

VIEWS *from the* WOODS

Hitchcock Woods
FOUNDATION

Vol. 4, No. 1
Fall 2010

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New Festival Puts Another Feather in Aiken's Cap

The Hitchcock Woods has long served as a refuge from daily life. Many enjoy the Woods alone or with close friends and family members. At long last, the Hitchcock Woods Foundation's new, annual "Festival of the Woods" provides an opportunity for those who love the Woods to celebrate it and enjoy it as a community.

For generations, events in the Woods carried on great traditions based on the historic equestrian uses of the Woods. Last year, in commemoration of the Foundation's 70th anniversary, the Foundation established the Festival of the Woods to recognize the equally beloved pedestrian uses of the Woods.

This event is a community celebration of the rich history and natural resources of the Hitchcock Woods, values that all visitors seem to appreciate no matter how they prefer to visit. The Festival is a two-day weekend event held in September to commemorate the Foundation's incorporation as a charitable nonprofit in September of 1939.

This year, the Festival was held on Friday, September 24, and Saturday, September 25. The event was a proud participant in the community level calendar of events for the City's "Celebrate Aiken!" program.

On Friday evening, a sunset "Feathered Friends Dinner" was served under a tent at the Show Grounds in the Woods. The evening included live musical entertainment with the Capital City Ramblers, a silent auction, and a guest speaker.

This year's guest speaker was J. Drew Lanham, Ph.D., a widely respected ornithologist and a professor of wildlife ecology at Clemson University.

He teaches and conducts research on impacts of forest management and natural disturbances on wildlife conservation.

Dr. Lanham's talk touched on various philosophical reasons for caring for the environment and reconnecting to the natural world. Gifted with a heartfelt, poetic speaking style, Dr. Lanham had the audience in the palm of his hand.

Saturday's activities included various displays, a wildlife exhibit, fun runs of various lengths, escorted tours with various talk stations, a live raptors exhibit and talk, and a dog obedience and agility demonstration. Lunch was available for purchase and a merchandise booth had items for sale sporting the Hitchcock Woods motif.

Each year, the Festival will feature a different guest speaker and a fresh topical focus on Friday night. The escorted tours on Saturday will highlight different facets of the Woods ... perhaps geology, wildflowers, wildlife, and sites of historical interest.

In 2010, Saturday's events were exclusively a benefit for members of the Friends of the Woods program. Next year, active member households will continue to enjoy free general admission on Saturday, but nonmembers may attend for a small admission fee. Next year's Festival of the Woods will be held on September 23 and 24.



Guest speaker Dr. J. Drew Lanham is a noted ornithologist. Pictured here, he watches for birds while visiting the Vaal River in South Africa.



Escorted tours of the Hitchcock Woods featured four talk stations where experts spoke on various topics. Pictured here are Board Trustee Linda McLean, who spoke on the history of fences in the Woods and the Hitchcock family, Woods Technician Deon Mealing and Woods Superintendent Bennett Tucker, who spoke on the prescribed burn program, and Woods Volunteer Dr. Ken Perrine, who spoke on giant tree specimens in the Woods. Not pictured are Dr. Harry Shealy and Bob McCartney, who spoke on the botanical diversity of the Woods.

Friends of the Woods

Listed below are only the names of Business Partners and Friends of the Woods who have joined or renewed between May 13, 2010, and November 11, 2010. The complete list of all current Partners and Friends is published once a year in the Annual Report.

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\$1,000 Level

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Lichens Surveyed in Hitchcock Woods

by Gary B. Perlmutter

University of North Carolina Herbarium
North Carolina Botanical Garden

Earlier this year, the Hitchcock Woods was visited by a team of scientists to survey its lichens. The team, which included lichenologists from Oklahoma to Massachusetts, had convened in the Augusta area of Georgia and South Carolina for the Tuckerman Lichen Workshop, an annual event created to help train amateur scientists in identification of lichens while cataloguing the lichen diversity of eastern North America.

On this visit, we surveyed only a corner of the Hitchcock Woods, collecting specimens from the Tea Cottage Trail area to the Chalk Cliffs for identification in the lab. Yet in this small area we have found at least 125 species. And this is only a preliminary number. As lichens (small composite organisms that consist of a fungus and an alga growing on soil, rocks and trees) are often neglected except by a few dedicated enthusiasts, there is often room for discovery.

One such example was not a lichen per se, but a related non-lichenized fungus that we found growing on the kaolite sands of the Chalk Cliffs. This fungus has duped the most experienced experts among our team, and thus may represent a species new to science. What else lies undiscovered at Hitchcock Woods?

Hitchcock Woods Calendar & Gifts

Every year, the Hitchcock Woods Foundation publishes a calendar featuring photographs of the beautiful 2,100 acre Hitchcock Woods. The 2011 calendar has just been released, with photographs by Todd Lista of Lista's Studio of Photography and commentary by Whit Gibbons, Ph.D., of Savannah River Ecology Laboratory.

The 2011 calendar depicts the flora and fauna of the Woods with helpful educational insights from Dr. Gibbons. Prints of the photographs featured in the calendar may be purchased directly from Lista's Studio of Photography at 803-649-4321.

Titled "Hidden Treasures of the Hitchcock Woods," the 2011 calendar is available for purchase exclusively at Birds & Butterflies at 117 Laurens Street NW in downtown Aiken. The store also is carrying other merchandise sporting the Hitchcock Woods Foundation logo, such as sweatshirts, ball caps, sports bottles, tote bags and vehicle plates. Smaller gift items also are available. All proceeds from all sales will benefit the Hitchcock Woods.



Mother Nature Strikes Again



During a thunderstorm on October 27, this 18-inch diameter longleaf pine located at Jack Rabbit Field was blown apart by a lightning bolt that sent chunks of the tree flying as much as 60 yards away. Lightning associated with light rainfall is the catalyst for natural fires to occur in southern pine forests. Fortunately, during this storm, the area received more than an inch of rainfall and the portions of this tree that ignited were extinguished by the rain.

This is another reason to conduct prescribed burns ... to mimic nature in a controlled manner, and thereby reducing the fuel load. Just in the last three years, two active fires on Hitchcock Woods Foundation property have been started by lightning. Due to the lower fuel loads in the Woods, thanks to the Foundation's prescribed burning program, these fires have been easily suppressed by Woods staff before taking off and requiring more resources to suppress.

“Horses Meet Wheels”

By Peggy Dils, Aiken Driving Club



The Aiken Driving Club sponsored a clinic in the Woods for riders to get their horses accustomed to being around carriages and horse drawn carriages. On the afternoon of October 13, like clockwork at the appointed time, riders and their horses arrived at the Show Grounds in the Hitchcock Woods. It was a beautiful day for spending an afternoon in the Woods.

Aiken Driving Club member and driving trainer Shelly Temple guided the riders through a series of learning stations. The various stops involved encounters with a stationary carriage and moving carriages. Riders were instructed to follow and then to ride alongside a moving carriage, and then to approach a moving carriage driving from the opposite direction. One small carriage was drawn by a mini, which provided yet another learning experience.

This was an excellent opportunity for the club and its gracious volunteers to give back to the community. It provided a chance to work with riders in helping their horses to meet and interact with carriages without fear. Everyone enjoyed the afternoon and it even seemed that the horses were thankful for the easy, comfortable introduction to the carriage.

The members of the Aiken Driving Club look forward to cultivating continued safety in the Woods when horses and horse drawn carriages meet. Special thanks are extended to the volunteers who made this clinic possible. The proceeds from enrollment in the clinic were donated to the Foundation.

Team Benefits from Trails in the Woods



For many years, the Cross Country Team from Aiken High School has held their regular practices in the Hitchcock Woods. They can be seen running quietly through the Woods on balmy afternoons from August through October. Twice this season, two of the team's competitive meets were held in the Woods, one with North Augusta and one with Midland Valley.

The Hitchcock Woods gives the local team a real advantage. The soft trail conditions provide for poor traction, which strengthens the runners' legs and makes them work harder for speed. What's the end result? These runners are more competitive in a track meet with teams that practice regularly on pavement or firmer soil.

This year, the Aiken High team placed third in South Carolina Region 5-4A. Three runners from the team qualified for State Meet, Sam McGill (senior), Andrew Sherburne (senior), and Nikki DeMass (junior). McGill did particularly well, personally placing third in Region 5-4A. He is in the All State Top 15 and is the sixth fastest high school runner in the state.

The Aiken High team is ably managed by Coach Brad Wilson, who also teaches criminal justice at Aiken County Career and Technology Center, and by Assistant Coaches Bradley Verenes and Jake Morris, both of whom previously graduated from Aiken High School.



For years, the silent auction at the Aiken Horse Show has included a catered luncheon at the Foundation's office, the historic "Green House" at the South Boundary Avenue entrance to the Hitchcock Woods. The winning bid this year went to longtime Foundation supporter Betty Witham (center in red), who invited guests to enjoy the luncheon and tour of the Woods on November 10. The luncheon is sponsored and hosted by Board Trustees Gail King and Sandy Tucker (kneeling).



As part of Celebrate Aiken!, the community's yearlong tribute to the City of Aiken's 175th anniversary, Hitchcock Woods Foundation trustee Dr. Harry Shealy led two tours of the Hitchcock Woods on October 2. More than 60 people participated in the tours to learn more about one of Aiken's premier natural and historic treasures. Pictured at the Tea Cottage entrance on Dibble Road, Dr. Shealy (far right) prepares a group to embark on the guided tour.

THE MISSION OF THE HITCHCOCK WOODS FOUNDATION IS TO:

- protect and preserve the Hitchcock Woods in a natural and ecologically healthy state,
- maintain and manage historic and traditional equestrian and pedestrian uses, and
- foster education and research on the history and resources of the Woods.


Hitchcock Woods
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