

VIEWS *from the* WOODS

Hitchcock Woods

FOUNDATION

(803) 642-0528

www.hitchcockwoods.org

Summer/Fall 2020

www.facebook.com/hitchcockwoodsfoundation

An Oasis of Tranquility

By Dede Biles, Aiken Standard

Social distancing is easy in Hitchcock Woods, which covers more than 2,000 acres and has 70 miles of trails that meander through stands of long-leaf pines go up and down hills.

During the coronavirus pandemic, the urban forest has become a popular place for Aiken residents and visitors to escape stress and uncertainty in a tranquil setting.

They walk, jog, run or ride horses while listening to drumming of busy woodpeckers and the songs of other birds.

Hitchcock Woods is also convenient for many of its users because it is located near downtown.

“I don’t know how I would get through this without Hitchcock Woods,” said Meg Ferguson, who was out stretching her legs recently. “It saves my soul. We are very fortunate to have it.”

Meghan Avrett was enjoying a leisurely stroll with her 1½-year-son, Forest, who was picking up and playing with sticks.

“I try to come out here once a day with him,” Avrett said. “It’s a nice place where he can run around. I especially appreciate it now with everything that is going on.”

The Hitchcock Woods Foundation is in charge of preserving and managing the privately-owned forest, which is one of the largest in the nation within a city’s limits.

“For me, Hitchcock Woods is about fresh air, sunshine and vitamin D,” said Linda Knox McLean, who is a member of the foundation’s board of trustees. “The air is crisp and clean, and the wildflowers are spectacular right now.”

For people not familiar with Hitchcock Woods, but would like to try it out, McLean offered some suggestions for walks.

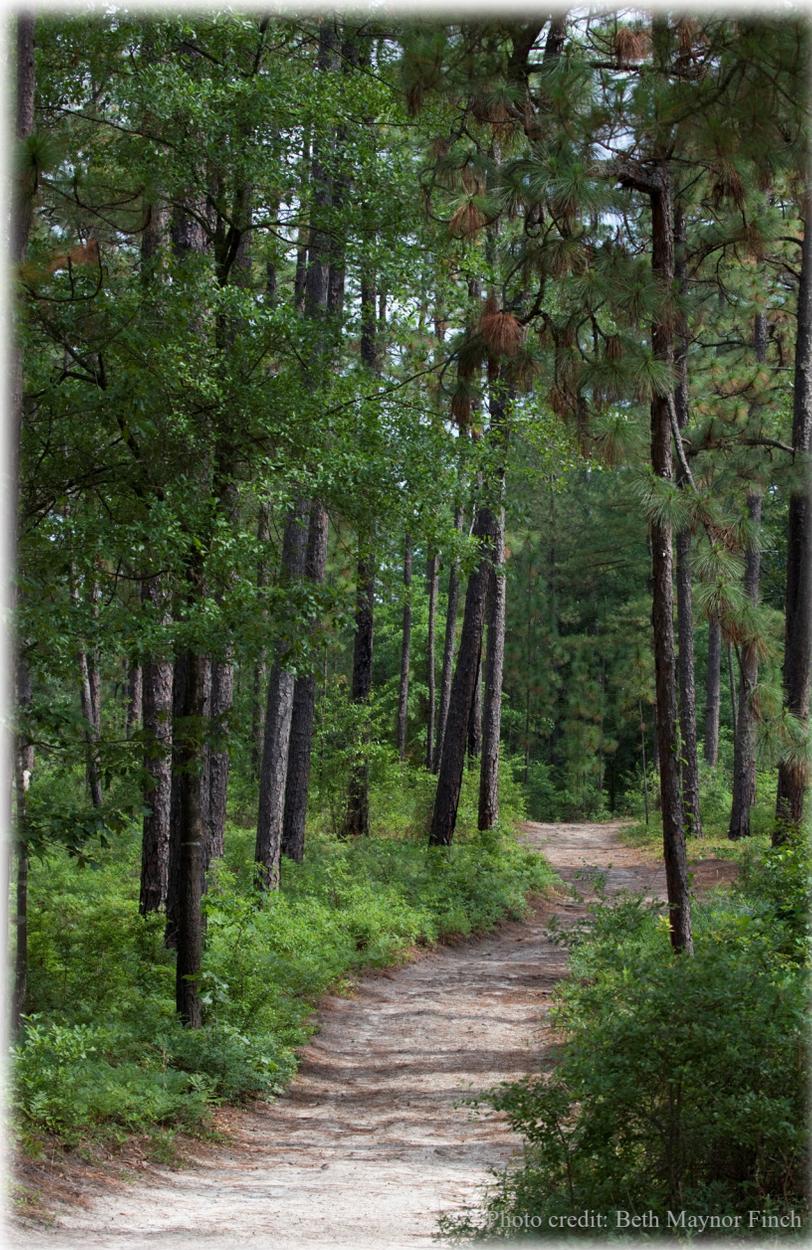


Photo credit: Beth Maynor Finch

An Oasis of Tranquility *continued*

“If you want to see a pond and turtles and birds, you should come in the Stable on the Woods entrance (at 263 Rubins Cottage Lane) and go to Black Gum Pond,” she said. “If you’re interested in history, walk to Memorial Gate (from the entrance at 444 South Boundary Ave. S.W.)”

There are plaques there that recognize prominent Aiken residents from the past and Woods lovers and supporters.

“If you go in farther, you can go to the Show Ring (where the Aiken Horse Show is held), and it is an emerald oasis there with its bright green grass” McLean said. “You can just sit in the bleachers and breathe in the air, and that is magnificent.”

Another member of the foundation’s board of trustees, Randy Wolcott, loves Hitchcock Woods during any season, but believes spring is especially nice.

“Where we did prescribed burns during the winter, there are fields of beautiful green bracken ferns, especially at Smith Cut,” he said. “The bluebirds are nesting and laying eggs, and so are the red-cockaded woodpeckers. You can see them around their nests at dawn and dusk.”

A favorite for Pat Corey, who is the chairwoman of the foundation’s board of trustees, is the Kalmia Trail.

Kalmia latifolia, an evergreen shrub commonly known as mountain laurel, blooms in April and May. Its large clusters of pink and white flowers look like big, puffy clouds.

“The *AllTrails* and *Maplets* apps are two helpful tools for navigating Hitchcock Woods,” said Woods Superintendent Bennett Tucker.

There are signs posted at entrances addressing issues related to social distancing.

The directions on them include the following:

- Be respectful of other visitors and keep your distance.
- Do not come in large groups. For walkers, we recommend no more than six people.
- For riders, we recommend groups of no more than six.

“The smaller the number, the better,” Tucker said. “Folks coming out as families are good because they are all staying under one roof.”

Visit www.hitchcockwoods.org for additional information.

HITCHCOCK WOODS FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES THE BEST FRIEND OF THE WOODS CAMPAIGN

“All creatures great and small.”



The Foundation strives to keep pace with a growing visitor population while sustaining the historic integrity and natural beauty of this community asset for the enjoyment of future generations.

The Foundation is expanding the Annual Fund to include your best friend(s)! You can enroll your dog, horse or other animal close to your heart as a *Best Friend* of the Woods.

Enrollment is \$20 per *Best Friend* or *In Memory of a Best Friend*. You will receive a bumper sticker (shown below) and a tax-deductible letter from the Foundation. Your Best Friend’s name will be printed in the Foundation’s 2021-2022 Annual Report and the 2021 Aiken Horse Show program book.

To enroll your *Best Friend*. . .

→ *Print the attached form and mail it with your check or credit card information to:*

*Hitchcock Woods Foundation
P.O. Box 1702
Aiken, SC 29802
OR*

→ *Call the Foundation office at 803-642-0528 M-F 9-5.*



“The journey of life is sweeter when travelled with a dog.”



“My heart belongs to the arena, but my soul belongs to the trail.”



“Until one has loved an animal, a part of one's soul remains unawakened.”

HATS-OFF TO OUR HITCHCOCK WOODS VOLUNTEERS *Bravo!*

MR. CHARLIE POSSEE



Charlie Possee, aka
"TAB" (Turn and Burn)

Charlie Possee, grew up in Montana and Oregon and graduated from the University of Oregon in Eugene. He worked for the U. S. Forest Service in forestry and wildfire in Oregon, Colorado, GA, NC, and SC at Savannah River Site and retired in 2012.

Charlie returned to Aiken in 2018 and soon started helping with prescribed burning in Hitchcock Woods. He quickly became a well-liked and an essential member of the burn crew.

Charlie has voluntarily logged hundreds of hours preparing units for burning. This is quite simply, hard physical labor. Charlie goes out prior to the burn and cleans up fire lines and creates "fuel breaks" around the jumps. He loves nothing better than raking around "snags" (standing dead trees that provide excellent wildlife habitat) and the RCW cavity trees to protect them from prescribed fire. Because of Charlie's help, the Hitchcock Woods burn crew has been able to increase our efficiency and apply more prescribed fire to the landscape than any prior year.

Charlie is a gifted story-teller. When he starts rolling on a story, we all know to stop what we are doing and listen. His sense of humor (giggling at his own stories) and timing are on full display when he tells stories about his life on "hot shot" crews.

If you walk in the Woods and enter from the South Boundary entrance, look to the right. Remember how brushy it had become? Well, Charlie is fixing it by taking a deep and personal interest. He has been using a brush saw along Devils Backbone to manually cut down thick brush and loblolly pine seedlings to speed up longleaf restoration. Charlie also helped prepare for the Aiken Horse Show last year as well as the Festival of the Woods. Charlie loves the great outdoors and he enjoys working hard to stay in good shape. When Charlie isn't helping in the woods, he might be off running the trails as he is an avid trail runner! As a volunteer, Charlie is a mentor and friend and fits right in as the "big brother" to the Woods staff and prescribed fire team. Charlie's greatest joy is being a member of the team and furthering our restoration goals. He takes great satisfaction in helping overcome a challenge that helps beautify a particular area. We thank you Charlie for your time, talent and friendship!

EXCELLENT!

Fantastic!

AMAZING!

Eagle Scout Alex Hanna Dedicated His Time and Talent



Bennett Tucker, Woods Superintendent
and Alex Hanna

The old map boxes were in need of repair, so when Alex Hanna approached Bennett Tucker, our Woods Superintendent, about replacing the boxes as his Eagle project, it was perfect timing. Jack Morris, Alex's mentor, helped engineer the project and with the help of the entire troop, Alex went to work sawing, hammering and painting. When completed Alex commented, "The invaluable skills you learn through a project like this will stay with you the rest

of your life." Thank you Alex for replacing the map boxes at the kiosks in Hitchcock Woods.

WAY TO GO!

Steve Percy, Talented Craftsman is One-Step Above

The trustees and staff appreciate the work and time Steve Percy put into constructing two new mounting blocks at the Coker Spring and Stable on the Woods entrances.

We have been receiving rave reviews and appreciation for your incredible work. Thank you!



ARRIVALS, DEPARTURES AND CELEBRATIONS

New Staff Member



We welcome Mary Katherine Philipp who has joined our staff as Director of Communication and Development. Mary Katherine was born and raised in Aiken and is passionate about the Woods as it has been a special part of her life since childhood.

She is thrilled that her 3 children, Crawford, Hallie and Loughlin, have also had the opportunity to “grow up” and

learn life lessons in the Woods and that they share her affinity and appreciation for this amazing sanctuary.

After receiving her Bachelor of Science in Business Management, Mary Katherine went on to earn her degree as a Doctor of Medicine from the Medical University of SC; she completed her residency and fellowship at the University of South Florida. She was the Director of Program for Saratoga WarHorse before returning to her roots and joining the Foundation.

She is excited to help further develop and improve outreach to our community, expand the educational aspects of the Woods inviting all to learn in this historic, outdoor classroom, help facilitate the City’s stormwater implementation plan and provide fresh ideas and input to continue the advancement of the Foundation’s mission, vision and development.

Mary Katherine considers it an honor and privilege to work with such an incredible and talented Hitchcock team...all of whom are ardent stewards of Hitchcock Woods dedicated to protecting and preserving this exceptional resource for generations to come.

Congratulations on Your Retirement!



Ron and Dori Brennemen

Ron and Dori Brennemen are saying goodbye to Aiken and retiring to the mountains.

They owned Birds and Butterflies for twenty years and now have decided to retire. Ron, a wildlife biologist, has been a valuable resource, advisor and longstanding member of the Hitchcock Woods Foundation’s Wildlife Committee.

Thank you, Ron! The Foundation wishes Ron and Dori the very best!

Dede Biles, Aiken Standard

Namon Corley Celebrates 85 Years Young!

A very special man to Hitchcock Woods celebrated a big birthday in June. Mr. Namon Corley, our retired woodsman for the Hitchcock Woods Foundation celebrated his 85th birthday with several staff members, trustees and volunteers making a surprise visit in Namon’s birthday parade in Aiken!

Namon served the Hitchcock Woods Foundation for 50 years, maintaining the trails, the jumps, the tree issues and so much more. Namon was also part-time kennel manager and drag man for the Aiken Hounds drag hunts. Namon is truly an Aiken icon!

We were grateful to be included in the birthday celebration and we knew Namon would enjoy seeing some of the equipment from the Woods in the parade.



The lawn was decorated for Namon and ready for the drive-by birthday parade of well-wishers.



The Hitchcock Woods brush truck joined the parade to wish Namon a very happy birthday!

LOOKING FORWARD TO 2021

UPCOMING

2021 APRIL						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Aiken Horse Show



Let's all look forward to the tradition in the Woods continuing on Easter weekend! Mark your calendars and join us with your family on Friday, April 2 - Sunday, April 4, 2021 at the 105th Aiken Horse Show. Hope to see you there!

2021 SEPTEMBER						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
19	20	21	22	23	24	25

Festival of the Woods



What is more enjoyable than having dinner under a September moon in the middle of Hitchcock Woods? We look forward to you joining us for the Festival of the Woods. . . what a great recipe for camaraderie.

Reminder



No matter what event is taking place in the Hitchcock Woods, be sure we have your correct mailing and e-mail address. We want to be sure you receive an invitation or our latest newsletter. You can send an e-mail to info@hitchcockwoods.org and you will be included in all the happenings in the Woods!

FOX SQUIRREL 5K RUN/WALK

The Hitchcock Woods Foundation will be hosting the **Fox Squirrel 5K Run/Walk** as part of the Festival of the Woods weekend. This 3.1 mile event will take place on **Saturday, September 25, 2021**, starting at 9:00 a.m. It will begin and end at the Horse Show Ring inside Hitchcock Woods.

On-site parking will be available. All profits will be donated to the Hitchcock Woods Foundation. Online registration will begin January 1, 2021 and can be accessed at strictlyrunning.com. For further information, contact Charlie Possee at cjpossee@icloud.com



"I will be on the lookout when you cross my path."

WOODS ACTIVITIES

Prescribed Burning Update

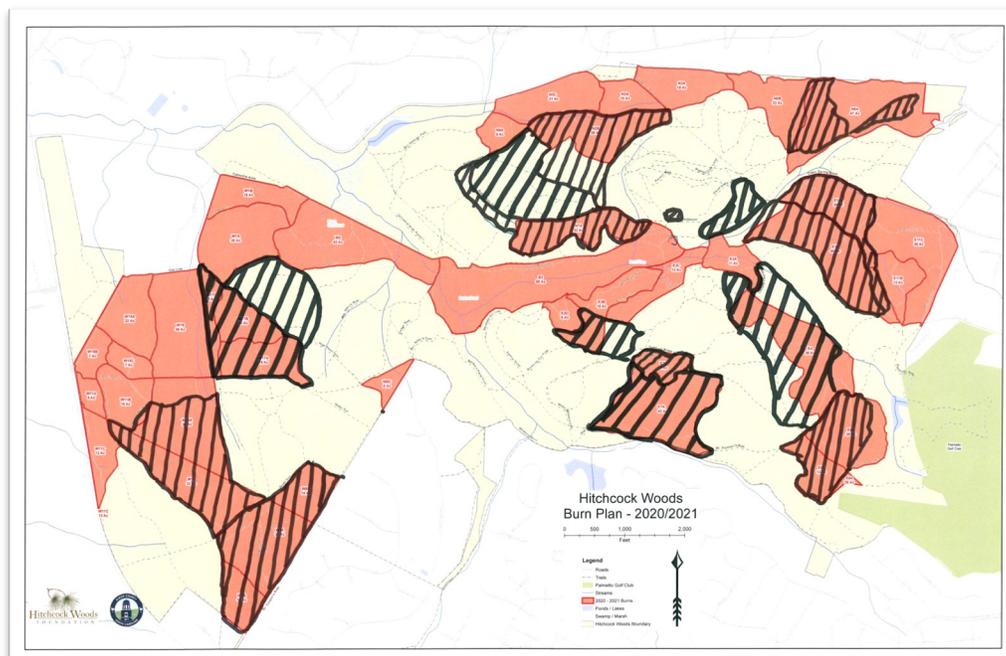
This year since the start of our winter, dormant prescribed burning season we have conducted 570 acres of prescribed burns for the health and safety of the forest. We have seen an abundant response in the recently burned areas in the growth of wildflowers, native grasses and legumes, to benefit all the wildlife of the Hitchcock Woods.



*Prescribed Fire-"a safe way to apply a natural process, ensure ecosystem health and reduce wildfire risk."
~ www.goodfires.org*



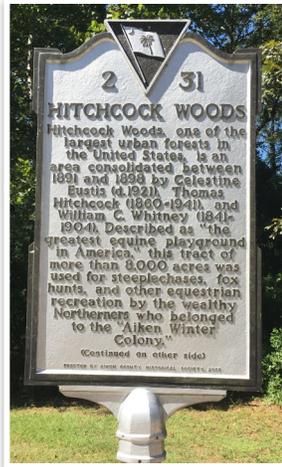
The Woods' fire team taking a break. From the left: volunteers, Sarah Bridges and Charlie Possee, Trustee Anne Kiser, Woods Steward Frank Morelli, volunteer Tim Mettlen and Woods Superintendent, Bennett Tucker. Seated, Woods Steward, Mike Grabowski.



The map of the Hitchcock Woods shows the prescribed burn units completed as of September 2020.

IN AND AROUND THE WOODS

SOUTH CAROLINA HISTORICAL MARKER



The South Carolina Historical Marker Program was established in 1936. The Hitchcock Woods marker is numbered 2-31 referencing the county code and order the marker was approved.

The Hitchcock Woods marker is located at the South Boundary SW entrance to the Woods. On the front of the marker it reads: *Hitchcock Woods, one of the largest urban forests in the United States, is an area consolidated between 1891 and 1898 by Celestine Eustis (d.1921), Thomas Hitchcock (1860-1941), and William C. Whitney (1841-1904). Described as "the greatest equine playground in America," this tract of more than 8,000 acres was used for steeplechases, fox hunts, and other equestrian recreation by the wealthy Northerners who belonged to the "Aiken Winter Colony."*

(1841-1904). Described as "the greatest equine playground in America," this tract of more than 8,000 acres was used for steeplechases, fox hunts, and other equestrian recreation by the wealthy Northerners who belonged to the "Aiken Winter Colony."

On the reverse side it reads: *The tract, now comprising almost 2,000 acres, has been owned and managed by the Hitchcock Foundation since 1939, when Thomas Hitchcock and his daughter Helen Clark established the foundation. Landmarks include Memorial Gate; Cathedral Aisle, a portion of the railroad bed built by the S.C. Rail Road in 1833-34; and Sand River, an unusual natural formation. Annual events include the Aiken Horse Show each April and the "Blessing of the Hounds" each November. Erected by the Aiken County Historical Society, 2005.*

For additional information regarding the other markers in South Carolina visit, <https://scdah.sc.gov/historic-preservation/programs/historical-markers>.



Your time and talent is welcomed and appreciated as a volunteer for the Hitchcock Woods Foundation.

Be a part of the activities and events that take place throughout the year that support the Woods.

Give us a call at
803-642-0528 or drop us a line at
info@hitchcockwoods.org.

We would love to hear from you!

FEATURED FLORA



Yucca filamentosa, commonly called Adam's needle, Spanish bayonet, yucca and needle palm, is a virtually stemless broadleaf evergreen that is native to beaches, sand dunes and fields from South Carolina south to Florida and Mississippi. It features a basal rosette of rigid, sword-shaped, spine-tipped green leaves up to 30" long and to 4" wide with long filamentous curly threads along the margins. Leaves form a foliage clump up to 2-3' tall. In late spring, a flowering stalk rises from the center of each rosette, typically 5-8' tall, but infrequently can reach 12' tall, bearing long terminal panicles of nodding bell-shaped creamy white flowers.

These plants can be found along Devil's Backbone and were invigorated by last year's prescribed burn. This year the plant has cast out beautiful flowers as pictured above.





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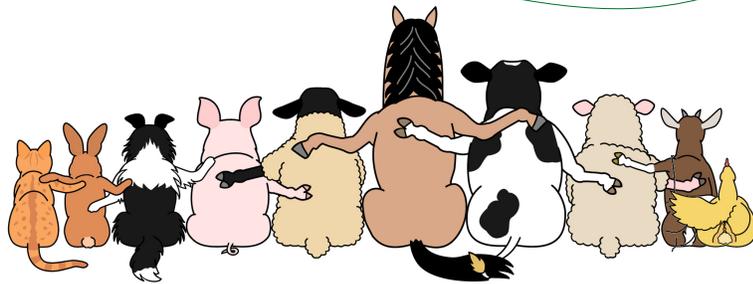
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W. Bennett Tucker
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Join today - Best Friend of the Woods!



DID YOU KNOW?

The Hitchcock Family's original and wonderful gift of land did not come with an endowment.

By making a planned legacy gift you can help sustain and ensure the Foundation's future work.

For more information about planned giving please call the Foundation office at 803.641.0528 or visit www.hitchcockwoods.org

BLESSING OF THE HOUNDS



The popular Thanksgiving tradition the Blessing of the Hounds in the Hitchcock Woods, has been cancelled due to COVID-19.



folly

Thank you **Folly** for selling Hitchcock Woods merchandise. Support the Woods . . .shop **Folly**!

116 Laurens Street SW
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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.