



# Friends of Congaree Swamp News

[www.friendsofcongarree.org](http://www.friendsofcongarree.org)

Summer 2019

## Save the date

### Fall butterfly count

The fall North American Butterfly Association butterfly count will be held **Saturday, September 14**, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

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. Please come for all or just part of the day.

We will meet at 9 a.m. at the

*See Save the date, page 7*

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## Flood data significant

The October 2015 flooding was the best-documented in the Midlands history, but there is still more to learn from it.

While flooding on the Midlands' streams and smaller rivers was unprecedented, the flood on the Congaree River, with a peak flow of 185,000 cubic feet per second (that's well over a million gallons per second) corresponded to somewhat more than a 25-year flood.

Nonetheless, it was a significant flood, the likes of which had not been seen since the April 1936 flood (231,000 cubic feet per second). The flood led to a significant break in the system of agricultural dikes on the Richland County side of the river that was neither documented nor reported, but a review of photos taken during the flood and aerial photography before and after the flood recorded the break.

As soon as the scale of flooding became apparent, Friends of Congaree



*Photos courtesy of Richland County mapping*

*White House 2014*



*White House 2015*



*White House 2016*

*See Flood, page 6*



# President's Corner

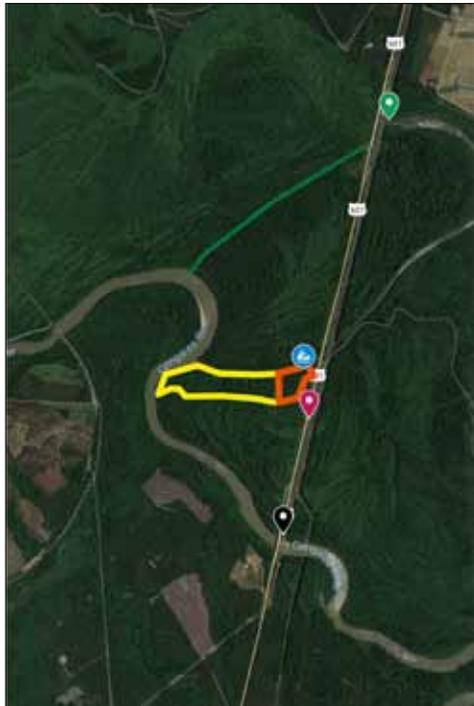
*Dr. John Grego*

## Fork Swamp Trail Guide

Friends of Congaree Swamp posted the Fork Swamp Trail Guide on our website this summer, the ninth and final surface trail guide for the park.

South Carolina Honors College student Alexander von Klar drafted the guide as a project for an Honors College service course for Congaree National Park during the Fall 2018 semester. Alex picked a tough fall to scout the guide. After an initial reconnaissance, the Fork Swamp Trail was badly flooded on his return trips and he essentially had to prepare a guide for a flooded trail, with cautionary notes on the portions of the trail most prone to flooding.

To be frank, after I heard his account, there was at least one trip I really wish he had not taken, but having been out with Alex, he enjoys wading through water.



*Fork Swamp Trail I is indicated in orange; and Fork Swamp Trail II is in yellow. The Bates Ferry Trail is in green*

Another Honors College student, Aaron Martin, has prepared our first paddling guide, covering the portion of Cedar Creek between Bannister Bridge and South Cedar Creek landing—look for that guide to be posted during the holiday break.

## Bates boat landing trash pick-up

Thanks to board member David Scheutrum for recent actions to clean up an overflowing trash receptacle at the S.C. Department of Natural

Resources' Bates boat landing off U.S. 601 on the Congaree River. The receptacle had been filled to overflowing and boaters continued to dump trash at its base, creating a public nuisance near park property.

David contacted Advanced Disposal/Southland, the company listed on the trash container, and reached out to SCDNR as well. The container was removed and replaced by another container placed farther away from the riverbank, though the trash pile remained. With a little more legwork and outreach to Quinton Epps, director of Richland County's Conservation Division, it was determined that Richland County Solid Waste & Recycling has responsibility for the trash receptacle, and once it was brought to their attention, they

promptly visited the landing and cleaned up the remaining trash.

In addition to David and Quinton's work, we would like to thank Capt. Ken Simmons of SCDNR and Marlin Henderson of Richland County Solid Waste & Recycling for their help. And it's great to have the right contacts should problems arise again.

## Biosphere Reserve

Congaree National Park has been part of a UNESCO International Biosphere Reserve since 1983. That designation by the United Nations

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Dr. John Grego, President

Sharon H. Kelly, Editor

*See Grego, page 5*

# Park to host Smithsonian traveling exhibit

With park interpretive ranger Gregory Cunningham's encouragement, we applied earlier in the year for a Smithsonian Water/Ways grant for the park to host a traveling exhibit.

Our frequent collaborators, SERCO (South East Rural Community Outreach) with assistance from the park, had hosted another Smithsonian traveling exhibit—Crossroads: Change in Rural America—in February and March of this year. We relied on their expertise in putting together the proposal. We were gratified to learn in June that our proposal had been successful.

The Water/Ways exhibit is one of a series of traveling exhibits developed by SITES (Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibit Service) intended to provide the opportunity for small communities and cultural organizations to host outstanding cultural displays.

S.C. Humanities has brought seven of these exhibits to South Carolina, and sponsors a total of six communities to host a given exhibit for six to eight weeks. The park is eligible as a site

because it is embedded in the Lower Richland community.

The exhibit will be installed in the park's Harry Hampton Visitor Center from November 13, 2020, to January 13, 2021. In addition to the exhibit, each sponsoring site is expected to organize at least three accompanying programs and widely publicize the event.

We plan to finalize these programs in the upcoming year. Since the Water/Ways exhibit encompasses communities' historical, cultural and environmental relationships with water, our programs will be organized around each of those aspects.

In addition to the exhibit, we were approached by S.C. Humanities and Smithsonian's Museum on Main Street program to apply for a supplementary Stories: YES grant. This program supports media projects by students based on the traveling exhibit's theme.

Usually, only about 20 grants are awarded each year, and only one per state. However, since SERCO had received a Stories: YES grant, Main Street staff felt that Friends could readily use SERCO's recording equipment and software to

support a youth project, and strongly encouraged us to submit a proposal at nominal cost.

Though we have not yet heard definitively that we will receive funding, we are moving forward with meetings with Lower Richland High School to discuss possible student groups to work with. You may see examples of student handiwork at <https://museumonmainstreet/content/exploring-water-quality-issues-and-historic-flood-events>. The project formats include websites, videos and ArcGIS Story Maps.

We would like to thank Carrie Sinkler-Parker of the National Council of Negro Women, Marie Adams and Mary Kirkland of SERCO, and Nancy Stone-Collum of Richland County's Conservation Division for their letters of support.

We also relied on Mary for her contacts with Lower Richland High School for the Stories: YES project. As Marie noted, November 2020 may sound far away, but it arrives quicker than one thinks, and it's important to work steadily on preparations in the meanwhile.

# Spring NAMC bird count nets 70 species

Friends of Congaree Swamp held a Spring North American Migration Count on May 5 at the park.

The count started early with Dr. Jerry Griggs leading the Robin Carter Dawn Chorus Walk along the Low Boardwalk.

After a breakfast break, a small party covered the Sims Trail and Elevated Boardwalk. Though birds were active the entire morning, migrants, both thrushes and warblers, were hard to find, with the exception of American Redstart and Black-throated Blue Warbler. Counts of our typical residents were notably down from last year across the board.

In the afternoon, the



*Great Egret*

remainder of the morning party checked sites along the U.S. 601 causeway, allowing us to pick up raptors and wading birds and a few more migrants.

The amount of flyover raptor and wading bird activity was impressive this year, and we added Broad-winged Hawk, Wood Stork and Cattle Egret to some of the usual species seen along U.S. 601.

Solitary Sandpiper can almost always be found along U.S. 601 during the Spring NAMC, and this year was no exception. Cliff Swallow are expanding their nests

under the bridge, and can now be seen nesting at the base of the pylons in the parking lot, and not just the pylons in the Congaree River.

Overall, we saw 70 species on the day—a benchmark for a good day of birding at the park!



*Red-bellied Woodpecker*

- Wood Stork 5
- Anhinga 8
- Great Blue Heron 1
- Great Egret 7
- Snowy Egret 2
- Little Blue Heron 10
- Cattle Egret 25
- White Ibis 10
- Yellow-crowned Night Heron 2
- Black Vulture 17
- Turkey Vulture 12
- Bald Eagle 1
- Osprey 1
- Mississippi Kite 6
- Red-shouldered Hawk 4
- Broad-winged Hawk 1

- Red-tailed Hawk 1
- Killdeer 1
- Solitary Sandpiper 2
- Mourning Dove 4
- Yellow-billed Cuckoo 5
- Barred Owl 6
- Chimney Swift 17
- Red-headed Woodpecker 2
- Red-bellied Woodpecker 16
- Downy Woodpecker 6
- Pileated Woodpecker 6
- Acadian Flycatcher 13
- Eastern Wood-pewee 5
- Great Crested Flycatcher 13
- White-eyed Vireo 20
- Yellow-throated Vireo 5
- Red-eyed Vireo 32
- American Crow 6
- Blue Jay 3
- Fish Crow 20
- Purple Martin 1
- Barn Swallow 6
- Cliff Swallow 120
- Carolina Chickadee 4
- Tufted Titmouse 20
- White-breasted Nuthatch 2
- Brown-headed Nuthatch 3
- Carolina Wren 34
- Blue-gray Gnatcatcher 25
- Eastern Bluebird 1
- Veery 1
- Wood Thrush 4
- Gray Catbird 1
- Cedar Waxwing 3
- Northern Parula 32
- Black-throated Blue Warbler 10
- Yellow-throated Warbler 10
- Pine Warbler 5
- American Redstart 13
- Prothonotary Warbler 8
- Kentucky Warbler 1
- Common Yellowthroat 3
- Louisiana Waterthrush 1
- Hooded Warbler 10
- Yellow-breasted Chat 2
- Chipping Sparrow 2
- Summer Tanager 16
- Northern Cardinal 25
- Blue Grosbeak 6
- Indigo Bunting 14
- Painted Bunting 3
- Common Grackle 50
- Brown-headed Cowbird 7
- American Goldfinch 1

## Grego

*continued from page 2*

Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization was largely treated as an honorific for Congaree, but UNESCO's goals for the designation evolved.

New goals for reserves included sustainable cultural and environmental development, protection of biodiversity and cultural diversity, and support for research and education, all taking place within a larger regional context. When Congaree and the other sites in the United States applied to renew their designation in 2016, almost all the applications were turned down, though Congaree successfully re-applied the following year.

Since that application, Congaree National Park has hired interns during the summer to kick start the reserve, organizing multiple meetings with stakeholders to first establish goals for the reserve, and then working toward a Memorandum of Understanding that would set up a governance structure and goals for the reserve.

Friends of Congaree Swamp was absent from discussions in 2018, but we were able to attend meetings this year organized by intern Ethan Shafron. The

## Annual meeting set for Oct. 27

Friends of Congaree Swamp will hold its Annual Oyster Roast and Business Meeting on **Sunday, October 27**, at Congaree National Park.

We'll celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of local advocacy groups' first visit to the Beidler Tract, the land destined to form the old-growth core of the park.

After a memorial hike, some of the park's original supporters discuss their first trips to the park.

The Oyster Bar will prepare roasted oysters and Friends of Congaree Swamp members will prepare our usual feast of chili, roast chicken, vegetarian selections, beverages and desserts.

Look for registration materials soon.

park pulled in a good spectrum of community partners, and there was strong support for the biosphere's goals, which mirror the efforts of many of the stakeholders.

At the same time, there was healthy skepticism about the viability of the reserve, since the park has made forward progress on the reserve mostly through the efforts of summer interns, and it is not clear the necessary leadership will be present to sustain the reserve. The park's role is somewhat ambivalent too; the reserve should be autonomous, but it is the park that will ultimately be held accountable for the success of the reserve.

From my perspective, it was useful to meet new people, including Tameria Warren of longtime Friends' partner

SERCO, and Robert Reese, the new president of Lower Richland NAACP. Reese, recently returned to the Midlands from Minnesota, had already been in contact with Richland County Councilwoman Dahli Myers, the Congaree Riverkeeper, the Richland County's Conservation Department, Friends of Congaree Swamp and others about a related project, and his enthusiasm at the meetings was infectious.

For now, the Memorandum of Understanding has not yet been finalized, but Friends does anticipate signing on as one of the primary stakeholders. It may well provide a framework for more cooperation with some of our existing partners, as well as a couple new partners.

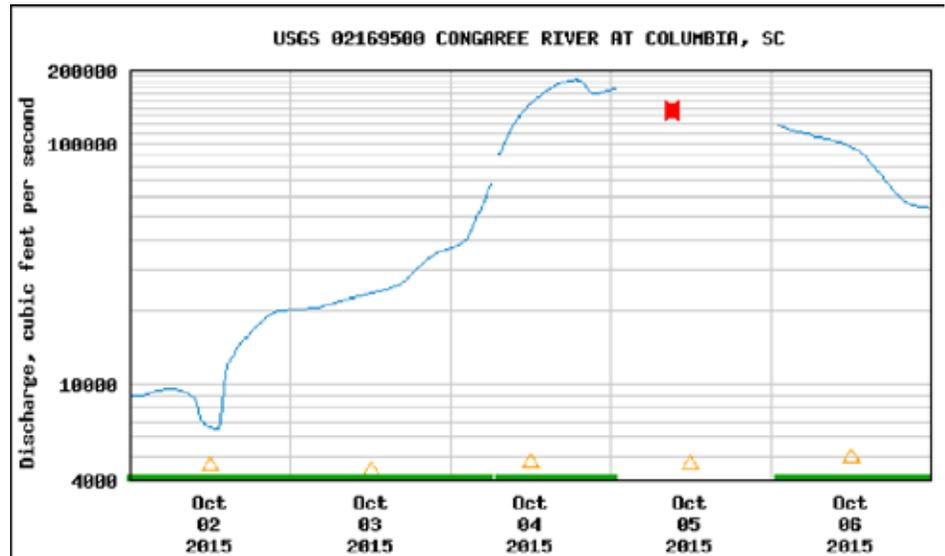
# Flood

*continued from page 1*

Swamp contacted SouthWings to see if they could fly over the Broad, Saluda and Congaree river flood plains to document flooding. SouthWings provides both planes and helicopters for environmental organizations to document environmental issues, including mountaintop removal, coal ash landfills, clear-cutting, wetlands impacts, and land development.

Congaree Riverkeeper and Friends board member Bill Stangler was able to accompany the SouthWings pilot the Tuesday after the flood and took hundreds of documentary photos. The scale of flooding in the Congaree floodplain was certainly suggestive of a breach of the agricultural dikes, and while inspecting photos of the agricultural dikes along the Congaree River, we noticed a substantive break in foliage indicative of a break at the site of the former White House Farms, just downstream from I-77 (see photo).

This location is on property formerly belonging to Columbia Venture LLC that was purchased by White House Warehouse II LLC in September 2009. Rep. Kirkman Finlay is the registered agent



for the LLC. The photo was compared to earlier aerial photos to confirm that the foliage gap was recent and that the damage to one of the buildings in the photograph was recent as well.

Once the water receded, there was further aerial photo evidence of the intensity of the break; flooding through the break left deep scours in the soil in two different locations—as floodwaters crossed Whitehouse Road to the southeast and Metro Lane to the east (see 2016 photo).

Since the scours and destruction of the embankment appeared catastrophic, it was likely that evidence of the timing of the break could be found from the Congaree River at Columbia gage. In fact, if you inspect the graph, you see an apparently slight dip in the discharge around Sunday,

October 4, at 10 p.m. The 20,000 cfs drop in discharge is actually significant but appears small because the discharge is plotted on a log scale. For perspective, the large regular discharges from the Lake Murray dam into the Saluda River are often on the scale of 8,000 to 12,000 cfs.

There are many aspects of the break that could be discussed here, but for the short term it was important to confirm that yet another flood smaller in magnitude than the 100-year (or one percent chance) flood again resulted in a breach in the agricultural dikes along the Congaree River and Gills Creek.

Since previous floods in April 1964 and October 1976 likewise resulted in agricultural dike breaks, we can note that all floods above 140,000 cfs have resulted in damage to the dikes.

## Save the date

*continued from page 1*

Harry Hampton Visitor Center.

All ages and experience levels are welcome. Appropriate clothing is required, 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. This program is free, but space is limited. Advance reservations are requested.

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

### National Public Lands Day

Friends of Congaree Swamp will host a trailclearing to celebrate National Public Lands Day on **Saturday, September 28**.

This will be our second year participating in National Public Lands Day, an event hosted by NEEF (National Environmental Educational Foundation) that is the largest volunteer service

event held to support public lands.

We will meet at the Visitor Center at 9

a.m., then select a trail or two for special attention, depending on turnout. The park service will provide vests and additional tools, but if you

have loppers, handsaws, or long-handled shears, please bring them along.

We should be off the trail no later than the early afternoon. In addition to trail-clearing tools, bring plenty of water, gloves, a snack and insect repellent.

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

Park staff also approached us about applying to be a highlighted site, but we were not selected for that designation. Nonetheless, we have reached out to a couple additional potential partners, and if we receive enough interest, we plan to extend the scope of our activities.

### Migratory bird hike

Join us **Sunday, October 6**, for a fall hike to look for

migratory birds moving through the park on their way back to the Caribbean and Central 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—American Redstart are always found in good numbers, for instance.

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).



*Variegated Fritillary*



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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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