

March 2000

www.friendsofcongarree.org

“Big Tree” Field Trip Scheduled for March 25th

Registration Deadline March 15th

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On Saturday, March 25th, John Cely will lead an exciting fieldtrip off the beaten path to look at some of the “Big Trees” often not seen by visitors to Congaree Swamp National Monument.

Cely is a professional birder and one of the most knowledgeable experts on the Congaree Swamp. His time in the Swamp began long before his employment with the Department of Natural Resources.

To sign up for the trip, fill in the “Big Tree Field Trip Form” at the end of this newsletter and return it by March 15th. The trip numbers will be limited and applications will be taken on a first mailed basis.

The trip will begin at 9:00am and end before lunch. Wear comfortable clothing and footwear; and meet at the lower Swamp parking lot.

Participants will see handsome trees, including cherry bark oak, cypress, shumart oak, beech, ash, amazing hollies and sweet gums.

Wachovia Becomes Corporate Associate

Wachovia Bank, N.A., has recently become a \$2000 Corporate Member of Friends of Congaree Swamp. We welcome Wachovia’s membership, and thank Charlie Cole for his and the bank’s support.

With memberships such as this, the Friends will ensure that the magnificent gift of nature called Congaree Swamp receives the protection and recognition it so rightfully deserves.

Memorial Received

In memory of Manigault & Arianna Capers.

-Anonymous

Friends of Congaree Swamp and SC ETV

Friends of Congaree Swamp is teaming up with SC ETV in March to promote the special nature program "Sunrises and Sunsets in National Parks". This will be wonderful exposure for both the swamp and Friends with three hours of live television time that not only shows our beautiful faces, but also shows the dedication we have for Congaree Swamp and the environment it shelters. This is an opportunity for coverage throughout South Carolina, and extended coverage in parts of Georgia and North Carolina.

Where: South Carolina Educational Television,
George Rogers Blvd.
Columbia, SC

When: March 19th, 2000 (Sunday)

Time: 1pm to 4pm

Call: **Lee Anne Jackson-Stoddard
at 783-3662**

E-mail: **Wateree@AOL.com
for more details.**

*Come join us for a wonderful time
promoting Congaree Swamp.*

"Big Tree" Field Trip Registration Form Saturday, March 25th, 9:00am

Name: _____

Number in Party: _____

Address: _____

Phone or e-mail: _____

Mail to: Big Tree Field Trip
Friends of Congaree
PO Box 7746

New and Renewing Members July 1999 - December 1999

Individual Level:

Andrew J. Thompson
Angela Viney
Betsy & William Godshall
Bill Klugh
Frank Walton
George C. Taylor
J. Michael Kapp
Jane and Rowan Crews
John A. Foster, Jr.
John Nelson
Kathy Murray
Kirstin Dow
Linda Peterson
Marian F. Hampton
Mary F. Turner
Mel Jenkins
Mr. Frank E. Robinson III
Mrs. Elizabeth Hampton
Pam Wadford
Rob Sneed
Robert J. Feller
Sam Porth
Stuart Greeter
William R. Carson
William R. Stanley

Roy C. Harms
W.M. Bryan, Jr., M.D.

Advocate Level:

Bob Guild & Nancy Barton
Candy Y. Waites
John and Winona Vernberg
Karen Patterson
Malissa Burnette & Mike LeFever
Mr. & Mrs. Hyman Rubin
Susie Heyward
Walter & Stewart Bristow

Partner Level:

Anna Mae & John Popp
Charles & Joanne Cole
Dr. Mary F. Finlay
G.T. Cowley
George & Judy McCoy
Hyman Rubin, Jr.
Janne & Bill Phillips
John Hughes Cooper
Susan Hilfer & William Campbell

Benefactor Level:

Bootsie & Heath Manning, Sr.

Family Level:

Bonnie K. Adams
Joellen & Pierce Cook
Julian E. Ruffin & Anne Sinclair
Liz & Jack Cantey
M. Christine Hardee
Margaret Claypool
Mr. & Mrs. Jon Rood
& Nelson Rood
Mr. & Mrs. John D. Beckler
Nelson & Robin McLeod
Pat & Gerald Smith

Patron Level:

Harriott Hampton Faucette
Mardie Faucette

Non-Profit

Organization Level:
Dana Beach

Affiliate Level:

River Runner Outdoor Center
Timothy F. Rogers

Membership

The majority of our first year members have renewed their memberships, and I want to thank all of them very much. Renewal notices are continuing to be sent out monthly. When you get your renewal notice, please respond promptly as it costs extra time and money to send out reminders.

The Membership Committee met on Feb24th at Bob Render's office.

If you have any questions call Mary Beth Jeffords at 803-782-5234.



Friends of Congaree Swamp Photo Contest

With winter's chill and our snow of the decade melting into spring it is now time to get excited about our first photo contest. With such wonders as Congaree Swamp National Monument has to offer, it will not be hard to come up with many excellent photographs.

In fact, the hardest job will be in the judging of the photographs. We already have two excellent judges who come with the best of credentials: **Jim Welch and John Jackson**. Jim Welch is the host of SC Educational Television's *Naturescene*, which travels the northern hemisphere bringing viewers and nature sites together for a deeper understanding of our natural world. John Jackson is the founder of Jackson Camera and Video, now a member of the Ritz family of camera stores, with a lifetime of expertise in all aspects of photography and business.

The contest has two divisions:

Children aged 5 to 15 years

Adults aged from 16 years up

There will be two categories of subjects in each age division:

Category One encompasses the natural history (flora, fauna, geological and mineralogical subjects) of Congaree Swamp.

Category Two will be human related impact (current or past civilizations activities) of the Congaree Swamp basin.

Since Congaree Swamp shows many different faces throughout the year, we are asking for photographs from all four seasons. Winter and fall are just as important to the swamp ecology as spring or summer. Therefore, a photo showing the impact of human activities on Congaree Swamp or the swamp in winter is as valued as a painted bunting feeding her young in spring.

Photographs may be black and white or color prints, digital or conventional photos in sizes from 5x7 to 8x10, matted on black matte boards no larger than 11x14. All information must be listed on the application form and securely attached to the back of each print. You may enter as many prints as you wish.

Application forms, deadlines and showing sites of our photo contest will be in the next newsletter.

Congaree Swamp's Virgin Cypress Trees

John Cely
South Carolina Department of Natural Resources

Bald cypress, *Taxodium distichum*, is the most magnificent of all southern trees. The sight of a cypress, with a 7-foot diameter trunk vaulting undiminished for 100 feet through a swamp canopy, is a never-forgotten experience. Unfortunately few have ever witnessed such a wonder because, with the exception of a few places like the Congaree Monument and Four Holes Swamp, these trees are gone forever.

The 20th century history of the Congaree Swamp had the bald cypress as its center piece. It was, after all, for this tree that the Beidler Family of Chicago came to South Carolina in the late 1800's and acquired a solid tract of 130,000 acres of bottomland forest along the Congaree, Wateree, and Santee Rivers. Lumbermen had confirmed that, outside of the Mississippi Delta, the Santee River and its tributaries had the largest remaining stands of virgin bald cypress in the South.

Bald cypress was considered the "wood eternal," its resistance to rot legendary. Cypress singles sometimes lasted more than a century. A cypress grave marker in Charleston was still solid 140 years after being made. When New Orleans was redoing its water mains at the turn of the century, water lines made of cypress were still sound even after being underground for 100 years.

Cypress was the lumber of choice for railroad ties, pilings, bridges, fences, building exteriors, and other construction projects exposed to the elements. The wood was soft and easy to work (an important attribute in the pre-power tool era), didn't warp when used green, and was much less flammable than the resin-soaked longleaf pine.

The Beidlers formed a corporation appropriately called the Santee River Cypress Lumber Company. Getting cypress out of the muddy swamps to the sawmill was a major ob-

stacle, however, and some locals scoffed at the idea of buying cypress swampland, even if the going price was only a dollar an acre.

The Beidlers learned by trial and error. Before the advent of logging trams and steam railroads, the cypress logs were floated down river to the sawmill at Ferguson, now under the waters of Lake Marion. The cypress was cut with a crosscut saw by two men mounted on a "spring-board." After felling, the huge trees, some of which were 6-8 feet in diameter above the buttress, were cut into 16-foot sections. Loggers learned the hard way that in order to float, cypress had to be "cured" on the stump; otherwise the "green" logs were too heavy and sank to the bottom (today some of these 16 foot sinkers are still evident in the Monument's sloughs and waterways). "Curing" was accomplished by girdling the cypress with an axe, which killed it, and waiting 6 months or more for the tree to "dry out."

By 1918, most of Congaree's virgin cypress had been cut down and delivered to the Ferguson saw mill. Man's presence at Congaree, except for large cypress stumps, quickly faded and after a few years the swamp reverted to an almost pristine forest. Naturalists and hunters exploring the Congaree in the 1950's and 60's, however, began reporting huge cypress trees that had been spared the ax, especially from the remote east end where much of the original old growth had occurred. It soon became obvious

that loggers of the earlier, pre-chainsaw era took only the best and straightest cypress and did not waste the considerable effort needed to cut up hollow and crooked trees.

Over the years I've been privileged to spend many hours tromping through the Congaree searching for remnant virgin cypress. Although the vast stands that once covered the swamp exist only in the memory of men now dead, I've found enough trees, at least a hundred, to raise goose bumps on my arm and an exclamation in my voice.

Many of these old cypress measure 17-21 feet around and 120-130 feet tall. Some growing in deeper sloughs and cypress "ponds" have pronounced buttresses measuring 25-28 feet around. Amazingly, many of the old cut stumps, now close to 90 years old, are still standing. Even more amazing are scattered dead cypress snags, some 30-40 feet tall, with the axed girdled marks clearly chiseled in the trunks.

Several years ago Dr. Robert Jones measured a new state champion cypress from the Congaree's "east end." This tree is 26 feet in circumference with a crown spread of 48 feet and a height of 131 feet. The tallest cypress Dr. Jones measured during his survey was one found by Harry Hampton years ago not far from where the old hunt clubhouse was located. This beautiful, straight tree is 23 feet in circumference and 148 feet tall.

Everyone is curious about the ages of these old cypress. The Ferguson sawmill manager, Fred Seeley, left records indicating that most of the virgin cypress from the Congaree-Santee system was 500-700 years old, but one log that came through the mill had 1600 growth rings!

Congaree's cypress are by far the oldest living things in Richland County. As I look up at the canopy of these remnant giants and see the Spanish moss gently swaying in their tops, I think about the history these trees have seen, about the dark waves of Passenger Pigeons that

shaded them from the sun, about the Carolina Parakeets that fed on their seed balls, about the mighty Ivory-billed Woodpecker that roosted in their trunks, about Indians, wolves, bears and panthers that passed within their shadows, and I think about the quote attributed to Francis Marion, the "Swamp Fox" - "I look at the venerable trees around me and I know that I must not dishonor them."

Website Now Under Construction

A website is currently under construction for Friends of Congaree Swamp.

The website developer and host is Ed Kujawski, who visited the swamp in December and liked it so much that he volunteered to develop and host a website. He is a computer engineer living in Atlanta, GA. Virginia Winn has been working with him to put some of our materials on the web.

You can look at what they have completed by logging into:

www.friendsofcongarree.org

As you can see below, Ed would like for people to upload pictures that they have taken and announce events over the web. Let him know what you think. His web address is:

ed@www.hp.uab.edu

Education

Members of the Friends of Congaree Education Committee will meet at 7:00 PM, Wednesday, March 8, at Carol Kososki's residence: 5225 Lakeshore Drive, Columbia 29206. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss speakers/presenters for an educational spring event. Please come with your ideas. Please call Carol Kososki, Education Committee Chair, at 803-737-2733 or 803-787-1706 for directions

Memorials and Honorariums

In memory of _____

In honor of _____

Sent by:

Name _____

Address _____

Phone: (_____) _____

Please notify:

Name _____

Address _____

Amount Enclosed: _____

Mail to: Friends of Congaree Swamp
PO Box 7746, Columbia, SC 29202

Membership Application

INDIVIDUALS & FAMILIES:

- \$15-34—Individual
- \$35-49—Family
- \$50-99—Advocate
- \$100-499—Partner
- \$500-999—Benefactor
- \$1000-up—Patron

Name: _____

Address: _____

**ORGANIZATIONS, BUSINESSES
& CORPORATIONS**

- \$50-99—Non-Profit Org.
- \$100-499—Affiliate
- \$500-999—Associate
- \$1000-up—Corporate

Home Phone: _____

(_____) _____

Work Phone: _____

(_____) _____

Amount Enclosed: _____

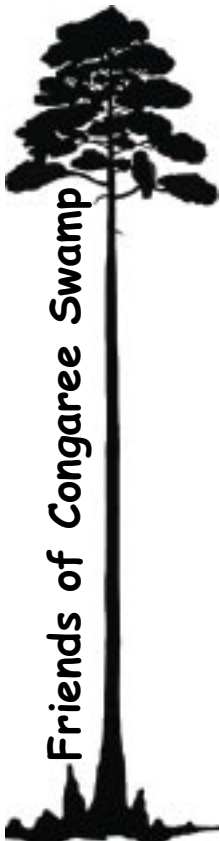
\$ _____

Fax: _____

(_____) _____

E-Mail Address: _____

*"Be a Friend...
...Get a Friend to Join!"*



PO Box 7746
Columbia SC 29202

803.776.9105