



South Carolina Department of Natural Resources

COWASEE

Chronicle



Newsletter of the COWASEE Basin - The Green Heart of South Carolina

No. 4, 2017

www.dnr.sc.gov/cowasee

"To promote land protection within the COWASEE Basin Focus Area by working with private landowners to establish, on a voluntary basis, conservation easements, and to educate landowners, the general public, civic and business leaders, and other stakeholders about the natural, cultural, and historical values of the COWASEE Basin."

Conservation Updates

There has been little change regarding land protection efforts within the COWASEE Basin since our last newsletter. Forty-five percent, or 142,271 acres, of the 315,000 acre focus area is in some type of public or private conservation protection. Within this figure, 98,434 acres (31%) are public lands, while 43,837 acres (14%) are private conservation easements.

Does this mean the "low-hanging conservation fruits" in the COWASEE Basin have been picked? Possibly so, but there are still many, many special properties within the Basin that could be potential conservation projects, and dialogue has been established with some of these landowners.

The map of the COWASEE Basin, produced by the Congaree Land Trust, shows two areas of notable conservation success: the Wateree River Corridor and the south side of the Congaree River in Calhoun County. It also shows blank areas with few, if any, conservation easements, for example, the area south of US 601 in Calhoun County bounded by state road 267, and areas on the northern border of the Congaree National Park in Richland County. Conservation easements for the latter area would be especially valuable since they would buffer the park from adverse development.

COWASEE Basin Task Force members were recently approached by Dr. Rob Baldwin of Clemson University about using the COWASEE Basin as a model to evaluate conservation at the landscape level. Dr. Baldwin, a conservation biologist, has particular interests in using reptiles and amphibians as landscape focus animals since they are especially vulnerable to fragmentation (created by development projects, highways, powerlines, etc.),

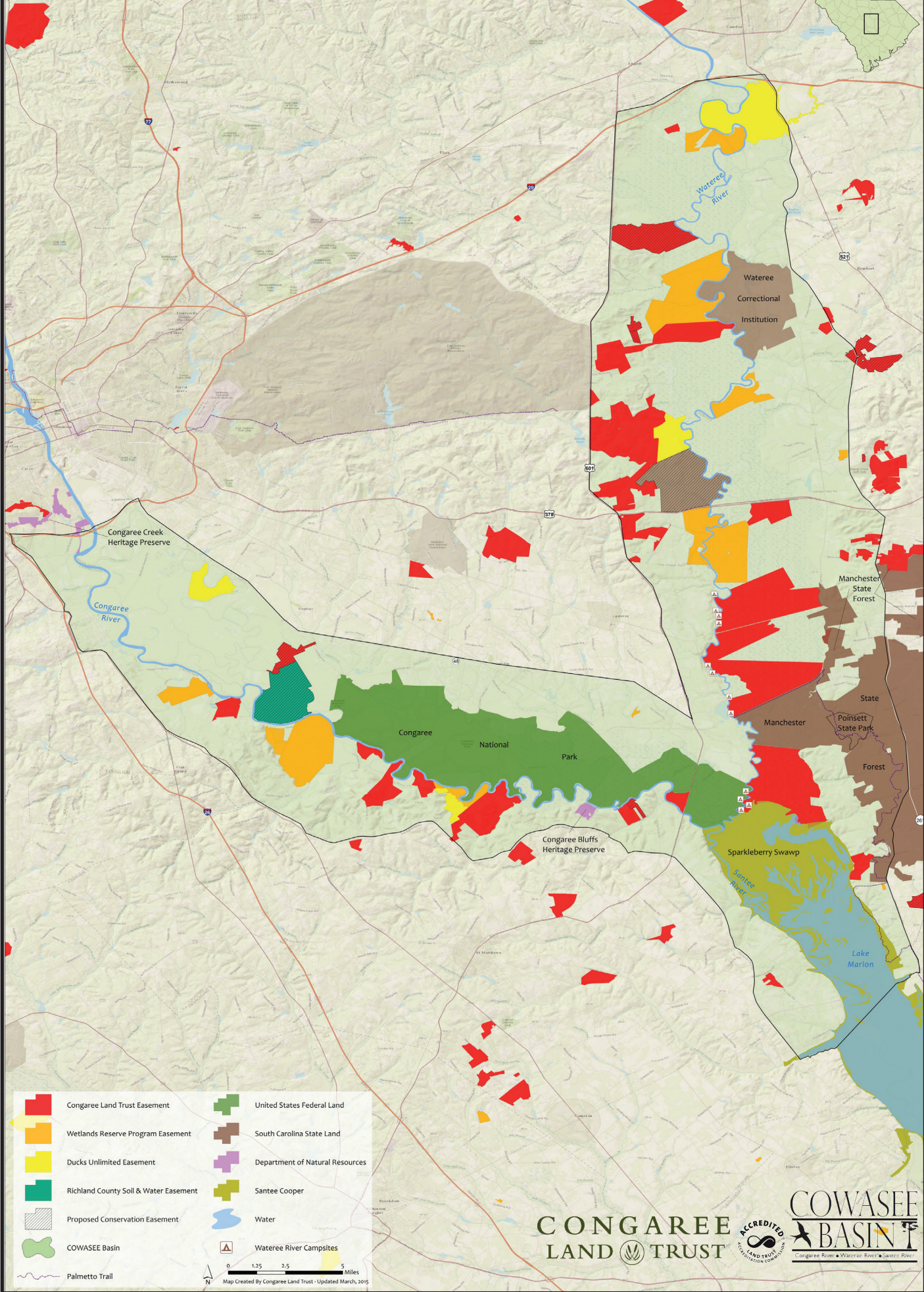
and is also interested in how local conservation easements contribute to biological conservation at the landscape scale. Dr. Baldwin is widely published in his field and has done extensive work with the Appalachian Landscape Conservation Cooperative as well as with North America's boreal forest conservation.

Status of the South Carolina Conservation Bank

There is no question that South Carolina's Conservation Bank has made a huge difference in making conservation easements work for many landowners throughout South Carolina. The proof is in the pudding when looking at conservation easements established during periods when no Bank funding was available and during periods when funding was available. Being able to actually pay landowners up front for a conservation easement, rather than taking a tax deduction at the end, has proven to be a real incentive for many.

Money from the Bank, generated by a small percentage of the documentary stamp fees required at real estate closings, has also helped to pay for highly visible public projects such as DNR's Woodbury Tract in Florence County, Stumphouse Tunnel and Issaquena Falls in the mountains, and Charleston's iconic Angel Oak. Since first authorized in 2002, the Conservation Bank has protected 294,000 acres of prime farmland, forest, wetlands, historic and cultural sites within the state, all at a cost of about \$520 an acre. Of this acreage, 30 percent, or 88,000 acres, has full public access. The conservation bank remains the most significant,

Conservation Success in the COWASEE Basin



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and cost-effective, tool for land protection in South Carolina.

One of the main criticisms aimed at the Bank is that it doesn't allow for public access on properties that it protects (but see the figure above). That is beside the point, however, since conservation easements have always been geared towards rewarding private landowners for giving up their development rights. And open space, buffered riparian zones, and protected farm and forestland provide huge benefits for everyone. (I personally take great pleasure in cruising South Carolina's back roads and viewing the scenery and pastoral countryside. Seeing it is enough for me, regardless of whether I ever set foot on it). One of the main reasons conservation easements were established many years ago is that conservationists realized the government could not possibly acquire and protect all significant conservation land, especially in a state like South Carolina where 90 percent of the state is in private ownership. This fact is exactly why focus areas such as the COWASEE Basin, ACE Basin, and others exist.

Despite the Conservation Bank's good work, its future is in possible jeopardy since legislation creating the Bank in 2002 is scheduled to expire June 30, 2018.

Feral Hogs in the Spotlight

On November 17, 2016, the US Department of Agriculture – Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), South Carolina Farm Bureau, SC Department of Natural Resources (SC DNR), Clemson Cooperative Extension Service, Richland and Calhoun Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Friends of Congaree Swamp, and Congaree National Park hosted a feral hog management workshop in St. Matthews. About 75 people were in attendance, clear evidence of the importance landowners and land managers within the COWASEE Basin attach to the feral hog problem.

The program consisted of an overview of the issue at Congaree National Park, a discussion of feral hog biology and impacts; feral swine diseases; and distribution, harvest trends, and hog hunting regulations. Lunch was catered barbeque (appropriate) and the workshop ended with live trapping techniques and demonstrations.

The COWASEE Basin, due to its thousands of acres of bottomland hardwood forest – prime pig habitat – has a significant feral swine problem. One of these areas is the 26,000-acre Congaree National Park. The park recognizes the problem and over the past fifteen years has taken steps to address it. Some of these steps include documenting the extent of the problem within the park; conducting pig research, including the use of radio telemetry; and evaluating the extent of diseases in the pig population. Working through APHIS, a pig-trapping program was initiated several years ago in the park, while more recently two APHIS employees have been hired full-time for pig control. Jake Beechler works entirely within the park, where a stepped-up trapping program is now underway, with controlled shooting added for increased effectiveness, while Bennett Payne works only with private landowners adjacent to or near the park. This partnership between the park and neighboring private landowners is crucial to the success of the program. So far this year Beechler has removed 118 pigs from within the park, while Payne, working with nine cooperators outside of the park, has removed 82 animals. Results so far from within the park indicate that pig sightings and rootings have decreased.

Feral hogs are very destructive to natural environments as well as farm and forest land, primarily through their rootings, food habits, and competition with native wildlife (even a blind hog gets an acorn once in a while; lots of hogs with two good eyes get lots of acorns). Some landowners within the COWASEE Basin have completely given up on wildlife plantings and food plots; for those that still do, a stout fence is almost a necessity. Statewide, it is estimated that feral hogs cause an estimated 115 million dollars of damage to farmland and other properties; nationwide, this figure is estimated to be 1.5 billion dollars.

There's a long list of diseases carried by wild pigs that can spread to domestic animals and people. Brucellosis, a bacterial infection of the reproductive tract, is one of the most prominent. Attendees were cautioned about the need for using rubber gloves and eye protection when dressing the carcasses of wild pigs, as well as minimizing the handling of swine reproductive parts. Pig remains and waste should be disposed of by burying or burning, and soap and hot water used after cleaning. Pork should



be cooked thoroughly to 160° prior to eating.

A study at the park conducted by the USDA with the Southeastern Wildlife Cooperative Disease Study from 2006 to 2010 found that of 119 pigs trapped, 31% (37 animals) tested positive for brucellosis while 30% (36 animals) had pseudorabies, a highly infectious herpes virus that can spread to domestic swine and other livestock (and dogs, where it is usually fatal). The name “pseudorabies” is a misnomer as it has nothing to do with the rabies virus.

Another investigation at Congaree National Park several years ago by Clemson University found that boars and sows had similar home ranges of about 500 acres, almost a square mile. Studies also show that individual hogs are not territorial per se but that a “sounder” of hogs is. A sounder is a large family group consisting of several adult females along with multiple juvenile pigs. Typically, boars are solitary except during the mating season, which for feral swine, can be year round. And therein lies part of the pig dilemma: females can start producing young at six months of age and, on good range, raise three litters a year, with five or more piglets per litter (I once saw a sounder at the park that had four adults with 24 piglets!). One pig authority says that “wild pigs are probably the most prolific large mammal on earth.”

The Clemson study also found that, as expected, pigs moved routinely between the park and adjoining private hunt clubs. Thirteen of 23 radioed pigs were found outside of the park, and at least eight of these were shot and killed. At the end of the 16-month study, only 4 of the 23 pigs were still alive.

Hunting wild pigs alone will not take care of the problem (SC DNR estimates a total feral swine population in South Carolina of about 150,000 animals of which about 30-40,000 are killed annually). Authorities estimate that as much as 70 to 80 percent of a pig population must be removed each year just to maintain the population. Park staff says that it’s anyone’s guess as to Congaree’s total pig population but no doubt the park is ideal pig habitat and densities are high.

Trapping and shooting programs will only help to keep feral hog populations in check to a degree. However, for Congaree National Park and other bottomland areas within the COWASEE Basin one of the main deterrents to burgeoning pig populations appears to be flooding. It may be no coincidence that hog populations mushroomed in the 1990s and early 2000s during a dry cycle (I remember when the park went through nearly a five-year period with almost no flooding). Recently, however, it appears that the flood cycle has swung back the other way, almost to the point of excess flooding (who can forget the Big Flood of October 2015?). My experiences in the park after a big Congaree flood are that pig numbers are reduced, presumably through high juvenile mortality (but no doubt some adults don’t make it either. Years ago I was paddling down Cedar Creek several days after a big flood, after the water had dropped five feet. I came around a sharp bend in the creek and spotted a black boar, very dead, hanging upside down four feet above the water in a vine thicket on the edge of the creek. I surmised the pig had been swimming across Cedar Creek at flood stage, had gotten tangled up, and drowned).



Like many states with a feral swine problem, SC DNR has liberalized its pig hunting regulations about as much as possible. On private lands there is no pig season or limits, and hogs can be hunted at night, with some restrictions. Transporting live wild swine is also restricted: a special DNR permit is required and pigs can only be released either where they were captured or in a permitted hog hunting enclosure in the same county.

Clemson University has created a South Carolina Wild Hog Task Force, comprised of personnel from Clemson, US Forest Service, US Department of Agriculture, SC Department of Natural Resources, Congaree National Park, Department of Health and Environmental Control, and the SC Pork Board. Among other things, their mission is to create awareness of the feral hog problem, coordinate educational, research, and management efforts to reduce problems associated with wild hogs in South Carolina, and develop a statewide plan for managing wild pigs. Right now hog problems in the state are confined mostly to rural areas, farms, and forestland. Urban South Carolinians will only become aware and involved when pigs start moving into the outskirts of town and rooting up lawns and soccer fields. This has already started happening in Texas which has an estimated 1.5 million wild hogs. For more about pigs, see the "Resource" section at the SC Wild Hog Task Force's web site at <https://www.clemson.edu/extension/wildlife/wildhogs/>

SCDNR has also an informative pig fact sheet with regulations at: <http://www.dnr.sc.gov/regs/wildhogregs.html>

Lower Richland Tourism and Economic Development Plan

The Richland County Conservation Commission has recently released its draft *Lower Richland Tourism and Economic Development Plan*. The idea is to promote and develop heritage and ecotourism infrastructure within Lower Richland County as well as encourage and support local business development. One key feature of this plan is the development of roughly 1,200 acres of the Mill Creek Mitigation Bank site into a Mill Creek Nature Center. Mill Creek is mostly floodplain

along the Congaree River just upstream from the Congaree National Park. The idea, however, is not to compete with but complement the programs and services offered by the national park. For example, the park has no facilities for RV camping – something that could be feasible on upland sites at Mill Creek. Other possible activities and features would include improvements for boat launches, fishing piers, bait and tackle vendors, rustic river cabins and huts, canoe and kayak and bike rentals, and campgrounds. One proposal that caught my attention is a possible canopy walk. I've experienced such walks in the tropics and they are a unique way to view a hidden part of the forest impossible to see from the ground.

Another recommendation includes the development of the 680-acre Cabin Branch Greenway to accommodate hikers and nature enthusiasts, as well as exploring the feasibility for equestrian and mountain bike trails. Additionally, the location could capitalize on the county's agriculture heritage through the development of niche agricultural enterprises.

Other suggestions include a Lower Richland farming cooperative to promote the return of prime farmland to farming uses and developing a Hopkins Village Green that would support, among other things, a local farmer's market, a permanent festival ground, and a heritage center and covered pavilion. For more information, see <http://www.lowerrichlandtourismplan.com/>

COWASEE Literature

Several books have recently been published that have connections to the COWASEE Basin. Hot off the USC Press is Mark Kinzer's land-use history of the Congaree National Park. *Nature's Return, An Environmental History of Congaree National Park*, is an in-depth look at the historical (and pre-historical) record of man's impact on Congaree's old-growth bottomland hardwood forest. It starts with fields created by Indians to plant corn, beans, and squash along the park's riverfront, then moves up to the first white settlers who used the park for raising livestock, and later the cultivation of indigo, cotton, corn, and other crops. One of the biggest impacts was the logging of the park's virgin cypress from 1899 to 1914 by the Santee River Cypress Lumber Company

(but almost none of the large pines, gums, oaks, and other hardwoods standing today were cut). Kinzer has left no stone unturned in conducting meticulous research over more than a ten-year period from numerous, and frequently obscure, primary sources. One of the main conclusions from his research is that although man's impact on the park has been perhaps greater than appreciated in the past, nature's resiliency and the fertility of Congaree's soils have allowed nature to return and obscure most past human impacts. This readable and scholarly book is a must read for historians, naturalists, genealogists, biologists, foresters, and anyone else interested in the story of South Carolina's only national park. The 70 pages of end notes and bibliography are alone well worth the price of the book.

John Oller has completed an impressive new biography, *The Swamp Fox: How Francis Marion Saved the American Revolution*, published in 2016 by Da Capo Press. It has been decades since the last Marion biography and Oller has incorporated much

new research about South Carolina's greatest citizen into a very readable and well-researched book.

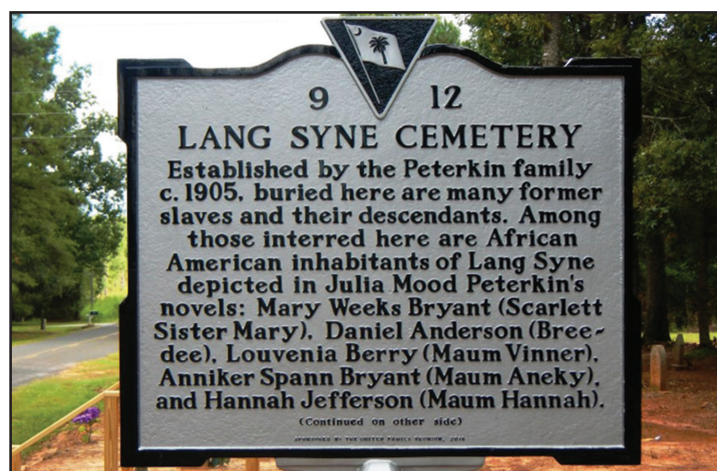
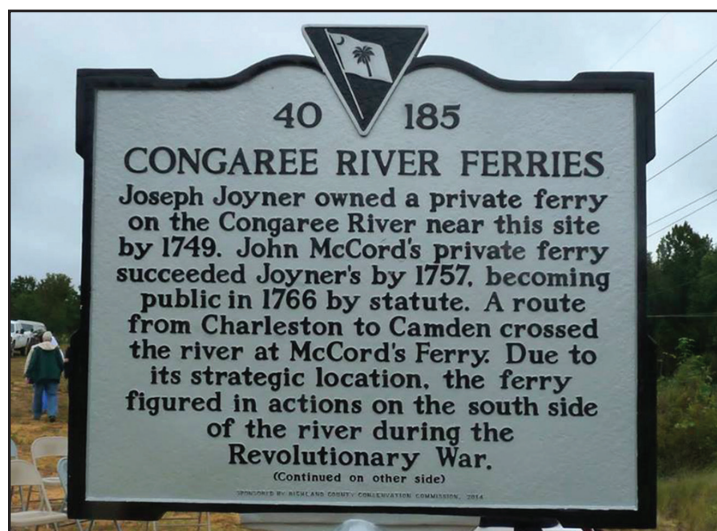
John Cely has just finished a pictorial book, *Congaree National Park*, for Arcadia Press in their Images of Modern America series. You may not be familiar with Arcadia Press but you've probably seen their products – typically black and white local histories about colleges, towns and cities, counties, parks and communities. The book starts out with the park's early history, discusses efforts to save it from logging, illustrates early and on-going park development, and features a large section on natural history featuring excellent photography contributed by a variety of talented photographers.

Well-known consulting biologist and author L.L. (Chick) Gaddy has put together a beautiful coffee table book about the park, *The Natural History of Congaree Swamp*. The book features splendid photography as well as in-depth discussions on all aspects of the park's geology and natural history. It also has an appendix listing the status and distribution of the park's known vascular flora as well as a detailed animal status list.

More Historical Markers

A couple of new COWASEE Basin roadside historical markers have come to my attention since publication of our last newsletter. One features lower Congaree River ferries and is located on the US 601 causeway about a quarter mile north of the Congaree River. Joseph Joyner, a member of one of the first families to settle the "Fork" as Lower Richland County was known then, established a private ferry on the river by 1747. It was succeeded by a new owner, John McCord, in 1757 and by 1766 became a public ferry by legislative statute. The ferry was a strategic crossing during the Revolutionary War and it was here in May of 1781 that General Nathanael Greene, leader of the southern Continental Army, first met Francis Marion the Swamp Fox. From the Civil War up to the 1920s, when a bridge was constructed over the lower Congaree, the ferry was operated by the Bates family.

Ferries were crucial links in South Carolina's transportation network for the first 250 years of its history. Public ferries were chartered by the legislature which also established toll rates. For



SCARLET SISTER MARY



A NOVEL BY
JULIA PETERKIN

FOREWORD BY A. J. VERDELLE

WINNER OF THE PULITZER PRIZE FOR FICTION

McCord's Ferry in 1845, rates for "black cattle, hogs, goats, and sheep, two cents each; for a man and horse, ten cents; for every four-wheeled carriage with drivers, riders, and horses, 37.5 cents; for every two-wheeled carriage, 20 cents; for horses or mules in droves, six and a quarter cents each."

Agriculturist Edmund Ruffin in his eight-month survey of South Carolina's agricultural economy in 1843 complained of the high costs of using Garner's Ferry on the Wateree River (where US Highway 378 is now located) where he was charged \$1 for a light, four-wheeled, one-horse buggy. To add insult to injury, Ruffin was charged an additional 50 cents for riding over a "shamefully bad road" through the Wateree Swamp to Stateburg.

The other historical marker pertains to the Lang Syne cemetery, located on Lang Syne Road in Calhoun County. Lang Syne Plantation was the home of South Carolina's only Pulitzer Prize winner for literature, Julia Peterkin. Several African-Americans featured in her books, including Mary Weeks Bryant, known as Scarlet Sister Mary in the book of the same name (which won Mrs. Peterkin the Pulitzer), are buried in this cemetery.

Seen Any Bobwhites Lately?

I don't know about you, but I see a lot more bald eagles these days than bobwhites. The comeback of our national symbol has been a privilege to observe, and one of the great wildlife success stories of the late 20th century. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for what many consider the greatest game bird in the world, *Colinus virginianus*, the bobwhite quail. Gentleman Bob, as the late author Havilah Babcock labeled him, also spawned some of the finest sporting literature anywhere: reading Babcock's quail hunting stories and Robert Ruark's *The Old Man and the Boy* nearly bring tears of nostalgia, with a strong dose of melancholy, to my eyes. As a boy visiting my grandparent's farms in Powdersville (it's in eastern Anderson County) and Slabtown (also in Anderson County), part of any summer's early-morning breakfast included hearing Mr. Bob (known in those parts as "partridges") whistling from field and hedgerow, sometimes from the yard itself. Now, I might go for a year or more and never see, much less, hear, a quail. And it's no big mystery why: although my grandparents' farms are still there, the habitat on the farm, and surrounding lands, has become so quail-unfriendly that no respectable bird would be caught within miles of either place.

Fortunately, there has been a lot of interest, and hard work, in reversing the decline of our beloved game bird. Some private landowners throughout the South have reported good success in the past few years restoring quail on their properties, in some cases quadrupling existing populations. The prescription seems to be intense management on large parcels. The days of having wild quail on 40 acres of good habitat surrounded by pine



plantations, fescue pasture, housing developments, and other unsuitable habitat are probably over.

Biologists and land managers know how to manage for bobwhite quail but past efforts have been for the most part uncoordinated with no overall “big picture” strategy. Recently the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, along with other federal and state conservation agencies and private conservation organizations, along with sportsmen and private landowners, have formed the South Carolina Quail Council with the goal of restoring bobwhites to early 1980s population levels. The Council’s primary effort is the South Carolina Bobwhite Initiative (SCBI) which seeks to restore quail at four focal regions around the state, consisting of about nine million acres, which have the best potential for increasing bobwhite numbers. Within these focal regions DNR has hired biologists working closely with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to provide landowner technical guidance, including information on cost-share programs, as well as conducting intensive quail management on Forest Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, and state DNR properties. One of these areas includes that part of Calhoun County within the COWASEE Basin, as well as the nearby counties of Orangeburg and Clarendon.

Birders know that recovering quail will also restore the declining fortunes of many so-called grassland birds – species that use the same habitat. Although the decline of many woodland birds, especially Neotropical migrants, has captured the attention of many biologists, it is the grassland birds – meadowlarks, dickcissels, loggerhead shrikes, kestrels, painted buntings, grasshopper sparrows, Bachman’s sparrows, and others, that have shown the greatest population declines of any bird group in America. The declining trend line for many of these species tracks very closely to that of the bobwhite quail.

Going back to those sweet days of youth spent in South Carolina’s Upper Piedmont, there is a song of another declining grassland bird that I miss almost as much as bobwhite’s whistle: the plaintive trill of the field sparrow.

For more information about the South Carolina Quail Initiative and the locations of the state’s quail focus regions and focus areas see <http://www.dnr.sc.gov/quail/focalregions.html>



A Nineteenth Century COWASEE Tragedy

Situated in an old, small family burial plot in lower Richland County is a tombstone with a poignant epitaph: “Sacred to the memory of Col. David Myers who was born near this place on the 29th November 1768 and was inhumanely murdered by John McLemore on the 3rd of March 1835.”

David Rudolph Myers resided at Fort Marion Plantation which was located on Back Swamp near Old Bluff Road. He became a well-to-do and prominent citizen of Richland, serving four terms in the House of Representatives and as a road commissioner in the Richland District. The Myers family, like the McLemores, was some of Richland County’s first settlers. John McLemore owned land adjacent to Myers which ultimately led to a dispute over a property line and eventually resulted in the homicide. Property line disputes were not uncommon in the rural South and sometimes escalated to violence. Apparently McLemore spent

Death of Col. Myers.—We have been furnished with the following particulars of this shocking tragedy, which are said to have been established before the Coroner's inquest.

Col. MYERS and Major JOHN M'LEMORE were neighbors, and their plantations adjoined. There was no friendship between the parties, although a son of the former had intermarried with a daughter of the latter. A dispute existed between them concerning 7 acres of land, to which both laid claim. Col. MYERS bought the land about four years ago from JOSEPH THREEWITS for fifty dollars. M'LEMORE had previously offered THREEWITS forty seven dollars for it. The land was valuable to Col. MYERS only because it connected his two plantations; and for this *very reason* M'LEMORE, as he himself declared, was most opposed to Col. MYERS having it. Nothing was known of M'LEMORE's claim, until last Spring, when Col. M. gave one of his negroes permission to plant the land for himself, and with that view had it ditched. Then for the first time M'LEMORE came forward, saying that the land was his, and his plat embraced it. On examination it was then discovered that the corner and line trees had been cut down and even the roots dug up. It was agreed, however, that M'LEMORE's land should be surveyed, and if his plat embraced it, that Col. MYERS would surrender it. The day was fixed for the purpose; Col. MYERS attended, and so did M'LEMORE, but only to say that his surveyor had disappointed him. Another day was fixed, when M'LEMORE was again in default. Here the matter rested until the 3d inst.; when Col. M. went with his overseer and four negroes to fence in the land. He had not been there more than a half hour, when M'LEMORE, and his overseer, both armed, rode up to Col. M., who was standing with his back to M'LEMORE, and the latter when within 6 or 7 steps of Col. M. (who was not aware of his approach) called out to him that he was a damned rascal, and as Col. M. wheeled round, shot him dead on the spot. Col. M. was unarmed, not even having a stick. M'LEMORE after this, still on horseback, advancing a step or two nearer, cocked the other barrel of his gun, and was in the act of shooting a second time, when Col. M's overseer, called out—"you have already killed him—do'n't shoot him again," upon this he turned his gun upon the overseer and threatened to shoot him too if he opened his mouth. He then dismounted from his horse, and reloaded the barrel he had discharged, and called to the overseer to look if MYERS was dead, and on being informed that he was, replied, "for if he is not I'll give him another load." He then went off with his overseer, having first ordered the negroes away, leaving the body of Col. M. weltering in blood, with only his overseer to guard it. Col. MYERS was shot directly through the heart, with a heavy load of buck shot, several of which passed through him. The Physicians say that he could not have breathed once after he was shot. M'LEMORE's overseer (SLIGH) proved that his employer had been on the watch for Col. MYERS ever since daylight, and told him (SLIGH) that "if Col. MYERS came to that land that day, he was determined to kill him."

We forbear any comments on this horrid transaction, as it is shortly to be judicially investigated.

much of his fortune defending himself in court but as far as can be determined, was never found guilty of the shooting.

The two men shared more than a property line. McLemore had a daughter Elizabeth who married one of Myers' sons, William. In his will of 1837 McLemore included Elizabeth only "if she will not live any more with her husband." Perhaps not coincidentally, Myers excluded son William from his will (and for whatever reason also excluded his oldest son Jacob). McLemore went on to mention another son, Joel, in his will as "my ungodly, prodigal son who has given himself over to vice and degradation.... [and will be given] no part [of this estate] until he has shown that he has reformed."

Dysfunctional families are obviously nothing new. History sleuth John Grego found the original article (shown below), first reported in the Charleston Courier on March 17, 1835.

Big Fish

This image of a large Atlantic sturgeon has made the rounds in the Columbia area over the years. It was caught in the Broad River at Columbia in 1936. The length is noted on the photograph as eight feet while the weight is given as 310 pounds. Before dam construction, ocean-going sturgeon were famous for their spawning runs up southern coastal rivers. Atlantic sturgeon, whose populations have been decimated from exploitation and habitat changes, could attain lengths of 14 feet and live more than 50 years.

The late Booker Sims told an interesting story about a sturgeon some years ago. Sims, who grew up on the edge of the Congaree National Park and fished its creeks and lakes as a youngster, recalled how an older fisherman using a cane pole had snagged a tremendous sturgeon in Weston Lake. Now local lore has it that Weston Lake is bottomless (the park service has confirmed that the lake is unusually deep for an oxbow, averaging 14 feet with the deepest point being 25 feet!). Perhaps the sturgeon had gotten trapped in the lake on a spawning run when the swamp was flooded and couldn't get out when the waters receded. At any rate, the fisherman realized he couldn't land such a large fish with a cane pole so impulsively jumped



on its back in an attempt to wrestle it ashore. But the fish was much too strong and proceeded to swim around the lake with the fisherman holding on for dear life. The fisherman soon got over his fear and began enjoying his ride, to the point of laughing about it, and couldn't wait to get home and tell his friends. The big fish, however, eventually tired of his passenger and threw the man off and who, being unable to swim, promptly sank to the bottom and drowned. But sometimes at night, especially during a full moon, they say you can still hear the fisherman laughing as he rides his big sturgeon around Weston Lake (I'm pretty sure I heard him once a few years ago.)

Although the COWASEE Basin is justly famous for its waterfowl heritage, it is just as well known for its tremendous fishery resources. Consider, for example, the famous spawning runs of striped bass up the Congaree River. In the 1950s and 60s it was not all that unusual to catch 30- or 40-pound stripers in the river, and there were several cases of landing huge stripers from the Blossom and Gervais Street Bridges. I also remember how the landings

around Sparkleberry and the Upper Santee Swamp would be full of fisherman, especially in spring, going to Broadwater, Indigo Flats, Risers Old River, McGirt's Lake, and other fishing spots.

COWASEE fishing has changed over the past 50 years. The landings are still crowded with boaters on a June weekend but many are joyriders and not fishermen (I was recently entertained by a flotilla of boats on a Sparkleberry "duck run.") The battered 14-foot aluminum john boat has been replaced by fiberglass with lots of horsepower. The number of quaint country stores selling live bait, Pepsi-Colas, nabs, Vienna sausages, and dispensing fishing information has greatly diminished. I don't know if fishing is what it used to be in the COWASEE Basin but I do know there are still some out there to catch, especially on a sunny spring day with a kid or two along to continue the tradition.

Acknowledgments

We gratefully acknowledge the Harry Hampton Memorial Wildlife Fund for their support in producing and mailing this newsletter.

Let Us Hear From You

We'd welcome any feedback, comments, and critiques you have about this newsletter or on any subject pertaining to the COWASEE Basin. The chairman of the COWASEE Basin Task Force is Richard Watkins at dolinhill@windstream.net while the newsletter editor is John Cely at cowasee@gmail.com

Oops Again

Thanks to a sharp-eyed reader who caught a math error when reporting in the last newsletter that the "COWASEE Basin is actually 315,000 acres, rather than the 215,000 we have been reporting and therefore nearly a third bigger than what we thought it was..." Actually the Basin is nearly 47% bigger than what we have been reporting. Apologies for the error.



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