

2017 WETLAND TREASURES OF THE CAROLINAS



CONGAREE WETLAND TYPES:

Bottomland hardwood forest, riverine swamp forest

Photo by Congaree National Park



CONGAREE SWAMP

Property Owner: National Park Service
Recognitions & Designations: Wetland of International Importance (Ramsar Convention),
Biosphere Reserve (UNESCO), National Natural Landmark (National Park Service),
Important Bird Area (National Audubon Society)

carolinawetlands.org

ECOLOGY & SIGNIFICANCE

Encompassing more than 26,000 acres of mostly floodplain forest, Congaree National Park features the largest expanse of southern old-growth bottomland forest remaining in the United States (11,000 acres). This dynamic floodplain ecosystem is sustained by flows from a 14,000-square-mile watershed. Periodic flooding of the Congaree River, Wateree River and Cedar Creek carries nutrients and sediments that nourish and rejuvenate this floodplain. A variety of habitats are associated with the floodplain's complex topography, including forested wetlands, oxbow lakes, slow moving creeks and sloughs, which collectively support a diversity of birds, amphibians, reptiles, mammals, insects, fish and other aquatic life.

FLORA & FAUNA

Congaree has a high concentration and diversity of big trees, including a number of state and national champions. This swamp is particularly valuable as resting and breeding habitat for neotropical migratory songbirds, and also supports large numbers of overwintering birds. Species include Kentucky warbler, Swainson's warbler, prothonotary warbler, yellow-throated warbler, northern parula, rusty blackbird, barred owl, white ibis and many others. A diversity

and abundance of woodpeckers and other cavity nesters live in the large amounts of dead, dying, and downed wood in the site's old growth. Rare species documented at Congaree include the Rafinesque big-eared bat, southeastern myotis bat, bald eagle, wood stork, swallow-tailed kite, and spotted turtle. At least 16 species of rare plants occur in the park, including the largest extant population of the Carolina bogmint.

THREATS

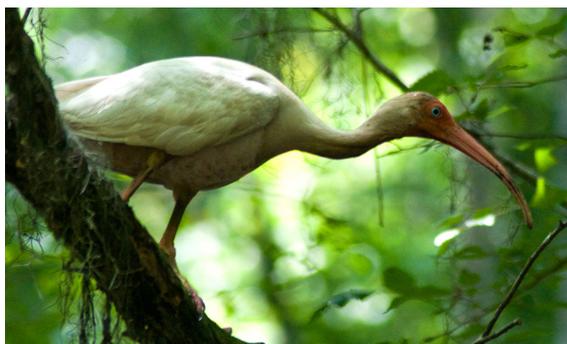
Development in the watershed affects water quality by sending excess sediment and nutrients downstream, especially via floodwaters. Invasive species are displacing natives in some areas. Feral hog rooting facilitates the spread of invasive plants and causes habitat damage. Climate change may already be affecting lifecycles of some native species of Congaree.

ACCESS

With more than 25 miles of hiking trails and 2.4 miles of boardwalk, there are many ways to explore Congaree. Ranger and volunteer guided programs are led on Saturdays year-round. A marked canoe trail invites you to explore Cedar Creek. See www.nps.gov/cong/ for details.

SOURCES

Foundation Document, Congaree National Park
Important Bird Area Site Profile, National Audubon Society



White ibis—photo by Congaree National Park

