

# VIEWS *from the* WOODS

Hitchcock Woods  
FOUNDATION

Vol. 1, No. 3  
Spring 2008

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Text by Harry E. Shealy, Jr., Ph.D.

Photographed and researched  
by Kenneth Perrine, Ph.D.

A few years ago I took one of my USCA classes through Hitchcock Woods in late May, and we went to one of my favorite spots in the Woods, the Ridge Mile Track. There are two reasons why I like the area. One, the deep sands make it interesting botanically, and second, it is the first area that the trustees selected to begin our management goals. The area has responded beautifully to our thinning and burning.

On this particular day in May, the main attraction was the natural garden of wildflowers that we saw in this unlikely spot of sand, drought, and heat. Yes, of course, we saw the usual eastern prickly pear cactus, *Opuntia humifusa*, with its bright yellow blossoms just enjoying this desert-like spot. Growing on the cactus was a fuzzy white colony of the cochineal scale insect whose pulverized bodies are used to make a commercial red dye; in Mexico the cactus is grown to harvest the insects.

In this same desert garden we found low round clumps of blue sandhill lupine, *Lupinus diffusus*, with its single leaflets covered in soft velvety hairs. Lupines, like other legumes, have the unique ability to "fix nitrogen," thus providing the much needed element to this nutrient-poor soil. This plant also provides protein-rich seeds for the wildlife.

Another favorite that the students saw in this sandhill area was coastal plain puccoon,

*Lithospermum carolinense*. This species is unusual in that it is a southeastern coastal plain endemic and in South Carolina is only found in the southern part of the state.

As we continued along, we saw a beautiful sunflower-like plant called eastern green-eyes, *Berlandiera pumila*. It only grows in the southeastern US and can bloom from May until November.

Further around the track, the class came upon a curious plant that looks too delicate and fragile for the harsh sandhills. It used to be called spiderwort, but now is commonly called roseling, scientifically named *Cuthbertia rosea*. When the flower is not present, the plant looks like low-growing grass.

The last flower we saw on our tour of the Ridge Mile Track on that day was New Jersey Tea, *Ceanothus americanus*. This small shrub with a delicate white terminal flower head is so common that it occurs in every county in SC and throughout the eastern US. It is called New Jersey Tea because the leaves make an excellent tea and were used as a substitute for black tea during the American Revolution. The taste and color are alleged to be similar to our usual black tea, but without the caffeine.

There are many more plants than just these in our sandhills. Perhaps you can take time this month for a field trip to the Ridge Mile Track to see for yourself this wonderful sandhill garden that was enjoyed so much by my students on that spring day several years ago.



Listed below are only the names of Business Partners and Friends of the Woods who have joined or renewed their membership with Hitchcock Woods Foundation between January 23, 2008 and May 9, 2008. A complete listing of all our Business Partners and Friends of the Woods will be published in the Annual Report, issued this summer.

# Friends *of the* Woods

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### \$1000 Level

All Star Rents\*  
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Renewals between 1-23-08 and 05-09-08 +  
New members between 1-23-08 and 05-09-08 \*  
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## 2008 AIKEN HORSE SHOW SPONSORS AND HITCHCOCK WOODS FOUNDATION BUSINESS PARTNERS



☞ GOLD ☞

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## EVEN A FOREST SOMETIMES NEEDS TO "THIN DOWN" A BIT

*Harry E. Shealy, Jr., Ph.D.*

One of the questions I am often asked is, "Why do you cut the trees in Hitchcock Woods?" My answer is usually something simple ... we cut the trees down for two reasons. We cut trees that are infested with pine beetles so that the infestation does not spread; second, we cut trees that are dead and are hazardous to Woods users because the tree is near a trail. But why do we cut healthy trees in stands that are not infested or present a safety issue? We cut them for the health of the forest! It is called thinning, and it's the cutting or removal of certain trees to improve the quality and health of the remaining trees.

The Hitchcock Woods is not a production forest; we do not raise trees to sell them as a crop. All of our thinning cuts are based on our management policies and objectives. Budget considerations do not drive our thinning operations; the thinning is driven by our management plans. We do sell the timber from thinning the trees, but management, not revenue, drives the process. Our goal for the Woods is the restoration of a longleaf pine forest, not the creation of a pine plantation.

We thin most of our stands of trees to a basal area of 60 to 70 square feet per acre. This means that in one acre we will have enough trees when measured at the ground level stump that the total area of those stumps would equal 60 to 70 square feet. As a general rule, a tree that measures 14 inches in diameter at breast height (DBH), which is 4.5 feet from the tree base, is about one square foot. So if we had an acre with 60 to 70 trees that were all 14 inches DBH, we would have a stocking density or basal area of 60 to 70 square feet of trees in that area. The reasons for having any given basal area relate to our management objectives.

If you have a high basal area, several things are certain. The trees will be in life or death competition for limited resources such as light, water nutrients, and space to grow and all the trees will suffer. With a dense stand, you also have very little light getting through the canopy, so you have almost no shrub layer or ground cover; there will be really low biodiversity. If you want a ground cover like wiregrass, you must let the light through the canopy. A well managed longleaf pine, wiregrass forest can have 40 species in 10 square feet and over 100 species can be found in a quarter of an acre.

So why do we thin? It makes for healthy trees that usually are more resistant to pine beetles and other pathogens. It creates a rich biodiversity, making wonderful habitats and producing food for all sorts of animals that are native to southern pine forests. We are, at best, simply mimicking what nature, with the help of Native Americans, have been doing for thousands of years before the first Europeans arrived on the shores of North America. Thinning and prescribed burning are two essential tools for a well managed longleaf pine forest and you need both if you hope to restore a pine forest to its original beauty.



## AIKEN EQUINE CHARITIES CUP RECAP



Some of polo's top talent teamed up to participate in a 30 Goal Polo Match staged to benefit the Hitchcock Woods Foundation on Saturday, May 10 at Meadow Hill Farm. The result was every polo aficionado's idea of excitement with a game that ended in a 7-7 draw. With a picture perfect day under sunny blue skies, the sidelines were lined with excited and happy spectators, and the hospitality tent proved to be a great place for everyone to gather and enjoy the match.

Hitchcock Woods Foundation would like to thank Tom and Barb Uskup for their assistance in making the Aiken Equine Charities Cup a huge success! We would also like to thank Haley Bryan, Christina Capps, Dave Flanders, Rebecca Gutierrez, Nancy Bruen-Smith and Todd Stilp for their assistance. A special thank you goes to Jane Page Thompson for doing a wonderful job on the silent auction. And, of course, we would like to thank the players ... Julian Daniels, Adam Snow, Jeff Hall and Martin Zeger who made up the Mercedes-Benz of Augusta team and Frankie Bilbao, Tiger Kneece, Carlos Gracida and Owen Rinehart, who played for Maverick Communications.

## ☪ IN MEMORY ☪

Our good friend and fellow trustee, W. Gibbs "Bud" Herbruck died in February. Always impeccably dressed, Bud was every inch a gentleman, with an easy and quiet charm and a kind word and friendly smile for everyone. Bud loved his retired life in Aiken and he and Muff enjoyed all the good things about life in this community which they supported in every way. Bud was a wise and thoughtful trustee of the Hitchcock Woods Foundation and his counsel and good judgment were a major part of writing the bylaws for the Foundation. Our deepest sympathy go to his wife, Muff. Bud will be sorely missed.



## RANDY WOLCOTT ELECTED CHAIRMAN

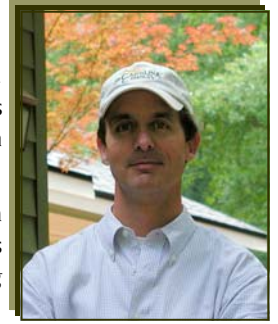
At the board's annual meeting in March, Randolph (Randy) A. Wolcott was elected chairman of Hitchcock Woods Foundation's Board of Trustees, succeeding Gail B. King, who served as chairman for three years.

Randy has been a trustee since 1998 and has worked with numerous committees. He participated in many controlled burns over the years and was instrumental in the renovation of the building that now serves as the Hitchcock Woods Foundation's offices.

He recently has served as chairman of the Wildlife Committee and as co-chairman of the Infrastructure Committee. He has been an active member of the Forestry Committee and is a longtime volunteer for the Axe Club and the Aiken Horse Show. He also has been involved with the Run for the Woods and has assisted the Aiken County Sheriff's Posse in search and rescue training in the Woods.

Randy grew up in Hamilton, Massachusetts, where his family has a long history of land conservation and management. He is a graduate of Boston University with a degree in economics.

Randy moved to Aiken in 1989. Today he is a licensed real estate broker representing The Carolina Real Estate Company. He is married to Girl Wolcott, who works with the Aiken Steeplechase Association and is an accomplished artist. Randy and Girl have a daughter, Caroline, age 10.



## THE 2008 AIKEN HORSE SHOW IN THE HITCHCOCK WOODS

The Aiken Horse Show is the highlight of the Woods' year and a great deal of time and effort is put into this event by a great many people. This year the ring was spectacular; the tent looked a picture with a slightly different format; the food served in the Hitchcock Tent was memorable; the classes provided a lot of entertainment for the spectators; and our judge, Betty Oare, did a great job. Sadly, Saturday, as you will remember, produced torrential rains and the decision to cancel was a wise one. However, our bottom line will suffer as a result, with proceeds from the gate, merchandising and sales and the silent auction taking a direct hit. But what I am most proud of is the way that our team pulled together that morning to try and notify as many people as we could and to generally salvage the day. It was handled with calm and cohesion. It takes all week to set up for the show (and a lot longer than that in the office) but this event is so fortunate to have as many wonderful volunteers as we do who help make all this possible. Thank you to all who participated as sponsors, workers, volunteers, exhibitors and spectators. It was a great success thanks to you. ☪ Gail King, AHS Director ☪

### 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**  
FOUNDATION

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