



Friends of Congaree Swamp News

www.friendsofcongarree.org

Spring 2018

Save the date

Adopt-a-Trail workday

Friends of Congaree Swamp will be clearing our adopted trails on **Saturday, June 2.**

Although later than usual, the date coincides with National Trails Day, when organizations across the country celebrate trails on public lands.

Our mascot is Indian Pink, which will be blooming along the Weston Lake Loop and Oakridge Trails. We will be concentrating on pruning back spring growth for the mid-canopy species (holly, ironwood, paw paw, etc).

There should be some flotsam from the recent flooding to move off the trails as well.

We will meet at the Visitor Center at 9 a.m. and will finish in the early afternoon.

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Deer management group helps with feral hog control

The Midlands Chapter of the Quality Deer Management Association has become Congaree National Park's new partner in its fight to control feral hogs.

In our Fall 2017 newsletter, we discussed our recent \$10,000 contribution to the park's hog control efforts, as well as increasing cooperation between the park, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and adjacent landowners and hunt clubs.

The park has funded a feral hog specialist, Jake Beechler, for the last three years with assistance from Friends of Congaree Swamp, while the USDA supports an additional feral hog control specialist, Bennett Payne, who works with landowners adjacent to the park.

At a 2016 workshop, Kingville Hunt Club president Larry Bachman, in a conversation with park resource manager Liz Struhar, had suggested a financial contribution to the park's feral hog control program. She reached out to Bachman in September of last year for support for the upcoming fiscal year, and he suggested that the Midlands Chapter of QDMA could arrange a fundraiser meeting. Bachman is a former president of the Midlands chapter



Park resource manager Liz Struhar and superintendent Tracy Stakely accept a \$2500 donation from the Midlands chapter of QDMA.

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President's Corner

Dr. John Grego

Grants

We have recently applied for grants to help with a couple projects at the park.

In February, we applied to the American Hiking Society for a \$2000 National Trails Fund Grant to extend the Fork Swamp Trail. Remember from our Winter 2017 newsletter that we used a \$5000 grant from REI to fund creation of the Fork Swamp Trail, including a parking area, an interpretive kiosk and a 0.6-mile loop trail with an unimproved paddling put-in on Bates Old River.

The trail was the site of considerable river otter activity this winter, with photographers Ron Ahle and Paul Beardsley able to observe and photograph otters for more than 30 minutes on separate visits.

The new grant would create a 2-mile loop by extending the portion of the trail along Bates Old River all the way to the Congaree River, following the riverbank for a piece then tying back into an existing jeep trail. Little additional trail creation would be required, and most of the funding would be used to create bridges over small guts that enter Bates Old River.

On a related matter, directional signs along U.S. 601 for Fork Swamp Trail have not yet been installed, so casual visitors have no way of knowing about the new trail. We have assisted the park by acquiring engineering drawings needed for the park's encroachment permit.

An encroachment permit is necessary since the signs will be placed on the S.C. Department of Transportation's easement along U.S. 601.

We also applied to the North Face Explore Fund for \$10,000 with the hope of revisiting improvements to the South Cedar Creek canoe/kayak landing, based on input from park staff. The funding would be used to supplement \$16,000 that Friends of Congaree Swamp long ago committed to landing improvements. A design has not been finalized, though it would presumably include elements from designs that the park and Friends of Congaree Swamp separately commissioned.

In any case, we are getting a little ahead of ourselves, since we have not yet received word on our proposals. We are confident we can find funds for Fork Swamp improvements from our own resources if needed, but would need to identify additional funding for the South Cedar Creek landing project if the North Face grant falls through.

Interim superintendents

As reported in the Winter 2018 newsletter, Friends of Congaree Swamp wrote to the National Park Service's Southeast Region Office to request a speedy process to replace former Superintendent Tracy Stakely.

Shortly thereafter, though likely not precipitated by our letter, the regional announced that two interim superintendents would be appointed to successive two-month terms while the superintendent search commenced. To our delight, the first interim superintendent was Mark Kinzer, longtime Congaree National Park advocate, enthusiast and historian. Mark recently published *Nature's Return*, a land-use history of the park based on 20 years' research, and was recipient of our 2011 Order of the Cypress Award.

Mark's tenure will end May 18, before the time you read this. After a one-week hiatus, Dr. Giselle Mora-Bourgeois, NPS coordinator for the Gulf Coast Cooperative Ecosystems Study Unit, will begin her two-month interim term.

We wrote to the regional office again upon learning of the park's record visitation of more than 159,000 in 2017, and urged quick action on posting the permanent superintendent

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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

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Garrick Road receives patchy repair

Garrick Road is rarely used as an access point to the park by the general public, though Friends of Congaree Swamp organizes trips to the intact 400-acre mixed Loblolly/Longleaf Pine forest at the road's southern terminus from time to time.

The road provides critical access for park personnel conducting controlled burns, controlling feral hogs, or carrying out law enforcement patrols. For these reasons, the deteriorating condition of the road became an increasing concern.

Within the past few years, the road developed a mud hole near the park boundary that became so deep and so extensive, it was known as "Garrick Lake" to park staff and was impassable to most vehicles. In the past year, another area of the road became increasingly difficult to navigate as well.

This past fall, Friends of Congaree Swamp contacted the park to discuss possible avenues to improve the road and found that the park had recently been in touch with Richland County's Roads and Drainage Division to improve the road. We weighed in with Roads and Drainage as well, and were told that resurfacing work would be scheduled in December.

After receiving notice in late December that the work was

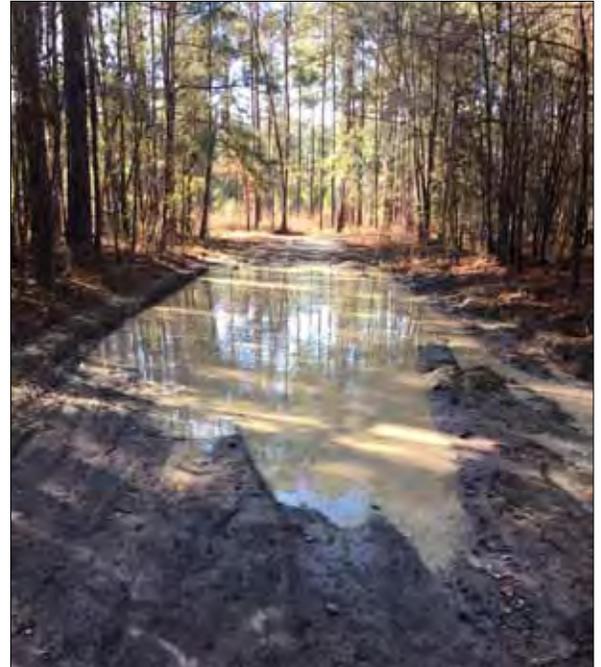
complete, we ventured to Garrick Road only to find to that the northern half had been resurfaced, which was good news to Garrick Road homeowners, but the impassable southern half was untouched. We took documentary photos and refiled our request, at which point Richland County finally improved the southern portion of the road.

The county explained that it was somewhat reticent to improve the road since there had been multiple reports of illegal dumping and trespassing on private property by hunters along Garrick Road in the past, and it was concerned that an improved road would only encourage a renewal of such activity.

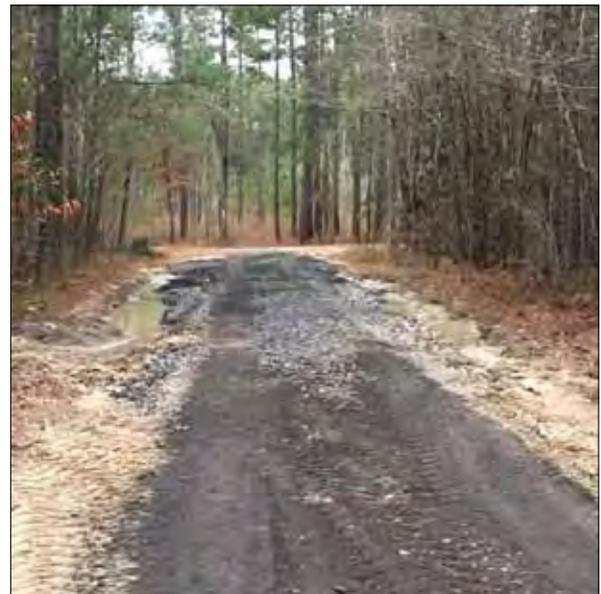
In fact, the improvement was deliberately patchy so that casual visitors to Garrick Road might be discouraged.

We visited the road after the second repair, and indeed found it rough, but readily navigable by a passenger car with no sign of Garrick Lake if you had not known it was there before.

The county has indicated



Garrick Road before



Garrick Road after

that it maintains an interest in keeping the road accessible, but would prefer to make improvements upon request. We now know better than to let it reach the state it was in last year.

Broad River Road Wastewater Treatment Facility completes corrective actions

A public notice for the renewal of the surface water discharge permit for Richland County's Broad River Wastewater Treatment Facility provided the opportunity to review that facility's operation.

This mid-sized plant, located a mile upstream from Harbison State Forest, is designed to treat up to 6 million gallons each day, but typically treats 1.5 million gallons each day.

WE REVIEWED THE Environmental Protection Agency's online database, which suggested a reasonable compliance record over the previous few years with four minor-to-moderate sanitary sewer overflows and a good compliance record for most of its analytes.

On the other hand, there were at least nine exceedances for coliform bacteria in the previous three years. The plant has been under a Consent Order to develop a corrective action plan for bacterial water quality violations and the Department of Health and Environmental Control reports that corrective actions have been completed. Both the sanitary sewage overflows and the semiannual coliform exceedances suggest some continuing issues with the plant operation.

IN GENERAL, we were pleased to see that the existing sampling frequencies and analyte thresholds remained largely the same, though we requested that samples should be collected daily rather than five times per week due to the coliform violations.

We were most interested in the 7Q10 calculation for the Broad River—a regulatory low flow that is used to establish analyte thresholds for discharges to the river.

As we have explained in previous newsletters, the 7Q10 is computed as the 10th percentile from the set of annual minimum 7-day running averages for a stream or river. It is used to ensure discharges are sufficiently diluted even during periods of low flow.

THE 7Q10 CALCULATION for the permit was based on a value of 807 cubic feet per second calculated by the U.S. Geological Survey in 2010. We actually discussed calculations with USGS following an analysis of the 7Q10 as part of public comments on a discharge permit for V.C. Summer Nuclear Plant Units 2 and 3 in 2012 and argued that empirically their value of 807 cubic feet per

second appeared too high.

We revisited and updated our calculations for this permit, and argued that a value of 600 cubic feet per second or lower would be more appropriate. We also noted that since USGS completed its calculation, their 7Q10 has been higher than the annual minimum 7-day average flow for four of nine years, so empirical evidence continues to accumulate that their computed value is too high.

IN DHEC'S RESPONSE, it was noted that USGS had recalculated its 7Q10 in response to our 2012 comments and updated the calculation to 720 cubic feet per second. This bit of history escaped our recollection, we are embarrassed to say, but it was good to know that our comments resulted in a lower 7Q10, which will reduce the wasteload allowed under the permit.

We still feel that the regulatory low flow for the Broad River may be too low, particularly given recent trends, and will continue to monitor Broad River flows annually and request an update should circumstances present a compelling argument for doing so.

Nest discoveries highlight Dawn Chorus



Photo by Jerry Griggs

Prothonotary Warbler at nesting cavity



Aninga



Photo by Rhonda Grego

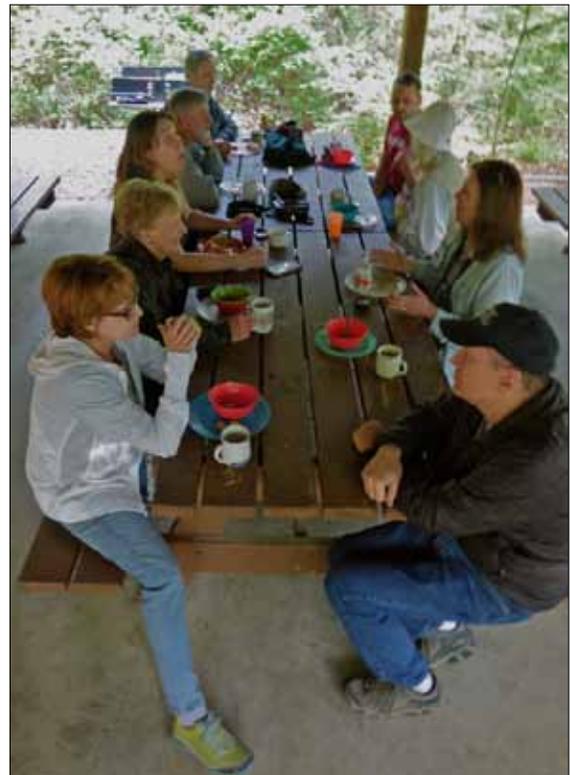
Dr. Jerry Griggs

Dr. Jerry Griggs led the Robin Carter Dawn Chorus Walk on May 6, which serves as the anchor to our annual spring North American Migration Count.

Participants included Robin's widow, Dr. Caroline Eastman, and interim park Superintendent Mark Kinzer.

After participants enjoyed breakfast, a small group walked the Sims Trail and elevated boardwalk, then reconvened in the afternoon for a visit to the eastern end of the park. Sightings by other observers were added to the account.

The birding highlight of the day was the discovery of three different nests! Chris Marsh from the Lowcountry Institute was leading a separate hike and found a Yellow-throated Vireo nest in the parking lot; scope views of the male singing from the nest were shared with everyone. Later, a White-throated Vireo on its nest was found from the elevated boardwalk, while Jerry Griggs spotted a male Prothonotary Warbler at a nesting cavity directly opposite the vireo nest.



Participants enjoying breakfast



Cherrybark Oak Hike

John Cely recently led a group of Friends members to revisit the Cherrybark Oak along the River Trail, the largest hardwood in the park.

Along the way, we stopped by several other interesting trees, including a most unlikely state champion recently documented by John, with the charismatic common name of Buckthorn Bully (or Buckthorn Bumelia).

This subcanopy tree is only about five inches in diameter, and few are found in the park.

We remeasured the Cherrybark Oak and shared measurements with Prof. John Kupfer. He had recently taken measurements himself and part of the park's champion tree project and confirmed that the Cherrybark Oak was eligible as a national co-champion.

Cherrybark Oak a national contender



Kate Hartley, left, and John Cely inspect the Buckthorn Bully.



Measuring the Cherrybark Oak

Save the date

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Work gloves, light hiking boots, water, and a snack are recommended. If you have loppers, long-handled shears, or a portable saw, bring them along. Friends members and park staff will provide gear if you do not have any.

Contact John Grego at friendsofcongareswamp@gmail.com or 803-331-3366 if interested.

Summer butterfly count

The summer North American Butterfly Association Butterfly Count will be held **Saturday, June 16.**

Congaree National Park's Dr. David Shelley and Carolina Butterfly Society members Marty and David Kastner are organizing the annual event.

Participants will spend

the day conducting field observations counting butterflies along the trail system and within various habitats of the park. The count will last until about 3 p.m., weather permitting. 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, including long pants and closed-toed shoes that attach to the feet.

Butterflies like the sun, so bring sun protection and plenty of water. Bug spray,

water, snacks, and a sack lunch also are recommended.

Close-focus binoculars are suggested as well, but not required. A limited supply of binoculars will be available for use during this program, and 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 contact David Shelley, director of the Old-Growth Bottomland Forest Research and Education Center, at david_shelley@nps.gov or (803) 647-3966.



Common Buckeye

QDMA

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of QDMA, while Chip Salak is the current president.

On Dec. 12, Midlands QDMA hosted a cookout and presentation by USDA-APHIS (Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service) personnel at Millaree Hunt Club attended by QDMA members, park staff and Friends members.

Jim Edens first discussed USDA's efforts at the national level, then Beechler and Payne presented their work at

Congaree National Park and adjacent private properties.

After the presentation, Salak presented a \$2500 check to park Superintendent Tracy Stakely, and pledged to match any contributions collected that night through Dec. 31. A total of \$172 was collected and \$250 was later donated through the Friends of Congaree Swamp website, resulting in an additional \$844 raised by QDMA to support the park's feral hog control efforts.

We greatly appreciate the contributions of a new partner to this critical park program.

Grego

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position. In response, the regional office anticipates posting the vacancy soon.

Kinzer's friends here in the Midlands encouraged him to consider applying for the superintendent's job, but he has too many commitments in Atlanta to consider the post.

We are encouraged by the regional office's actions to date and hope the interview process and eventual appointment will proceed apace.



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_____ Family \$35 * Mailing address _____
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_____ Benefactor \$500
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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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