

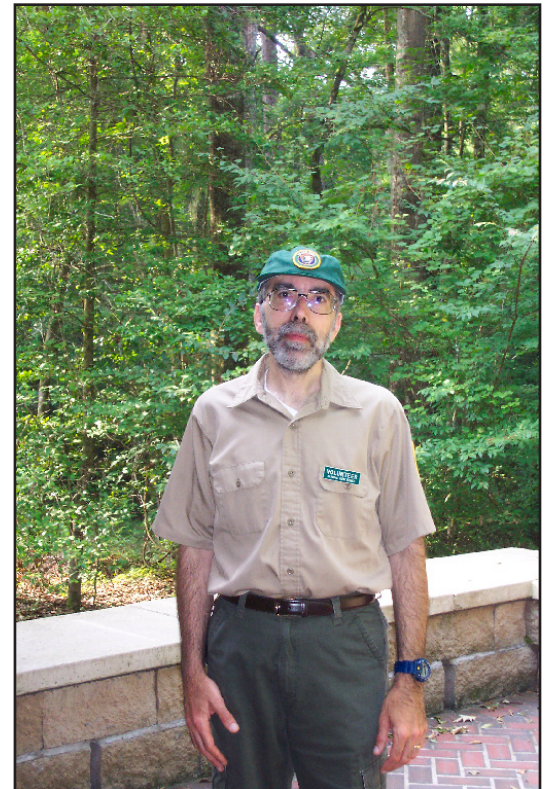


# Boardwalk Talk

Quarterly  
Volunteer  
Newsletter

## VOLUNTEER OF THE QUARTER:

Michael Montebello



Michael graduated from the University of South Carolina as a Civil Engineer. He also completed graduate studies in Environmental Engineering there. He currently works at the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control in the Bureau of Water. Michael has worked there for 26 years. He is married and has one daughter (age 17). Both his wife and daughter also are National Park Service Volunteers.

His other volunteer experience includes Treasurer of the Columbia Gem and Mineral Society, a volunteer for the South Carolina State Museum, and as a sound technician for his local church. Michael said "I enjoy the outdoors and visiting national parks and monuments throughout the United States."

We are very happy to have Michael aboard as part of our volunteer team.

# Superintendent's Corner



It's finally autumn here at Congaree, and I'm excited to be on the job as the new Superintendent. The staff and volunteers have already made me feel welcome, as I settle into my new role and new responsibilities. South Carolina is my home state, and to return here as Congaree Superintendent is an honor! My husband, Tom and I are looking forward to weekend hikes in the park as the leaves begin their losing battle with gravity.



Just the other day, I took my lunch break outside, and walked down the boardwalk behind a large group of elementary school children, led on a hike by "Ranger Fran." I stopped midway, and as the excited sounds of the children faded away, the sound was swiftly replaced with the gentle cacophony of birds and a faint pattering of leaves hitting leaves as they fell to the ground. For a moment, amid the telephone calls, emails, document reviews, and meetings - I found solace. It is this sense of solace, wonder and awe that brought me to Congaree.

Since arriving here, I have enjoyed getting to know our many talented volunteers and park friends, and look forward to working with you into the holiday season. I also look forward to learning from each of you what it is that you value most about Congaree. I encourage you to share with me your thoughts about the park, what we do, and how we do it. An organization that doesn't adapt- doesn't have the opportunity to flourish. Just as we look around and see signs of adaptation in the park- we must adapt our operations to the park and its needs.

Best to you for a wonderful autumn!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tracy Swanson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.



# Resource Management

## 2006 Ivory-billed Woodpecker Survey

As you know, field surveys for the Ivory-billed Woodpecker occurred at CONG from February - April, 2006. The Old-Growth Bottomland Forest Research and Education Center hosted and coordinated all activities associated with this effort. Forty-six citizen scientists contributed almost 2000 volunteer hours to survey significant acreage across the Park. The Learning Center facility was transformed into an "operations center" for this project, which included weekly volunteer training sessions, daily logistics coordination, overnight accommodations for field crews, and data download and management.

Volunteers completed systematic transect searches across the park and documented typical signs of woodpeckers including foraging and cavity trees. More than 7,000 acres of CONG were surveyed, which represents approximately 28% of the park. During these searches, a total of seven "potential encounters" were reported, but no definitive, verifiable evidence of the Ivory-bill was captured.

Park staff is currently working with the South Carolina Ivory-billed Woodpecker Working Group to plan additional surveys at CONG this winter. We were also successful at securing additional funding from the NPS regional office that will

support an experienced Cornell search team here at CONG this field season. Many, many thanks to all of our dedicated volunteers who participated in the 2006 search effort.



Gary Williamson, long-time explorer in southeastern floodplain forests, helped survey for Ivory-billed Woodpeckers at Congaree National Park in April 2006



Volunteers at Congaree: Ready for Ivory-bill searches! (left to right): Gordon Murphy, Laura Fogo, Dalcio Dacol, John Rich, John Cely and Mitch Binnarr

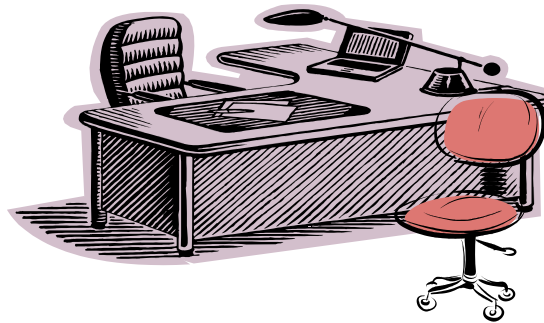
## Quote of the Quarter

"Earth's crammed with heaven,  
And every common bush afire with God;  
But only he who sees, takes off his shoes -  
The rest sit round it and pluck blackberries."  
Elizabeth Barrett Browning



## INFORMATION DESK NOTES:

1. Very Important! Do not sign up anyone before the two weeks notice for guided canoe trips or other programs which require two weeks notice. If someone insists on signing up before the two week period and you need help in explaining this to them please contact Fran or Jeremy immediately.
2. The water in Cedar Creek is medium to high. Please let any people inquiring about Cedar Creek canoeing know this information. There are treefalls over Cedar Creek requiring boaters to get around them. If anyone would like to check the creek level you can go to: <http://waterdata.usgs.gov/sc/nwis/uv?02169672>
3. Be aware August 15, 2006 was the beginning of deer hunting season which extends though January 1, 2007.
4. All volunteers and staff who write camping permits need to have Jeremy or Fran review the steps we need to take in order to make the camping permit complete. All boxes on the camping permit must be filled in with correct in and out dates, name of campground, number of campers and complete addresses. **ALL CAMPING PERMITS MUST HAVE A VEHICLE LICENSE NUMBER WRITTEN ON THE PERMIT.** This will require some campers to go back to the parking lot to get the proper license tag number. The person assigned to the front desk needs to sign the permit as well as the camper. The camper gets the top sheet.
5. If any volunteer needs to use the laptop computer behind the information desk, he/she must take the required security training before doing so. There is an icon (symbol) on the screen which will link you directly to the security protect the staff, the computer volunteer from unauthorized questions about this see Fran



training. This is to system and each park use. If you have any or Jeremy.

## Make-A-Match

Fall is a cool reprieve from our summer heat. Try to match these autumn observations:

- |   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| 1. Small spike of small white flowers     | a. Pawpaw tree           |
| 2. Large spike of scarlet red flowers     | b. Red Maple             |
| 3. Large spike of brilliant blue flowers  | c. Fall asters           |
| 4. Brilliant yellow or red leaved tree    | d. Baldcypress           |
| 5. Gray stalagmite                        | e. ladies tresses orchid |
| 6. Brown stalagmite                       | f. cardinal flower       |
| 7. Miniature daisies on one branch        | g. blue lobelia          |
| 8. Small tree with large nearly oval leaf | h. Hanging Spanish moss  |
| 9. Small stick with legs                  | i. Baldcypress "knee"    |
| 10. Tree that loses its needles in fall   | j. Walking stick insect  |

Answers: 1-e, 2-f, 3-g, 4-b, 5-h, 6-i, 7-c, 8-a, 9-j, 10-d

# Maintenance Locker

## Congratulations Lewis!



Lewis Prettyman recently accepted a promotion as a District Facility Management Specialist at the Blue Ridge Parkway. Congratulate him when you see him. He was willing to be interviewed before he left. Following are his remarks.

*Interview with Lewis  
Prettyman:*

*Fran:* So, you are headed to Blue Ridge Parkway, how do you feel about that?

*Lewis:* Thrilled. I am certainly going to miss “the Swamp,” but the Blue Ridge is a huge opportunity. It’s much larger than the Congaree for sure, but hey, it’s drop-dead gorgeous, and by default, a larger challenge. To be a part of that team up there is going to be something special and an experience you gotta look forward to. Heck, if what a person does in life isn’t challenging, what fun is that? But, no doubt, gonna miss the “Swamp” and everyone associated with it. I’m no dummy; I know we have a great thing here. I can think of no better place to be “born” into the Park Service.

*Fran:* What was your most memorable experience at Congaree?

*Lewis:* Heck, after close to 13 years there are thousands of memorable moments. Anything involving you (Fran) or Madman (Marcus) I can count as memorable. The infamous “Lewis, Leg, Tree” incident is memorable. All the people I have met and come to know are memorable. Sean Kelsey telling the Acting Superintendent to “HUSH!” when he thought he heard a bulldozer we were waiting on ...and even more memorable, the Superintendent actually clamming up instantly (for those wondering, it is not normal for a WG-03 to “Hush” a Superintendent). All the things we have accomplished are truly memorable. My whole experience at the Congaree is truly memorable. A wise man once said something like; “Memories keep all things dear to you alive and well.” I have a lifetime of great Congaree memories and everyone of you reading this is a part of them.

*Fran:* What was the most challenging time you had at Congaree?

*Lewis:* The Congaree Juggling act. We never had enough money or staff or support or whatever. ...the cliché issues all parks face. What was cool was how we, as a team, reacted to it. Everyone wore many hats. Everyone had those notorious “other duties as assigned” ... and didn’t cry about it. Look around and see what we’ve accomplished.

*Fran:* What was the biggest obstacle that you overcame while working at Congaree?

*Lewis:* The last year and a half was quite the adventure and eye-opener, both positive and negative. I know the staff as a whole kind of felt like we were left out in the cold, it more than irked me. ...BUT, we drove on and continued to set records at the park. We built the new Maintenance Facility, Resource Management did wonders with the Learning Center (just peruse the FY06 LC Report), everyone pulled it all together with close to half the FTEs at the park lapsed. ...its all astounding and everyone at the Congaree has the right to be proud.







*Fran:* What are you most proud of while you were at Congaree?

*Lewis:* That's a tough question. No doubt the whole partnership experience with the entrance road and VC would top the list. That was a proud moment for all of us. I'd have to say, being a part of a park as it grew from a single Ranger Station to what we have now, with all the projects and adventures in between, is something to be proud of. Shoot, remember when your desk was milk crates and a piece of plywood?

*Fran:* What got you excited about getting up every morning and going to work at Congaree?

*Lewis:* I think John Torrence summed it up pretty well. . .he called the park "his church." When you got overloaded with work, down in the dumps, or whatever, all you had to do was walk outside or stroll a trail and everything was immediately put back into perspective.

The magnificence of the Congaree has that power. I always found it quite cool to come around a bend on a trail and there would be Allen Gibbs, sitting reading the "Good Book," in the middle of nowhere, happy as a clam. It gave a new meaning to the Congaree as a Church.

*Fran:* What words of wisdom would you give to a new Chief of Maintenance before he arrived on the job?

*Lewis:* Embrace the team concept at the Congaree. . .the hell with "Divisions" . . .throw that word out of your mental dictionary. If the Congaree ever divides itself among classic park division lines, it will fail. I guarantee it. Remember that you work as a part of a TEAM for a PARK, for the PARK SERVICE, for your COUNTRY. "Not my job" is a phrase best left for those who aspire towards nothing. . .it's a worthless mentality.



And whatever you do, the second you hear "That's not how we do it here," be sure you recognize that phrase as a warning sign of non-creativity and an immediate leadership issue/concern. Oh, and don't be afraid to fail, reminds you that you're human and "stuff happens" . . .just don't make it a habit and make darn sure you learn from them (Grins).

*Fran:* What was your most inspirational moment here at Congaree?

*Lewis:* I'll use a Rudy Mancke talk as an example. . .that man can make dirt interesting. I once went on a three hour walk of his and after two-hours it dawned on me we had only gone about 100 yards. . .it was that engrossing. And more so that he 'educated' me to look at the park as more than just excel sheets, projects, and such. . .it all goes back to remembering where you work and why. It's much bigger than our own personal tiny little worlds. I'd be remiss if I also didn't say that all our accomplishments were inspirations in themselves. Really, just look around. . .this place should be a model for *Fundamentals*.

*Fran:* What are you going to tell your new team at Blue Ridge Parkway when you enter on duty?

*Lewis:* What I tell everyone I meet for the first time. . . look them in the eye, firm handshake, "Howdy, I'm Lewis, how can I help you?"

# CREATURE FEATURE – SPIDERS



by Theresa Thom



Did you know there are lots of different species of spiders in the Southeast?



Some stream dwelling spiders eat fish?



There are spiders that steal prey from other spiders?



Spiders are an important part of the food chain?

Spiders and their relatives are called arachnids. Arachnids have the head and thorax combined (cephalothorax) with simple eyes, jaws adapted for tearing or piercing prey, a pair of pedipalps and eight walking legs. Arachnids include spiders, scorpions, pseudoscorpions, whipspiders, harvestmen, ticks and mites. Spiders are the only arachnids that have special glands in their abdomen which produce silk.

Spiders are arachnids not insects, but both spiders and insects belong to the largest group of animals on Earth, the arthropods - animals with hard external skeletons and jointed limbs (greek arthro=joint, podo = footed). What is the difference between spiders and insects? Spiders have two main body parts, eight walking legs, simple eyes and piercing jaws (fangs) and abdominal silk spinning organs. Insects have three main body parts, six walking legs, compound eyes, antennae and chewing jaws (mandibles - often secondarily modified).



The eastern United States has one of the richest spider faunas in North America. No one really knows just how many species of spiders inhabit this region. A good estimate would probably be between 800 and 2,000 species! (Worldwide there are at least 35,000 species of spiders). There are many spider species within the eastern US that have never been formally named, and many more which await discovery!

Most spiders are small, inconspicuous arthropods which are harmless to humans. Their beneficial role in keeping insect populations in check far outweighs the hazard posed by the few spiders that occasionally bite humans. Only two groups--recluse spiders and widow spiders-- are considered poisonous to humans. Tarantulas, jumping spiders, wolf spiders and some other spiders worry people who mistakenly believe they are seriously poisonous. Although these spiders are often large, hairy and formidable-looking, their bite is typically less harmful than a bee sting. People who are extremely allergic to spider venom, though, react severely to any spider bite.



## WHAT DO SPIDERS EAT?

All spiders are predators, usually on insects. They capture their prey and inject venom. Spiders also inject powerful digestive enzymes into their prey that liquefies the internal tissues of their prey. To eat, spiders simply suck up the digested soup into their stomachs!

Did you know that some spiders eat other spiders, and the fishing spider *Dolomedes* actually eat small fish? There is a small relatively common spider called the Pirate Spider *Mimetus puritanus* that doesn't spin a web of its own - it invades the webs of other spiders, kills and sucks them dry!

## SPIDER LIFE CYCLE

Some spiders provide maternal care for their offspring. Wolf spiders, for example, carry the young spiders on their back. Golden orb weavers are laying eggs right now in egg cases that look like upside down balloons that will hatch in the early spring of next year.





# Welcome David Shelly

We are excited to welcome the newest addition to the Congaree Team. David Shelley joined the park staff on October 2 and will serve as the Education Coordinator for the Old Growth Bottomland Forest Research and Education Center. This position has been vacant for 2 years, so we are all thrilled to have some new energy and momentum targeting environmental education and outreach associated with the Learning Center.

Although David was born in Franklin, Indiana, he was raised in Greenville, SC from a young age. With deep roots in Lexington, Sumter, and Marion Counties, he is proud to be a South Carolinian. The education profession runs deep in his family on all sides. He has loved nature all of his life, and more recently, has found his vocation in the fields of geology and public science education.



David Shelley in the CONG muck swamp (mmm, mmm good!)

David received a B.S. in Geology at Furman University in 1998, then left for New Mexico, where he discovered his inner “desert rat” – and completed an M.S. in Geology at New Mexico State University. He is currently finishing a Ph.D. with Dr. Art Cohen in the Department of Geological Sciences at USC.

His dissertation project (which is coordinated with the NPS and the SCDNR Geological Survey) involves producing and interpreting geologic maps of the Congaree River Valley and Floodplain. The upshot is that the landscape around us contains a history of ancient oceans, tectonic uplift, ice-age climate change, and human impacts here in Central South Carolina.

David is happily married to Maria T. Shelley, whom he has known since middle school. They recently celebrated the first birthday of their son, John Lawton Shelley, on Oct. 12 of this year. When David is not working, playing with John, or hiking, he enjoys playing Scotch-Irish and Traditional American music on the Hammered Dulcimer and Bodhran (an Irish frame-drum).

David is “so grateful for the opportunity to serve the community and park service in this position, and is excited to jump into the swamp with both feet.”

David will be working out of the Harry Hampton Visitor Center and welcomes any inquiries about education programs and/or regional geology questions.

Students Allied for a Greener Earth (SAGE)

The University of South Carolina student group, Students Allied for a Greener Earth (SAGE), worked with park staff and SCAs to remove non-native Japanese Stilt Grass (*Microstegium vimineum*) along the West Boundary Road and the River trail. Once the stilt grass goes to seed, the plants die and will only regenerate the following year from seeds remaining in the soil. The timeliness of this effort, just prior to the stilt grass going to seed, eliminated thousands if not hundreds of thousands of new plants from being produced. Thank you SAGE volunteers for your assistance in controlling non-native plant species at Congaree.





# Farewell & Thank You Derek Rascon



DEREK RASCON  
Student Conservation Association  
(SCA) Intern

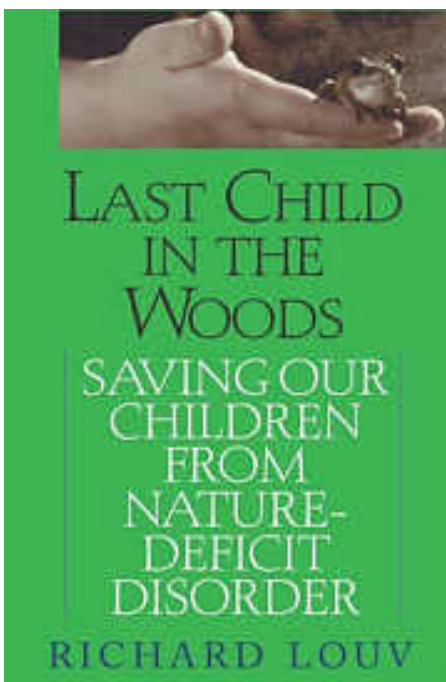
Derek came to us from Waco, Texas, where he received a B.S. in Biology from Baylor University.

A native Texan, Derek found the east coast and specifically the Congaree to be a wonderful change. He worked in the resource management division as part of our exotic plant control team, but he also tried his hand in all aspects of the park, from providing visitor information to assisting Researchers in the field. This was an exciting time for the park and we were excited to bring Derek on to the Congaree team.



On a typical day, you could find Derek hiking through the forest, helping track our feral hog population, or with a pair of clippers removing exotic plants that threatened the native species of the Congaree. Derek, who enjoyed hiking, photography, and canoeing, was very excited about his stay at the park and indulged in all three during his time here. Derek left the Congaree National Park on November 17th. We wish him the best of luck on his future endeavors.

## BOOK REVIEW



Not only computers, television, and video games are keeping kids inside. It's also their parents' fears of traffic, strangers, Lyme disease, and West Nile virus; their schools' emphasis on more and more homework; their structured schedules; and their lack of access to natural areas. Local governments, neighborhood associations, and even organizations devoted to the outdoors are placing legal and regulatory constraints on many wild spaces, sometimes making natural play a crime.

In Last Child in the Woods, Louv talks with parents, children, teachers, scientists, religious leaders, child-development researchers, and environmentalists who recognize the threat and offer solutions. Louv shows us an alternative future, one in which parents help their kids experience the natural world more deeply—and find the joy of family connectedness in the process.



# Rametta's Ramblings



## PEACE & TRANQUILITY

Our national parks protect not only redwoods, Spanish moss, and musket balls, but they also protect those values we cannot measure with a yardstick or a weight scale. Those values include peace, tranquility, silence and beauty. How could we possibly measure any of these or fit them to our market economy?

Silence in the Congaree forest is not total. When we sit with a group at the Weston Lake end of the boardwalk for “three minutes of silence,” the forest speaks. In sunlight, crickets chirp, prothonotary warblers sing “sweet, sweet, sweet, sweet,” loblolly pine needles whisper in the wind.

At dark we hear tree crickets, katydids, and barred owls. There is a symphony in the silence. In Congaree the silence seems more a state of mind than an actuality. The state of mind occurs

almost automatically. From a frenzied life of heavy schedules, workdays, and personal concerns, the serenity of Weston Lake is a welcome intrusion.

When we lead guided nature walks with school groups we label the program “Silent Walk.” While we walk we are quiet, when we stop we talk. Children catch on to this very quickly while immersed in the giant loblolly pines, sweetgums, oaks and hickories. A recently published book related to this quiet immersion is called Last Child in the Woods by Richard Louv. His main thesis is that today’s children have “nature deficit disorder.” Louv wrote “if children are not allowed access to natural settings it adversely affects their development.” I think adults may also experience “nature deficit disorder.” We all must expose ourselves to wild natural settings not for frills, but as one of life's necessities.

When we become silent in the forest our state of mind often changes to peace and tranquility. We get receptive to our surroundings by sitting quietly on one of the park



benches on the Boardwalk Loop trail. While we are in receptivity mode, we are more susceptible to insights, creativity, and to experience natural beauty. Moments like these allow our spirits to soar with the hawks, and our hearts to beat with nature’s rhythms. We may even get into “Muga” the Japanese word for flow. We know when we reach these flow moments because we lose all track of time and become totally focused. Psychologist Abraham Maslow called these peak experiences.

Come out and visit the Congaree forest, sit on one of the boardwalk benches, get quiet, and soon you will feel the peace and tranquility flow from the trees into you. You will energize yourself and create your own peak experiences.

Although these values (peace, tranquility, silence and beauty) cannot be measured, they are most certainly, priceless.







The Fall SCA Exotic Plant Management Team (from top to bottom): Alex Entrup (Team Leader), Jonathan De Long, Tynan Granberg, Dan LaFrance, and Zachary Cravens

Please welcome the Fall Exotic Plant Management Team to Congaree! Our current Weed team arrived on September 18 and will work until February 16, 2007. Their mission is to conduct exotic plant control at 14 National Park sites throughout the Southeast. As you know, there is plenty of this work to be accomplished here at Congaree. The ultimate goal of this program is to help parks locate, identify, and control non-native exotic plants that are threatening to alter park ecosystems.

Team training and orientation was hosted at Congaree for two weeks, which included instruction on chainsaws, herbicide application, plant identification, ATV use, and field navigation using GPS equipment. Many thanks to the CONG maintenance staff, the Nature Conservancy and others who made this training a success.

After two full weeks of training, the team was more than ready to “get to work.” One of their projects here at Congaree was to begin the arduous task of removing a 2 acre stand of exotic bamboo from the floodplain. This infestation was initially spotted by John Cely, and is clearly delineated on the “John Cely Map” of Congaree near Mazyck’s Cut. Park staff surveyed the perimeter of this bamboo stand with GPS last year, and suspect that it has expanded approximately 50 feet since then! The Exotic Plant Management Team worked at this site for 3 days and successfully cleared approximately 1/3 of an acre of this infestation. We plan to continue work at this site at a later date in order to eradicate this pocket of aggressive exotic bamboo from the park.

The team is currently working at Cape Hatteras National Seashore in North Carolina and plans to visit several other NPS sites across the Southeast in the months ahead.

---

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
Congaree National Park  
100 National Park Road  
Hopkins, SC 29061



Boardwalk Talk  
is a Quarterly  
production of  
Congaree  
National Park.

Editor:  
Fran Rametta

Contributors:  
Park staff & volunteers

Comments? Write to:

Superintendent  
Congaree National Park  
100 National Park Road  
Hopkins, SC 29061

Or E-Mail us at:

[COSW\\_Information@NPS.GOV](mailto:COSW_Information@NPS.GOV)

## Editors Comment's

Fall is always a special time of year. It reminds us of going back to school, pumpkins, hayrides, and falling leaves. For me it is a reprieve from the sweltering heat and humidity of our torrid summers.

Many of Congaree's plants and animals prepare for the coming cold- spiders leave egg sacs; turtles hide and slow their metabolism; insects die and leave eggs that will overwinter; trees and many herbacious plants recycle their leaves into new soil; paving the way for new giant tree growth. The morning cloak butterfly overwinters as an adult, hiding in tree cavities by night and flying when winter temperatures rise.

Starry nights grow brighter in the cool crisp air. Some nights you may even glimpse the milky way galaxy. Fall is a great time to visit Congaree National Park.