Lake Loop Trail, the park's most popular surface trail, as the object of our first guide.

Many parks have a simple honor system for inexpensive guides where visitors can make a modest deposit at the trail head, pick up a guide and then return it when their hike is completed.

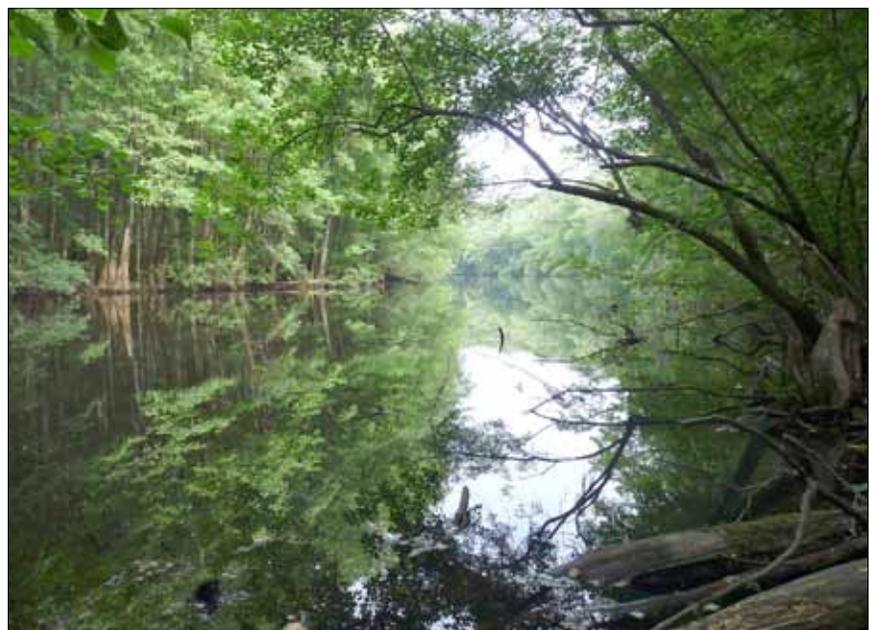
We originally intended to produce a printed guide with line drawings in the spirit of such trail head guides. As the project evolved, we found that a trail head-based system created a lot of overhead for the park and our preference for a longer format with photographs would have made such a system impractical regardless. In the end, we produced a printed trail guide that we hoped to sell at the visitor center, but will instead be offering online.

The guide includes 18 stops along the Weston Lake Loop Trail with a map and accompanying photographs

for each stop. It can be downloaded prior to or during a hike, but will not be GPS-enabled; i.e., it will not be keyed into your current location on the trail to alert you to upcoming guide highlights. The guide will be available for use shortly, and we will be sharing information through email, our website and Facebook on where to download the guide.

Several members of Friends of Congaree Swamp have assisted with the guide, but two deserve special mention. Sharon Kelly edited the guide and designed its layout, while Ed Kujaski created the web-based application for the guide.

We are working with University of South Carolina interns to develop guides for other trails, including Cedar Creek Canoe trail. With a template finally in hand, we anticipate that development of additional guides will proceed readily.



Weston Lake



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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

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

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

_____ 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: _____
Address: _____
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