



Sweetgum
ALL IMAGES—NPS UNLESS OTHERWISE CREDITED

American beech

Swamp chestnut oak

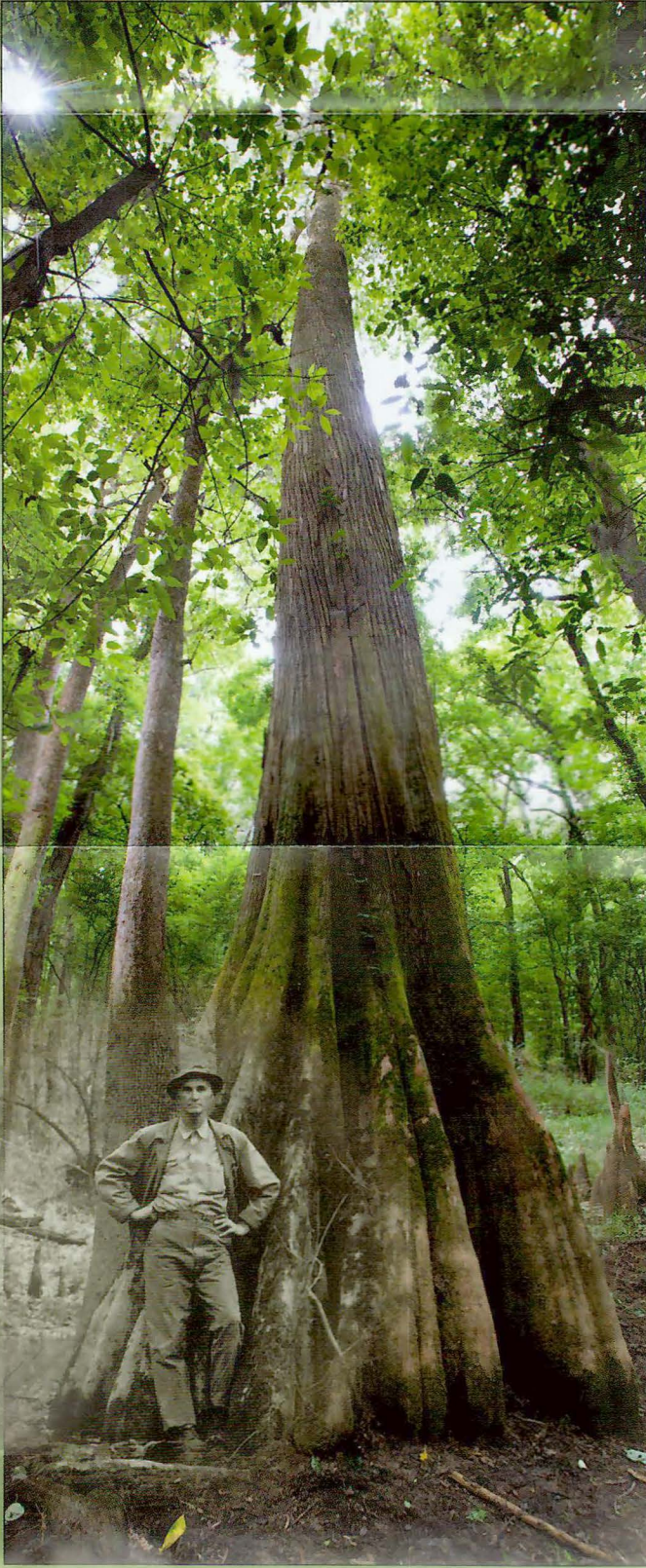
American holly

Water tupelo
© JEFF REBER AND WALTER MARK

BREATHE THE AIR OF ANCIENT TREES

Welcome to the wild heart of South Carolina—a land of towering trees, of floods and fire, of woodland paths and water trails used by people for over 10,000 years. These ancient trees have witnessed wars, slavery, freedom, and destruction. This rare old-growth floodplain forest was almost lost. In 1976, it became part of the nearly 27,000 acres of Congaree National Park.

Congaree’s floodplain and uplands are steeped in folk tales, ghost stories, and fond memories. Carrie Barber White, who grew up near here, remembers summer weekends spent at Cedar Creek, where “it would be so cool and inviting.” Today, she and her sisters bring grandchildren to look for birds, frogs, and salamanders.



Dwarf palmetto
© CHRIS ECKARD / UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

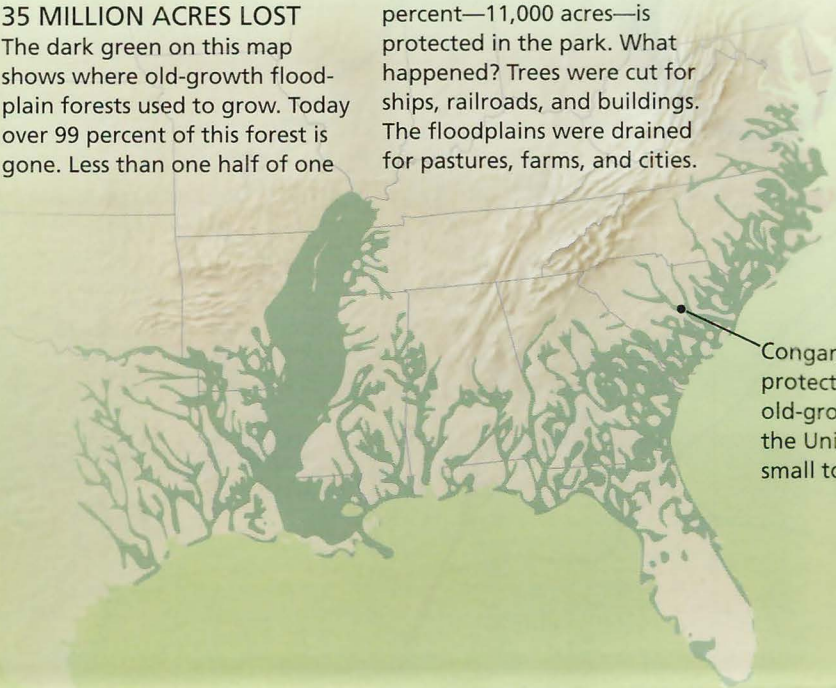
Loblolly pine
© LARRY KOTHIYAK

What will you experience here? Listen for the song of a warbler. Fish the creek and lakes. Paddle a kayak into wilderness quiet. Walk through the upland and inhale its piney scent while looking for signs of past residents. And be sure to come back. Congaree National Park is a land of constant change and new discoveries.

Bald cypress
NPS / JUSTIN HOBERT

35 MILLION ACRES LOST
The dark green on this map shows where old-growth floodplain forests used to grow. Today over 99 percent of this forest is gone. Less than one half of one

percent—11,000 acres—is protected in the park. What happened? Trees were cut for ships, railroads, and buildings. The floodplains were drained for pastures, farms, and cities.



Congaree National Park protects the largest remnant of old-growth floodplain forest in the United States—an area too small to see on this map.

HARRY HAMPTON Journalist and champion of Congaree, Hampton posed next to a bald cypress in the 1950s. It towers over 130 feet and still stands—thanks to his efforts and those of others he inspired.

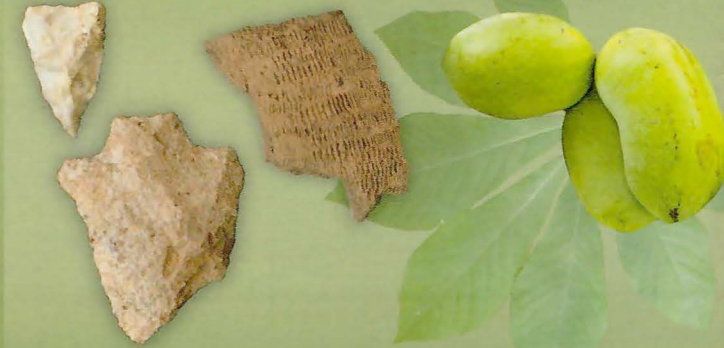
BALD CYPRESS This tree’s broad base and complex root system help hold it steady during a flood. The knees (*below*) might also help stabilize it. Many giant trees grow here, and some are

considered “champion trees”—the largest of their kind in the state or even in the nation. The park has numerous champions, including pawpaw, loblolly pine, and sweetgum.



Bald cypress knees
© JEFFREY M. HARRIS / NPS

WALK IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF ANCESTORS



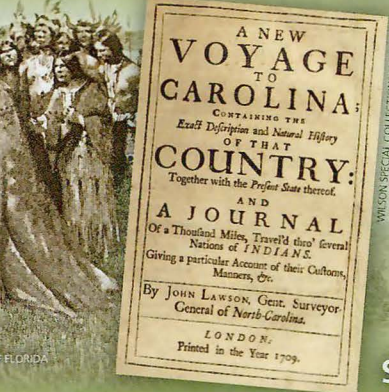
First People of the Congaree 9500 BCE–1700 CE

HUNTERS AND GATHERERS The area’s first people find plenty of food in the floodplain and uplands, like pawpaw (*above right*). They hunt with stone arrowheads (*above left*).

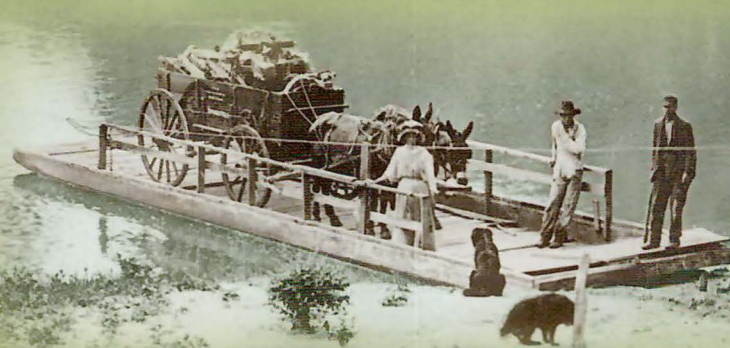
TRADERS, CHIEFS By 1000 BCE (before common era), people begin settling in villages near here to farm, hunt, and gather. They add distinctive patterns to pottery (*above center*)



and build large mounds, perhaps for burials. Chiefdoms develop from 1000 to 1600 CE. A major village, Cofitachequi, is near the park along the Wateree River.



EUROPEANS Spanish explorer Hernando DeSoto meets people of Cofitachequi (*above*) in 1540. As diseases ravage their people, chiefdoms realign into smaller tribes—including the Congaree.



Settlement, Wars, and Slavery 1700–1865

UNEASE Europeans begin to take land from native people for farms and settlements. In 1716, the tribes fight the English and lose. The Congaree, reduced earlier by disease and now by war,

join the Catawba. Settlers establish ferries across the Congaree River by the 1740s (*above*). Land-owners use enslaved people to clear and develop the floodplain for growing crops.



AMERICAN REVOLUTION Soldiers skirmish nearby. Brig. Gen. Francis Marion, known as the Swamp Fox, leads a siege that breaks the British hold on this area.

SANCTUARY People running from slavery find shelter here and even form small communities. During the Civil War, Union soldiers destroy railroads and bridges as they march by.



Community and Industry 1865–1950

FREEDOM AND A FARM After the Civil War, freed people in South Carolina can buy farms from the state in a program some call “40 acres and a mule.” In the Congaree area, they farm

the floodplain and the uplands. They hunt, fish, and many are baptized in Cedar Creek (*above right*). They establish towns close to Congaree where they start businesses and raise families.

LOGGING In the late 1890s, the Beidler family buys most of the Congaree floodplain for its trees. Logging this dense, wet forest is hard and expensive. They quit—for now.

LIVING Irvin Portee (*above*), born and raised near Congaree, learns how to “doctor” horses and other farm animals. He also guides hunters and anglers through the forest on weekends.



Full Circle 1950–Present

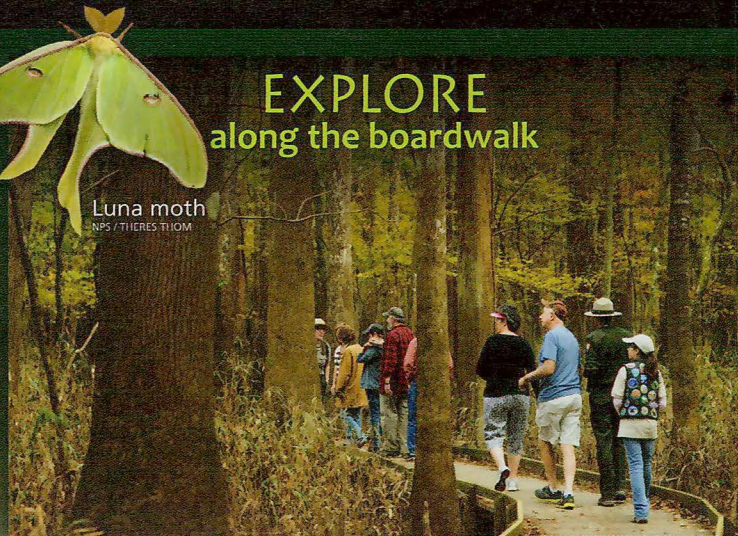
TREES AT RISK In the 1950s, journalist Harry Hampton begins his work to preserve the Congaree forest. When the Beidlers allow logging again in 1969, Hampton’s effort grows into a

grassroots campaign. Politicians from multiple parties join to pass national legislation to preserve the largest remnant of old-growth floodplain forest in the southeastern United States.

TODAY This world-renowned forest remains at risk. Floods bring pollution. Climate change is altering plant growth, animal behavior, and weather patterns. Even so, descendants of enslaved

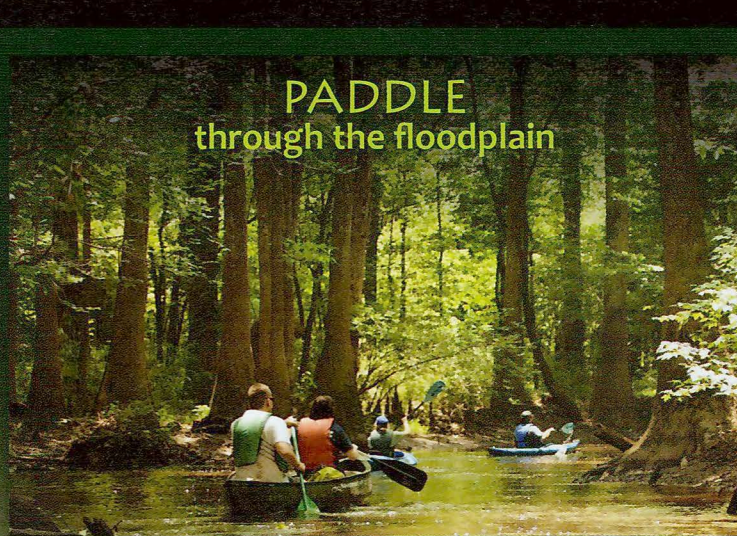
people, members of 17 tribes, and millions of visitors come to enjoy Congaree National Park. As we walk through its wilderness, we walk in the footsteps of those who came before.

Visit the Home of Thousands of Species



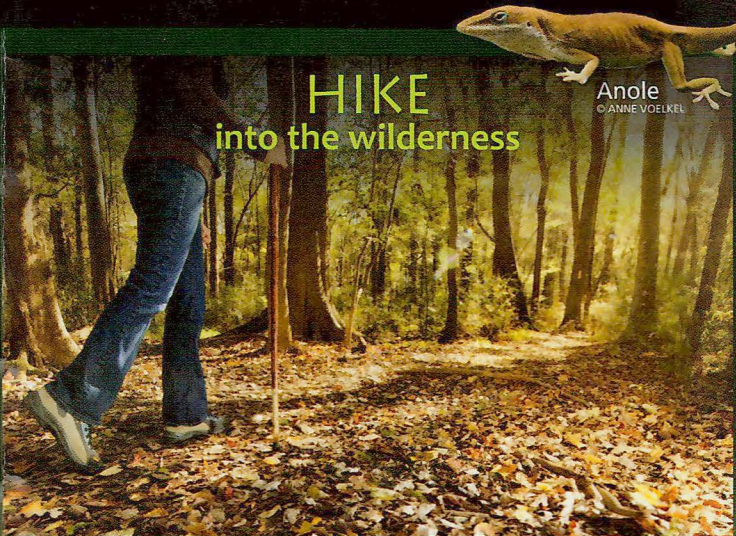
EXPLORE along the boardwalk

Come wander among towering trees, hear the rata-tat-tat of a pileated woodpecker, and soak in the history of "the swamp." Head out on your own, follow the self-guiding tour, or join a ranger-led walk. The boardwalk is for people of all ages and abilities.



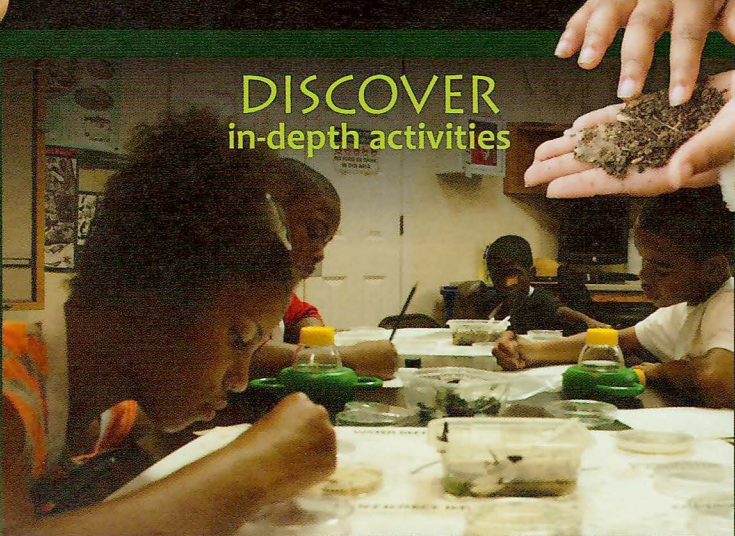
PADDLE through the floodplain

Paddle Cedar Creek through the watery wilderness of Congaree. Discover "walking trees," spot a great blue heron, watch leaves twirl in the current. You can also approach the park along the Congaree River's Blue Trail and



HIKE into the wilderness

Spend a few hours or a week walking the wilderness trails. They cross the bluff and its loblolly plantations, taking you by sites used in ancient and more



DISCOVER in-depth activities

Like many national parks, Congaree is a laboratory for science research at all levels. Scientists and students come here from around the world. Ask about ongoing projects and recent research findings. You might see



Congaree's old-growth floodplain forest and uplands support an extraordinary variety of life. Because of this diversity, the park is designated an International Biosphere Reserve.

BIRDS The park is famous for its variety of birds. Thousands of songbirds migrate through here or stay the winter.



NOT WELCOME Feral hogs dig constantly for food, which damages native plants and animals, and historic sites.

Butterweed NPS / KATH COOPER



>1,000 SPECIES Over 1,000 species of moths live here, along with 140 species of butterflies, and thousands of other insects.

Fox squirrel © PAUL K. MASAR



AT NIGHT Owls fly silently through the forest each night. In early summer, synchronous fireflies flash in unison, providing a rarely seen light show.

White-tailed deer NPS / PAUL ANGELLO

FED BY FLOODS The Congaree River is bounded on both sides by bluffs that mark the edge of the floodplain and help contain floodwaters that cover much of the park each year. Floods bring in minerals and other nutrients to the floodplain ecosystem.



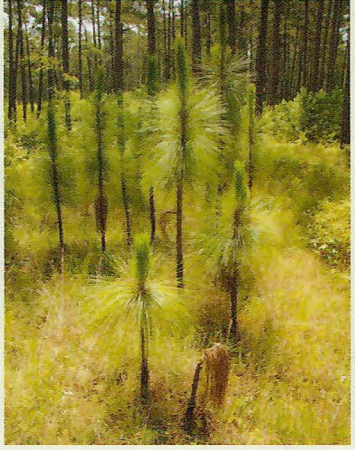
DRY CONDITIONS For most of the year, most of the floodplain is dry. Look for small wet areas, low hills, and fallen trees. These and other small habitats are why so many kinds of plants and animals live here.



MINOR FLOODING After a heavy rain, guts (small water channels) and low areas begin to fill. Cedar Creek spreads among the trees. Now is a good time to look for fish and salamanders in waters rising along the boardwalk.

FED BY FIRE In the park's uplands, fire—not flood—is bringing back a rare forest.

In the past, longleaf pine dominated the upland regions of the park. These trees depended on regular fire to keep fast-growing hardwoods like sweetgum from taking over. Today the park uses fire carefully to restore the longleaf pine forest. In time, rare animals like the red-cockaded woodpecker may return, along with rare plants.



Longleaf pine seedlings



COMMON FOOD Seven kinds of crayfish live here, and all are eaten by many animals, including this great blue heron. During dry times, crayfish burrow deep into the soil and are safe from other animals.

HARRY HAMPTON VISITOR CENTER Named for the man who helped save Congaree, the visitor center is a good place to begin. A film and exhibits show highlights of the park's people, plants, and animals. The Boardwalk and Bluff trails start here, as do most ranger programs.

For Everyone Bring the family for a picnic, a ranger program, or a walk through the woods. Camp at the Longleaf Campground or hike to the primitive Bluff Campground.

Just for Kids Ask about the Track Trails program and how to become a Junior Ranger.

For Teachers Bring your students on a field trip or join other teachers on a learning adventure. Go to the park website for more information.

Wilderness Most of Congaree National Park is wilderness (see small map above). This designation protects forever the land's wild character, natural conditions, opportunities for solitude, and scientific, educational, and historical values. Here you can sense being a part of the whole community of life on Earth.

Rules and Safety Pets must be leashed; they are allowed on all trails. • Be alert for poison ivy, stinging insects, and mosquitoes. • Anglers must have a South Carolina fishing license. Minnows and fish eggs are prohibited as bait. • Bicycles and motor vehicles are not allowed on trails. • Motorized watercraft not allowed. • Littering, digging bait, picking plants, and disturbing wildlife are not permitted. • For firearms regulations check the park website.

Getting Here Congaree National Park is southeast of Columbia, SC. From I-77 take exit 5 onto SC 48 (Bluff Road). Follow the signs to the park.

Accessibility We strive to make our facilities, services, and programs accessible to all. For information go to the visitor center, ask a ranger, call, or check our website.

Emergencies call 911

More Information Congaree National Park 100 National Park Road Hopkins, SC 29061 803-776-4396 www.nps.gov/cong

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Congaree National Park is one of over 400 parks in the National Park System. To learn more about national parks, visit www.nps.gov.

National Park Foundation. Join the park community. www.nationalparks.org

AMPHIBIANS This green tree-frog is one of the 18 kinds of frogs in the park. Four toad species also live here, and nine kinds of salamanders.

