



Friends of Congaree Swamp News

www.friendsofcongarree.org

Summer 2018

Save the date

Fall butterfly count

The fall North American Butterfly Association Butterfly Count will be held Saturday, **Sept. 8**, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Dr. David Shelley, Congaree National Park education coordinator, 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. Come for all or just part of the day. The fall count always records many more species than the early summer count, so be prepared for a busy day! We will meet at the Harry Hampton Visitor Center. All ages and experience levels are welcome. Wear appropriate

See *Save the date*, page 5

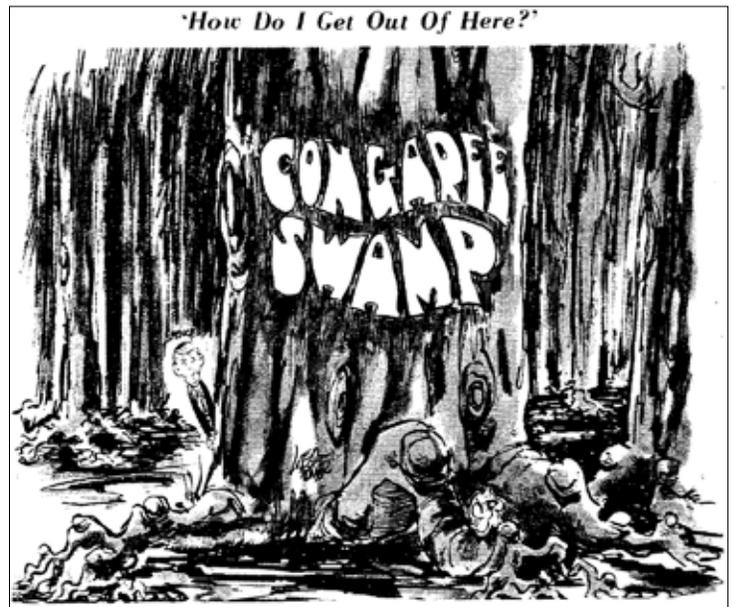
The Congaree Swamp and the Floyd Spence papers

By Neal Pohemus

The remarkably successful grassroots campaign to save the ancient trees of the Congaree River floodplain from the sawdust piles of Sumter County will be familiar to many readers of this newsletter.

In the early 1970s, with the assistance of The Sierra Club, an informal group of environmentally conscious citizens morphed into the Congaree Swamp National Preserve Association (CSNPA) to protect the ancient trees. But the Beidler family, who owned the core tract of what would become Congaree Swamp National Monument, had no interest in selling their land.

Consequently, the preservation of the Beidler tract would require an act of Congress. The highly motivated preservationists set their sights on Congressman Floyd Spence who represented South Carolina's Second District, including the Beidler tract. The Floyd Spence Papers housed in the Hollings Special Collections Library



The State

INSIDE

President's Corner.....	2
Aquatic Critters Hike	2
Ted Snyder dies	3
Fort Motte Festival.....	4
Annual Meeting.....	5

Continued on page 6



President's Corner

Dr. John Grego

River Trail Guide

We recently completed an online guide for the River Trail, available for download on the Friends website under the Visit tab.

This new guide highlights the sandbar, and includes an optional off-trail visit to the largest Cherrybark Oak in the park, a national co-champion.

Scouting for the trail guide this summer had

unexpected benefits, leading to the first-ever sighting in the park of a Limpkin, a large snail-eating wading bird typically found in Florida.

We now have trail guides available for all the trails in the western end of the park, thanks in part to contributions of University of South Carolina Honors College students, who completed three guides either as part of senior thesis projects or as a service project for a course.

An Honors College service course on Congaree National Park will again be offered this fall, and students should complete guides for the park's newest trails along the U.S. 601 corridor, the Bates Fork Trail and the Fork Swamp Trail.

The Cedar Creek Canoe Trail really has not been on our radar screen as a subject for a guide, but perhaps it is time to add it to our to-do list.

Aquatic Critters Hike



Mud Sunfish



Justin Lewandowski looks for macroinvertebrates

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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

The Aquatic Critters Hike in May sampled a productive reach of Toms Creek. Dr. Jim Bulak of the S.C. Department of Natural Resources led the hike assisted by technician Nathan Hayes. It was the first of our field trips find a Mud Sunfish, top left. Justin Lewandowski from the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control helped identify macroinvertebrates, including some truly intimidating dragonfly, mayfly, and stonefly nymphs. Thanks to Kingville Hunt Club for allowing access to the site.

Congaree loses one of its first advocates

Lawyer and conservationist Ted Snyder, one of the originators of the efforts to save Congaree Swamp, passed away recently at his home in Walhalla.

The Greenville News obituary summarized his many contributions to conservation efforts in the Southeast:

“Concurrent with his law career, Ted Snyder became a committed environmentalist. After returning from an East African safari, he set out to protect wilderness in the Southeast. He joined the Sierra Club in 1966 and organized members in the Carolinas in 1968. He served as first chair of the Joseph LeConte Chapter, and in 1971 he organized the Appalachian Regional Conservation Committee. He was chosen to serve as chair of the National Wilderness Committee in 1974 and the National Outing Committee in 1980. After serving as national treasurer in 1977, he was elected president of the national Sierra Club in 1978, serving for two years.

“Ted Snyder was instrumental in establishing the Chattooga as a Wild & Scenic River and in protecting the Congaree Swamp

as a national park. He was also intimately involved in the Cohutta and Kilmer-Slick Rock Wilderness designations and the passage of the Eastern Wilderness Act. One of his last achievements was successfully opposing the infamous “road to nowhere” in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park by helping to negotiate a fair financial settlement between the Department of the Interior, TVA, the state of North Carolina, and Swain County.

“For his environmental work, he was honored with the national Sierra Club’s Special Achievement Award and Walter A. Starr Award, as well as the Joseph LeConte Award. In 2002, the National Parks & Conservation Association presented him with its Marjorie Stoneman Douglas Award for his efforts to protect the Great Smoky Mountain wilderness.”

The 2009 documentary, “Roots in the River”, describes how Ted and others organized the first Sierra Club trip to Congaree Swamp in October 1969, with a crowd of 50 people attending. That first outing led



Ted Snyder

to other outings, and as Ted noted in the documentary, “We started off, our goal was to have one outing a month and every outing, we had big crowds and people were signing up. They wanted to join. They wanted to get involved in what we were doing. It just blossomed.”

These early trips were critical to developing a groundswell of support for protecting the swamp. And at the wildly successful Congaree Action Now rally of Sept. 20, 1975, it was Ted as the final speaker who literally put an exclamation point on the event as he led the crowd in a call-and-response—
What do we want? Congaree Action Now!
What do we want to tell the governor?
Congaree Action Now!

Fort Motte Festival



Kellie Weidinger, right, Congaree National Park's communiity volunteer ambassador, talks with a couple of festival attendees about mammals in the Congaree Swamp.

Friends of Congaree Swamp attended the 17th annual Fort Motte Festival in July. The festival coincided with the biennial Community Reunion Festival organized by Jackie Whitmore to celebrate the descendants of African-Americans enslaved at Lang Syne Plantation near Fort Motte.

Friends has attended the festival since its inception and has shared a booth with Congaree National Park for the past two years.



Dick Watkins, right, talks with the Rev. Johnny Goodwine of Sweet Home Baptist Church.

2018 Annual Meeting

Friends of Congaree Swamp will visit Richland County's Mill Creek property on the Congaree River floodplain just upstream from Congaree National Park for its Annual Oyster Roast and Business Meeting on Sunday, October 28. In addition to natural history tours, county conservation staff will lead tours that showcase ongoing mitigation efforts at the site and discuss tourism plans.

Look for registration materials soon.



Goose Pond

Save the date

continued from page 1

clothing, including long pants and closed-toed shoes.

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

Bug spray, water, snacks, and a sack

lunch are also recommended.

Close-focus 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



Great Purple Hairstreak

reservations are requested.

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

Migratory bird hike

Join us **Saturday, Sept. 29**, 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 (mostly of resident and summer species), and will be able to observe several species up close, such as

American Redstart which are usually found in good numbers.

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 friendsofcongaresswamp@gmail.com.

Spence

continued from page 1

at USC since 2009 provide a window into the final stages of the efforts to preserve one of the last old-growth bottomland hardwood forests.

Although Spence was a relative newcomer to Washington, D.C., he was a familiar face in Columbia, having served in the S.C. House. Congressman Spence took office in January 1971 but material in the archive concerning Congaree is not documented until 1974.

The preservationists had their work cut out for them. According to an internally circulated memorandum, Spence was known to be a “good guy, but not a mover and shaker... doesn’t want to have to make a decision” on Congaree. Spence tended to vote for “environmental concerns which are national and won’t have repercussions at home.”

For the members of the CSNPA, the ever-increasing number of logging trucks ascending from the floodplain *were* significant repercussions at home. While the preservationists viewed the logging of the floodplain as the eradication of the last virgin forest in the Southeastern

United States, others measured success in volume of board-feet cut at the timber mill.

Martin C. Colvin, president of the Holly Hill Lumber Company, wrote to Spence on April 23, 1975, and included a copy of the S.C. Forestry Association’s opposition literature. Dubbed the Congaree Pamphlet, 20,000 were initially printed and a second printing was under consideration.

As the third largest industry in South Carolina, the coffers of the timber industry were bottomless in comparison to those of the CSNPA. The alleged advocates of “true forest conservation” were formidable foes from the outset and remained so throughout the campaign.

With each passing day, the volume of trees harvested from Congaree increased, further threatening the preservationists’ campaign. The Beidler family planned to log about 500 to 600 acres of timber each year, a rate that would eliminate the remaining old-growth groves in less than 30 years.

Despite the overwhelming odds against them, the preservationists were relentless,

meeting with Spence “at least a half dozen times” and his “aides many additional times” as the campaign escalated. In an early June 1975 letter, CSNPA President Jim Elder bemoaned Spence’s continued inaction and unwillingness to give “any



Floyd Spence in 1976

clear statement” of his position on Congaree. Elder repeated Doug Salisbury’s accurate assertion that Spence was deliberately foot-dragging on the Congaree issue. Spence’s silence was unacceptable;

the thousands of citizens “concerned about the preservation of Congaree Swamp” deserved a response.

Elder’s letter hit the mark. Spence responded in a June 16, 1975, letter, expressing surprise in regard to the “tone” of Elder’s dispatch. The three-page letter, the longest of any he dispatched on Congaree in the archive, left little doubt as to Spence’s stance regarding the issue.

Spence’s stated that his “goal is to do what is right and only that” —an irritatingly vague promise included in nearly every letter sent to constituents, whether opponent or advocate

Continued on page 7

Spence

continued from page 6

for saving Congaree. Only with the completion of the study being conducted jointly by the S.C. Wildlife and Marine Resources Department and the National Park Service would Spence take action.

Despite the fact that a 1963 Park Service study supported preserving Congaree, the repeated call for additional studies was a recurring thorn in the preservationists' efforts. Although Spence stated he was "sympathetic" with the "general objective" to preserve "landmarks of great significance," measures for stopping the ongoing destructive logging of Congaree were dead in the water until an official report was finalized. Spence's letter to Elder revealed that the Congressman would respond to constituent pressure but only when backed into a corner.

Those challenging the preservationists' efforts to protect Congaree from further destruction actively sought to sway Spence's stance on legislation. From 1947-1988, Spence was member of the U.S. Naval Reserve. Donald Carter, who served with Spence in the

reserves for about a decade, and was an active member of Cedar Creek Hunt Club that leased the property from the Beidler family, used their military camaraderie to try to convince



Dorothy Walker, second from right, and her staff from USC's South Carolina Political Collections Library accept Jim Elder's records from the 1970s-era efforts to preserve Congaree Swamp.

the Congressman not to support the proposed legislation.

In late January 1976, Columbia businessman Wyman Platt, also an active member of Cedar Creek Hunt Club, contacted Spence via telephone and letter. Platt restated the opponents' well-established platform against saving Congaree—loss of state tax revenue, the establishment of Four Holes Swamp, and ongoing strategic forest management.

John D. Carpenter III of St. Matthews and owner of a tract of land along the

Congaree River abutting the Beidler tract, pleaded with Spence, stating that his family's floodplain property was "his whole life." The opponents for preserving Congaree proved to

be formidable adversaries throughout the campaign, but they ultimately failed.

For the supporters of Congaree, Spence was the key to introducing legislation. Had the CSNPA been unsuccessful, the Beidler tract would most likely resemble the thousands of skeleton keys mailed to Spence late in the campaign—bareboned.

The materials highlighted in this essay are but a small glimpse of the Congaree files in the Spence papers. Many more treasures are waiting to be uncovered and revealed.

The Spence papers, along with a significant cache of CSNPA papers recently donated to USC, are priceless relics of the monumental efforts required to save Congaree.

Digging through the boxes and folders is an exercise of patient, methodical discovery, much like a hike through the floodplain in search of the record trees that continue to thrive in Congaree National Park.



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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!

Friends of Congaree Swamp, P.O. Box 7746, Columbia, SC 29202-7746
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