



# Friends of Congaree Swamp News

## Save the date

### Paw Paw Adopt-a-Trail

Our next trail clearing date will be **Sunday, Aug. 28**. We'll work on the Sims Trail, the Boardwalk, the Weston Lake Trail and the Oakridge Trail, or whichever of the park's trails need the most attention. Though late August is hot, trail-clearing duties are usually light, and the paw paw fruit is ripe. We will be clearing the trails of fallen limbs, and intruding branches, vines and cane.

We will meet at the Visitor Center at 9 a.m. and finish in the early afternoon. Be prepared for warm weather, spider webs and bugs. Work gloves, light hiking boots, plenty of water, and a snack are recommended. If you have loppers, long-handled shears or bow saws, bring them along. Friends members

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## Park service celebrates 100; Congaree celebrates 40

By Scott Teodorski  
CNP Chief of Interpretation

In 1903, a group gathered at a massive grove of trees in California. Among the group



Photo by Carleton Watkins

John Muir

were Theodore Roosevelt and John Muir and the massive trees surrounding them became emblematic of the need to preserve our nation's natural and cultural treasures. In 1916, the National Park Service was created through passage of the Organic Act. This year marks the Centennial of the National Park Service and, at Congaree National Park, 2016 is especially momentous.

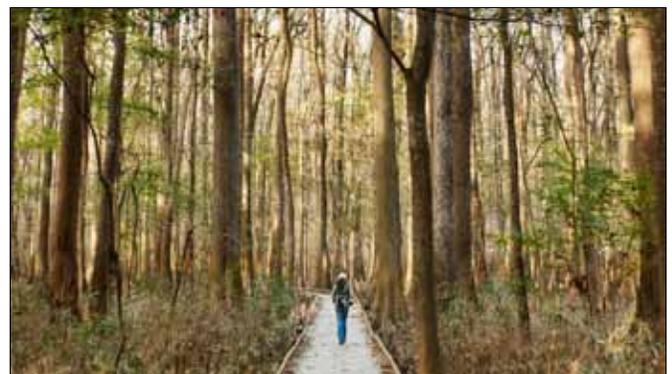
Congaree National Monument was created in 1976 and was eventually designated as Congaree National Park in 2003. The movement to create Congaree National Park began as a

grassroots effort by individuals who shared a desire to preserve this special place. The massive trees at Congaree also became symbolic. The story of the people who worked to preserve it endures and stands tribute to the visitors who come annually to marvel at the park's beauty and significance.

Park staff, volunteers, and friends will celebrate the Centennial of the National Park Service and the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Congaree National Park through special programs and activities slated to be offered in upcoming months.

Founders Day will be commemorated on Thursday, Aug. 25, and will focus on the movement to create the National Park Service and the history of

*See Congaree, page 3*



A hiker on the low boardwalk at Congaree National Park



# President's Corner

*Dr. John Grego*

## Feral hog management update

In our last newsletter, we shared an update on the activities of Jake Beechler, the park's wildlife specialist hired to manage the feral hog population at the park. Jake's activities continue, including night-hunting to remove a feral hog sounder that had been rooting along the Low Boardwalk, and the evocatively named judas pig program, in which a trapped pig is released with a tracking collar and used to locate a sounder, or family group, of feral hogs.

We also detailed Friends of Congaree Swamp's efforts to seek funding for this upcoming year. I can confirm that our board voted to donate \$15,000 toward the position this upcoming year, but have not yet learned whether our grant application to Blue Sky Funders Forum was successful.

Liz Struhar, the park's integrated resource manager, and Noel Myers with the U.S. Department of Agriculture have been active in seeking funds as well. Some of these funding proposals have a greater chance of success if they can document effects of feral hog degradation upon adjacent private landowners.

Recent outreach efforts were catalyzed by an appearance by park personnel at a Calhoun County Soil and Water Conservation District meeting to discuss their feral hog management program. Friends of Congaree Swamp Board member Dick Watkins identified several affected

private landowners in Calhoun County and has worked as a liaison to ensure that damage to agriculture and silviculture is fully documented.

Independently, Jake Beechler has reached out to additional landowners in Richland County to coordinate feral hog control efforts. The landowners have the opportunity to sign cooperative management agreements with the park that allow park management activities on their land.

## Oakridge Trail Guide

South Carolina Honors College student Andrew "Drew" Dixon approached me last year for a service-related project to include as part of his honors thesis. He was particularly interested in preparing a trail guide, so we selected the Oakridge Trail as a candidate and planned a scouting trip.

The trip was only a few weeks after the October floods, and we were surprised that we were able to negotiate the entire trail in spite of flooding, downed trees and bridges buried under flotsam. Drew continued his work through the fall and spring, successfully defending his thesis in April. During a convalescence at home in July, I had an excellent opportunity to edit Drew's guide and prepare materials so that our webmaster Burt Pardue could prepare a web-based version for our web page. The Oakridge Trail now joins the Weston Lake Loop Trail and Bluff Trail guides already hosted there.

This fall, I will again be teaching a service learning course on the park to Honors College students, and hope to persuade students to prepare at least one additional guide for their service project.

## Board member transition

Mardie Faucette, granddaughter of Harry Hampton, stepped down as a board member earlier this year, having served since 2010. We are truly grateful to Mardie for the support she, her sister Mary, and her mother Harriott Faucette have provided to Friends of Congaree Swamp over the years. The board recently appointed Blaney Coskrey to fill Mardie's unexpired term.

Blaney was born and grew up in Sumter with family roots in Clarendon County. His formative summers were spent on Lake Marion,

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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

*See Grego, page 5*

# Industrial park development goals reached

The S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control recently released a notice of department decision on the permit to develop Richland County's proposed industrial park. The site is the same one proposed to relocate the State Farmers' Market several years ago.

Development will involve filling approximately 10 acres of wetlands and extending Shop Road to Longwood Road, which will require bridging Reeder Point Branch, a tributary of Mill Creek.

Filling the wetlands will involve the relocation of a small pond that will be crossed by the Shop Road extension. In its comments two years ago, Friends was concerned that

Richland County proposed mitigating the wetlands impacts using a mitigation plan in the Congaree Creek watershed in Lexington County. We were gratified to learn from the decision that credits from the Mill Creek mitigation bank will be used instead.

We were also concerned with the protection of Reeder Point Branch's floodplain. Based on site drawings, a proposed utility corridor along the edge of the floodplain would serve as a de facto buffer, though small portions of the floodplain would be filled.

Also of concern was the crossing of Reeder Point Branch, since the size of the proposed culverts was unclear. According

to the decision, two bottomless culverts, each approximately 50 feet wide, will be used under the Shop Road extension. A bottomless culvert has a top and two sides, but the base is unpaved and basically follows the natural contours of the floodplain and stream channel.

The decision also included admonishments that construction discharges should not affect bacterial water quality of Reeder Point Branch.

In the end, we achieved most of our goals strictly related to the permit, though we are sorry to see the excellent birding and wildlife habitat associated with Longwood Farm being converted to industrial use.

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## Congaree

*Continued from page 1*

Congaree National Park. Special exhibits in the Harry Hampton Visitor Center will highlight the park stories through photographs and quotes from the park's oral history collection. The original watercolor paintings of Stephen Chesley, Columbia artist-in-residence, will be on display. Several programs will be offered in the auditorium throughout the day and refreshments will be served. These events and activities will serve to kick off upcoming events culminating with a very special 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration in October.

**Tuesday, Oct. 18**, marks the

40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Congaree National Park. That day will be celebrated at the Harry Hampton Visitor Center with numerous exhibits and programs, including commemorative hikes showcasing the big trees and the history of Congaree National Park along with living history programs. Refreshments will be served, including a Congaree "birthday" cake celebrating the occasion!

The week will culminate with a gala and reception to be held in Columbia at the South Carolina State Museum on **Saturday, Oct. 22**. The reception will feature several guest speakers, an unveiling of a Stephen Chesley original

painting and a concert featuring chamber musicians performing a tribute to the words of John Muir and wilderness.

2016 has been an amazing and busy year. It has also been a year to commemorate the extraordinary efforts of those who worked to preserve our treasures, nationally and locally here in South Carolina. These celebrations also stand to remind us that the story is not over. This is not just a birthday party but a call to continue the legacy and do what those did before us.

Our national parks are gifts to future generations and Congaree National Park stands as a shining example of this ideal.

## Save the date

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and park staff will provide gear if you do not have any.

Please contact John Grego at [friendsofcongareeswamp@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofcongareeswamp@gmail.com) or 803-331-3366 if interested.

### Migratory bird hike

Join us **Sunday, Sept. 25**, for a fall hike to look for migratory birds moving through the park on their way back to the Caribbean, Central America and South America.

This is also a chance to see if we can still find some of our summer resident bird species that have not yet moved on.

During the hike, we will have the opportunity to practice identification skills on mostly resident and

summer species, and observe several species up close.

The hike will be part of the Fall North American Migration Count for Congaree National Park, an idea first originated by Kathleen O'Grady, and our observations will be part of a statewide compilation. We plan to cover other areas of the park both preceding and following the morning hike and welcome additional volunteers.

We will meet at the Harry Hampton Visitor Center at 8:30 a.m. and the hike should last until noon. Bring water, insect repellent and binoculars. The hike will follow portions of the Sims Trail, Boardwalk

Loop Trail and Bluff Trail. If interested, contact John Grego at (803) 331-3366 or [friendsofcongareeswamp@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofcongareeswamp@gmail.com).

### Butterfly count

The fall North American Butterfly Association Butterfly Count will be held **Saturday, Oct. 1**, from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Congaree National Park staff members David Shelley and Frank Henning and Carolina Butterfly Society members

Marty and David Kastner are organizing this annual event. The fall count always promises excellent butterfly activity throughout the park.



*Pearl Crescent*

Participants will spend the day conducting field observations counting butterflies along the trail system and within various habitats of the park. Please come for all or just part of the day.

We will meet at 9 a.m. at the Harry Hampton Visitor Center. All ages and experience levels are welcome. 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 are recommended. Binoculars are

recommended as well, but not required. A limited supply of binoculars will be available for use during this program, and these may be reserved ahead of time at the front desk. This program is free, but space is limited. Advance reservations are requested.

For more information please contact David Shelley, education coordinator of the Old-Growth Bottomland Forest Research and Education Center, at [david\\_shelley@nps.gov](mailto:david_shelley@nps.gov) or (803) 647-3966.

### Aquatic Critters Appreciation Event

The Aquatic Critters Appreciation Event will be held **Saturday, Oct. 15**, from 8:30 a.m. until noon.

It's a rare opportunity to explore Congaree National Park's wide variety of aquatic life that most visitors never see or experience. Led by Dr. Jim Bulak, research coordinator at the S.C. Department of Natural Resources' Fisheries Research lab in Eastover, we will visit a number of aquatic habitats, along Dry Branch, rather than our usual location along

Cedar Creek.

Dr. Bulak also will organize a team to electrofish Dry Branch. We will bring along gear to

stop at backwaters and collect and discuss the fish, crayfish, insects, salamanders and other critters that live in them. A macroinvertebrate



*Cedar Creek Crayfish*

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## Save the date

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specialist will be along to assist with identifications.

Inspection of the specimens collected by Dr. Bulak and his crew will take more than an hour. The hike to the site will require some off-trail walking,

Participants should be in moderate physical shape. Bring water and insect repellent and long pants are recommended.

Participants should be in moderate physical shape. Bring water and insect repellent and 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.

Meet at the Visitor Center parking lot. To sign up, contact John Grego at [friendsofcongaresswamp@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofcongaresswamp@gmail.com) or 803-331-3366.

### Annual Meeting

Friends of Congaree Swamp will hold its Annual Oyster Roast and Business Meeting on **Sunday, Oct. 30**, at the learning center at Congaree National Park.

It has been many years since our last annual meeting at the park, and we are excited to return for the park service's centennial and the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the park. We will have guided nature-based hikes along some of the park's most familiar trails.

In addition to oysters, chili, roast chicken, vegetables and desserts are on the menu

Look for registration materials soon.

# Donna Slyce passes away

We were very sorry to learn of the death of Donna Slyce on June 4, 2016 in Ridgeway.

Donna was a prominent South Carolina birder, who served as chair of the S.C. Records Committee for the Carolina Bird Club and had strong ties to birding at Congaree National Park.

Donna, along with Robin Carter and Lloyd Moon, was one of the first birders to explore Congaree Bluffs Heritage Preserve with as a hawk watch site in 2000. She also patrolled the Kingsnake Trail with Molly Bonnell for the Congaree Swamp Christmas Bird Count for many years. She had an uncanny knack for finding some of her beloved Piedmont bird species, including Purple Finch and Pine Siskin.

Donna stepped in as leader of the Robin Carter Dawn Chorus Walk from 2009 to 2015. Given her nuanced reflections on birding blogs of the pre-dawn bird sounds



*Donna Slyce*

heard on her Ridgeway farm, she was a natural choice.

One of Donna's dawn chorus walks was featured in the January/February 2012 issue of S.C. Wildlife magazine. The article "First Light: Midlands" by Aida Rogers was a spot-on profile of Donna's working-class sensibility and smarts. In the article, Aida recognized the trip leader as Donna, "the undisputed smartest and straightest talking girl in my Lexington High class of 1979."

The article ends with Donna's reflection on the peace she found at Congaree: "It's quiet here too. It's just you and the birds. For a lot of us, it's healing."

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## Grego

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to which he attributes his continuing love of swampy habitats. He lives in the Horrell Hill area with two yellow labs.

He holds a BA in English from Furman University and a Juris Doctor from University of South Carolina. He specializes in business and employment litigation. In recent years, he has been a mediator, helping

others solve their disputes.

His leisure interests include hiking, kayaking, and photography. He has completed the Master Naturalist program and some pro birder modules sponsored by the South Carolina Wildlife Federation.

Soon after starting law school in 1986, he discovered what was then Congaree Swamp National Monument and has been a frequent visitor since.



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**Join Friends of Congaree Swamp today!**

Yes, I want to support conservation of Congaree Swamp for future generations. Enclosed is my tax-deductible contribution of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ . (Please make checks payable to Friends of Congaree Swamp.)

Individual \$15      Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Family \$35 \*      Mailing address \_\_\_\_\_  
 Advocate \$50      City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Partner \$100 \*\*      Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_  
 Benefactor \$500  
 Patron \$1000  
 Nonprofit \$50  
 Corporate \$1000

***Please keep your information current to receive special notices about field trips, events, scheduling changes and acknowledgements in addition to a quarterly newsletter.***

\*For a contribution of \$35 or more, you may choose one:

- Baseball cap maroon \_\_\_\_\_ tan \_\_\_\_\_
- Tan visor \_\_\_\_\_
- Bandana with map of Congaree National Park gold \_\_\_\_\_ blue \_\_\_\_\_ red \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*For a contribution of \$100 or more you will receive a copy of "The Natural History of Congaree Swamp."

In addition, I would like to donate \$ \_\_\_\_\_ as a gift.

**Thank you for supporting Friends of Congaree Swamp!**

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