



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.

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.

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.

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.



Dwarf palmetto
© CHRIS EVANS / UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
Loblolly pine
© LARRY KORNHART

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 discovery.

Bald cypress
NPS / JUSTIN HOBART

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
NPS / JAMES AND JERRY TAPPLEY

WALK IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF ANCESTORS



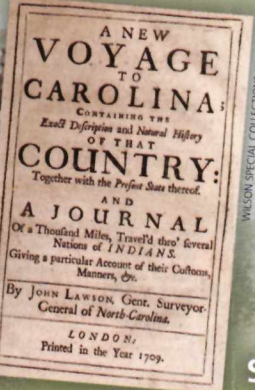
First People of the Congaree 9500 BCE–1700 CE

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



BARBARA FRUTKIN: ONE PEDESTAL OF MISSISSIPPIAN POTTERY
STATE MEMBERS OF FLORIDA



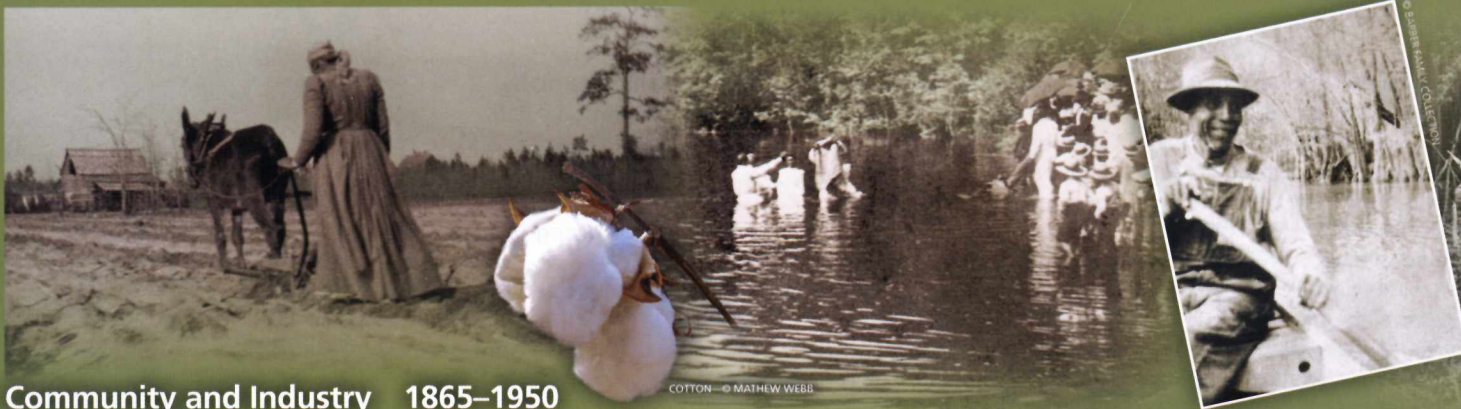
Settlement, Wars, and Slavery 1700–1865

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 by disease earlier and now by war,

join the Catawba. Settlers establish ferries across the Congaree River by the 1740s (*above*). Landowners 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 uplands, and hunt and fish. 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

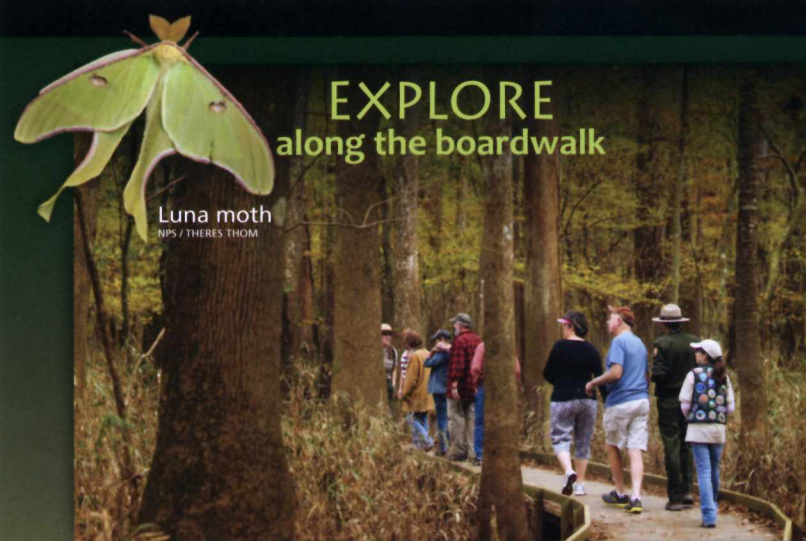
TREES AT RISK In the 1950s, journalist Harry Hampton begins his work to preserve the Congaree forest. When the Beidlers allow logging again in 1969, Hampton’s effort grows into a

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



Luna moth
NPS / THERES THOM

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 abilities and

ages. You can walk the full 2.4-mile loop or explore a small section. If it has been raining, parts of the boardwalk might be slick or underwater. Local people come here often; they know the Congaree floodplain is a place of constant change and surprise.

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

camp in the wilderness. Bring your own canoe or kayak, or join the popular ranger-led tour. The paddling experience changes as water levels change. Before starting your trip, get updated information at the visitor center.

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

recent times. Trails in the floodplain lead you to oxbow lakes, primitive camping deep in the forest, and opportunities for solitude. The Bates Ferry Trail follows a historic road to the banks of the Congaree River.

Congaree, like many national parks, 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

a researcher at work or children taking water samples. Perhaps you can join a bird or butterfly count. These are just a few of the ways to experience the research underway here. Find out more on the park website.



Pileated woodpecker
© GARY LEITCH-REES

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

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

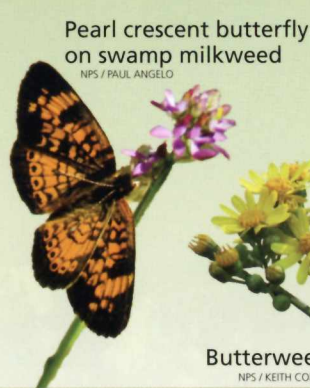


Feral hog
© DUANE BURDICK

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



Common whitetail dragonfly
NPS / THERES THOM



Pearl crescent butterfly on swamp milkweed
NPS / PAUL ANGELO



Butterweed
NPS / KEITH COPPER

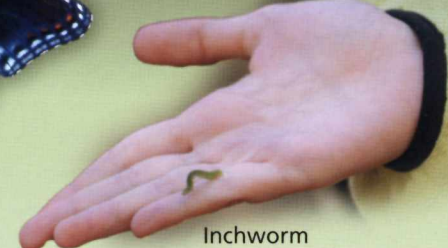


Red-spotted purple butterfly
NPS / THERES THOM

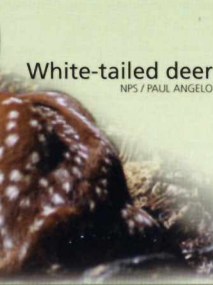
>1,000 SPECIES Over 1,000 species of moths live here, along with 140 species of butterflies and thousands of other insects.



Fox squirrel
© PAULA K. MASLAR



Inchworm
NPS / JAMES AND JENNY TARBLEY

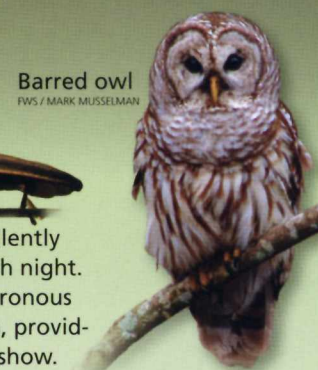


White-tailed deer
NPS / PAUL ANGELO



Firefly
© BEN PFEIFFER

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



Barred owl
NPS / MARK MUSELMAN

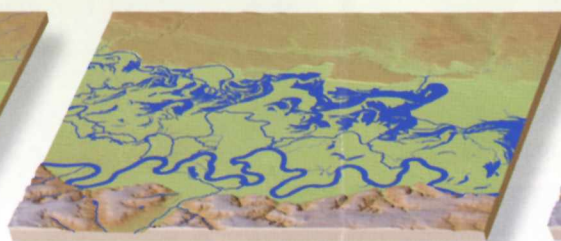


River otter
© BARRY TROUTMAN

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 salamanders and fish in waters rising along the boardwalk.



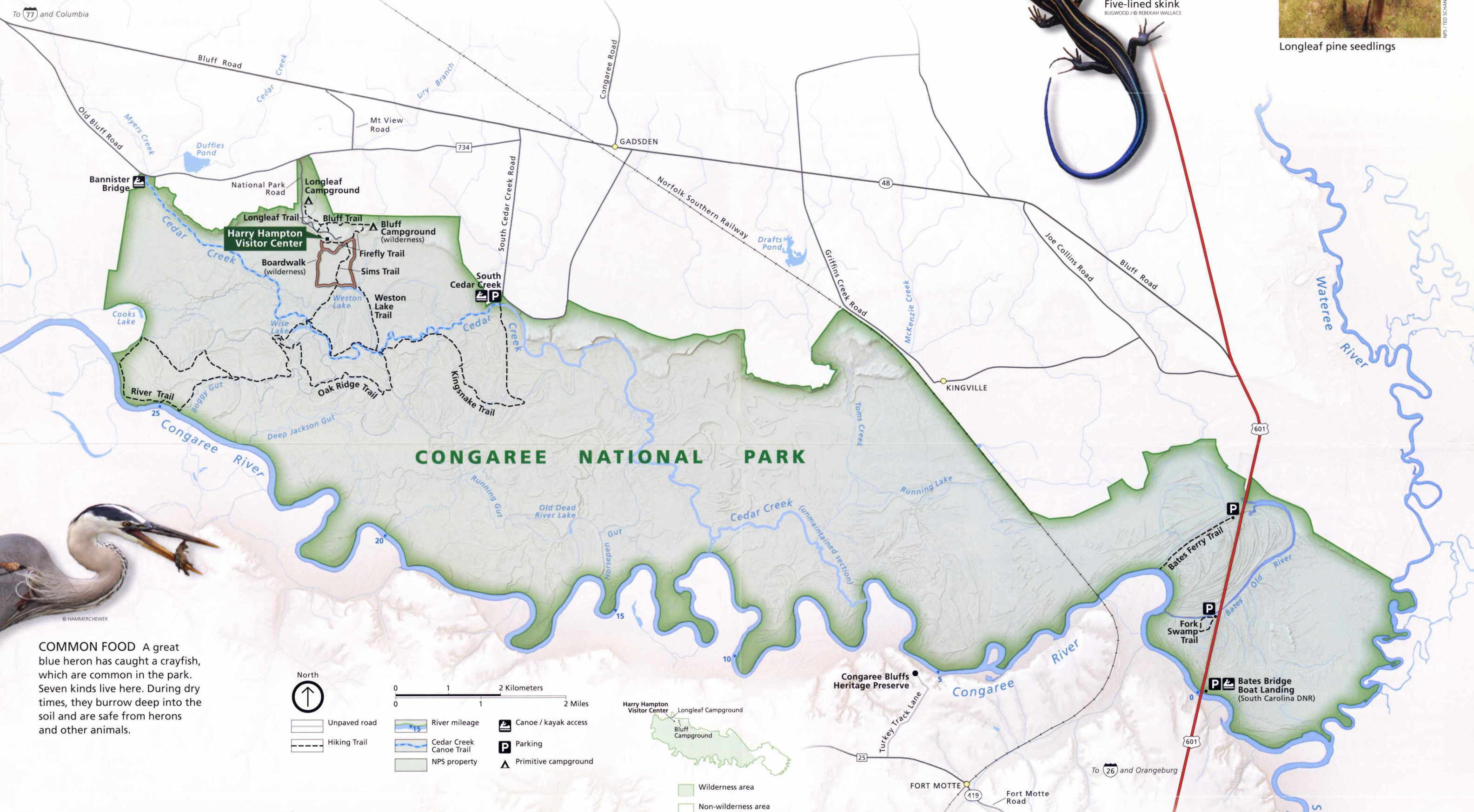
MAJOR FLOODING Waters can rise fast and high when Cedar Creek and the Congaree River overflow. River otters and other aquatic animals spread out. Land animals head for high spots in the floodplain or move to the uplands.

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
NPS / TED SCHANZ



COMMON FOOD A great blue heron has caught a crayfish, which are common in the park. Seven kinds live here. During dry times, they burrow deep into the soil and are safe from herons and other animals.



Unpaved road

Hiking Trail

0 1 2 Kilometers

0 1 2 Miles

River mileage

Cedar Creek Canoe Trail

NPS property



Canoe / kayak access



Parking



Primitive campground



Wilderness area



Non-wilderness area

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.

Explore Congaree's wilderness on foot via the boardwalk and trails, and by canoe or kayak. Stay in the wilderness at Bluff Campground. Ask at the visitor center about other wilderness camping opportunities.

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. Fish eggs and minnows are prohibited as bait. • Bicycles and motor vehicles are not allowed on trails. • Motorized watercraft are 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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National Park Foundation Join the park community. www.nationalparks.org

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



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