

SOUTH CAROLINA WILDLIFE

November-December 1986 \$2.50



Amid 610,000 acres of towering pines and shaded hardwood bottoms few would imagine the lean times and lands stripped of topsoil and timber that gave birth to our Sumter and Francis Marion national forests.





THE UNWANTED LANDS

by Jim Fenwood

IT IS DAWN in the forest. For a few moments the only sounds are a background of chirping crickets and the overhead sighs of tall loblolly pines stirred by the rising breeze.

Awakening songs of wren, jay, chickadee, cardinal and warbler will ring through the sun-dappled, broadleaf understory. The black and white flash of a pileated woodpecker will punctuate the straight-trunked pattern of pines. Within the oak, ash, gum and hickory hardwood bottomlands, squirrels, turkey and white-tailed deer will browse and search for nuts.

On this day, as on others before it, men, too, will come to the forest. Some will enjoy it briefly as they pass through; others will seek solitude in remote campsites. Some may come to gather firewood, others for an eight-point buck. Some will come to fell and haul its timber to be milled and dried for later use in the construction of new homes.

From mountains to piedmont to coastal plain, nearly 3 percent of South Carolina's lands comprise two national forests, the 360,000-acre Sumter and the 250,000-acre Francis Marion. Together with 153 other national forests, these lands, encompassing 191 million acres in 48 states, are managed by the U.S. Forest Service, the largest agency within the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Contrary to popular belief, those charged with managing these lands are not all "forest rangers," and most have never spent more than a few minutes in a fire tower. Their

ranks include professional resource managers specializing in every discipline from forest genetics to wildlife management, computer science and logging systems engineering. Their presence and the existence of these lands as a public resource are results of a developing nation's awakening to the need for conservation. It began in the lean years of the Great Depression.

Where cotton was once king in South Carolina, by 1930 the boll weevil reigned. Farmlands that once yielded bountiful harvests lay exhausted from repeated plantings of cotton, much of their topsoil washed away through gaping gullies.

Where virgin forests once stood, timber stands were stripped bare of their protective canopy. "Cut-and-run" forestry took the tallest, straightest trees and left only culls standing among the tops and logging slash. Wildfires burned unchecked for days.

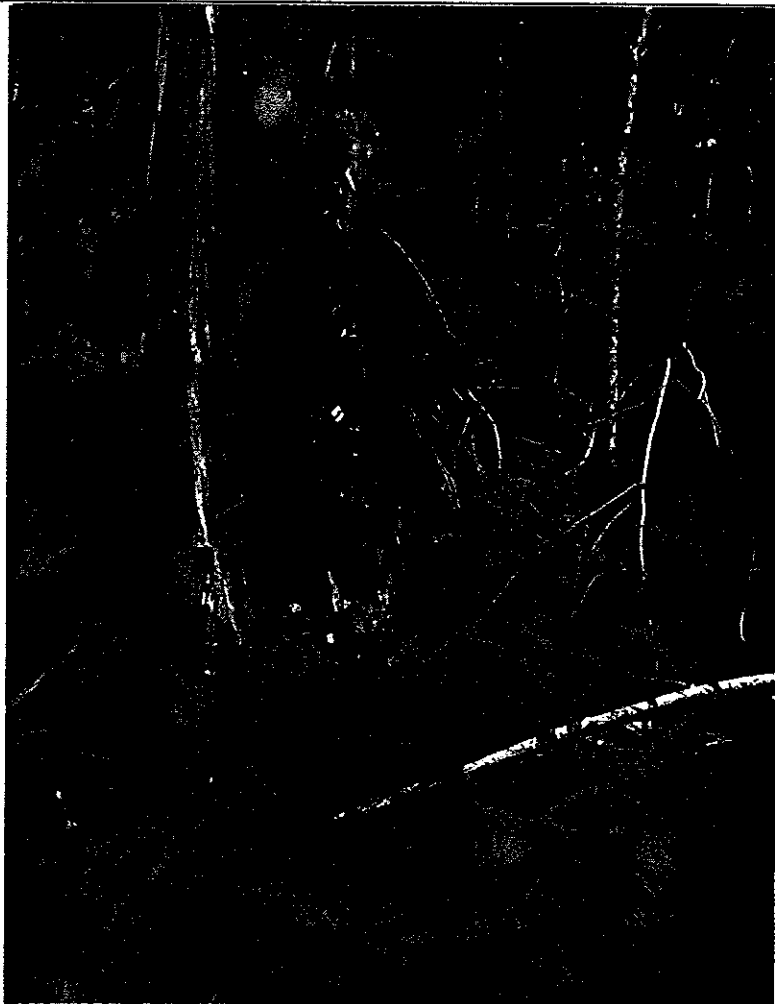
This devastated landscape provided little food or cover for wildlife and poor sustenance for man. Deer and turkey remained in only the most remote forest areas. Silt-choked creeks made poor spawning habitat for fish. Remnants of the Lowcountry's rice culture were washed to the sea by floods cascading from stripped lands and barn-sized gullies far upstream.

Eroded and abused, much of these lands no longer produced enough crops or timber to pay their owners' property taxes. County tax rolls shrank as land was abandoned by destitute farmers.

In desperation, local officials petitioned

Serene in the shimmer of early morning, tall pines now grow on what was once devastated landscape. They stand as living reminders of the persistence and dedication shown by conservation workers over the past 50 years.

PHILIP JONES



PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROBERT CLARK

Washington to purchase these lands under the provisions of the 1911 Weeks Act and the 1924 Clark-McNary Act. In 1936 President Franklin D. Roosevelt cooperated by establishing "proclamation boundaries" describing where lands could be purchased for the Francis Marion and the Sumter national forests.

BY 1940 over 550,000 acres had been purchased. Typically, these tracts were those in the worst shape, described by some as "the lands that nobody wanted."

As the Civilian Conservation Corps began tree plantings to heal the scarred landscape and Smokey the Bear spread his now-familiar message against wildfires, our forests began to recover. Terms like "fire prevention," "reforestation," "watershed restoration" and "game management" began to enter the local vocabulary.

South Carolina can boast of such good deer and turkey hunting that it is difficult to imagine the situation 40 years ago. Throughout the piedmont these two big game animals were virtually non-existent. Only the remote swamps of Berkeley County's Waterhorn Unit on the Francis Marion and a few other isolated areas within the coastal plain held remnant populations.

It was the Waterhorn, in fact, that provided stocks for reintroductions throughout the state. With a 1947 proclamation from Washington declaring the 16,000-acre unit as a refuge for the Eastern wild turkey, federal and state wildlife biologists began four years of intensive management. Domestic hogs and cattle were excluded by fencing the entire area, and the unit was closed to all hunting.

From 1952 through 1958 turkeys trapped on the Waterhorn were released on national forest lands in the state's western piedmont section. In 1952 the Waterhorn also began supplying white-tailed deer for a similar effort. In 1957 the piedmont held its first legal deer season on these restocked lands, and in 1970 a spring gobbler season was held.

Restoration of the state's timber, soil and water resources proceeded at an equally dramatic pace. Reforestation began in 1936 with more than a million seedlings planted in some years. Other areas seeded in gradually as check dams were constructed to plug gullies and stem continued losses of topsoil. From ashes and cotton stubble, a forest was being reborn.

Scientifically-applied prescribed burning and state-of-the-art suppression activities

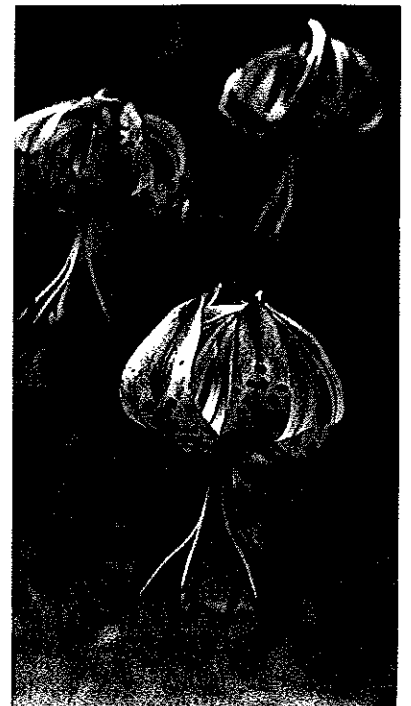
supplanted the raging wildfires. Rivers and creeks no longer choked with mud began to support trout, bass and other game fish. The resilience of nature, the determination of man and the gentle nurturing of time helped erase decades of mistakes.

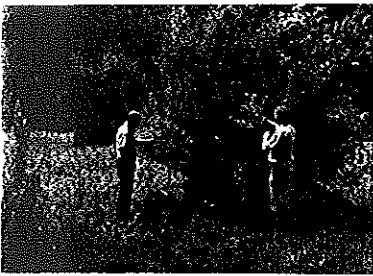
The "lands that nobody wanted" became "lands of many uses," providing recreation for all and livelihoods for many. Thousands came to camp, hunt, harvest timber, float the rivers, fish, pick berries, watch birds and simply escape to enjoy their forests. With each user came opinions and ideas on how the forest should be managed.

For many who live within the Sumter or Francis Marion boundaries, production of timber ranks near the top of the preferred management list. Since sales began in 1937, 3.6 billion board feet of timber worth \$170 million have been sold. Twenty-five percent of these annual revenues support roads and schools within the 14 counties which have lands in these national forests. Revenues in 1985 alone exceeded \$10 million.

Thousands of individuals employed in timber and wood production, the state's third largest industry, depend upon the Sumter and Francis Marion for their livelihoods. Tree-length sawlogs, shortwood pulp, firewood and cedar posts are harvested from these lands.

To ensure future generations' enjoyment of the forests, approximately 7,000 acres are regenerated following harvest through annual plantings of genetically superior seedlings and natural reseeding methods. Pre-commercial thinnings, seedling release and fertilization are additional management

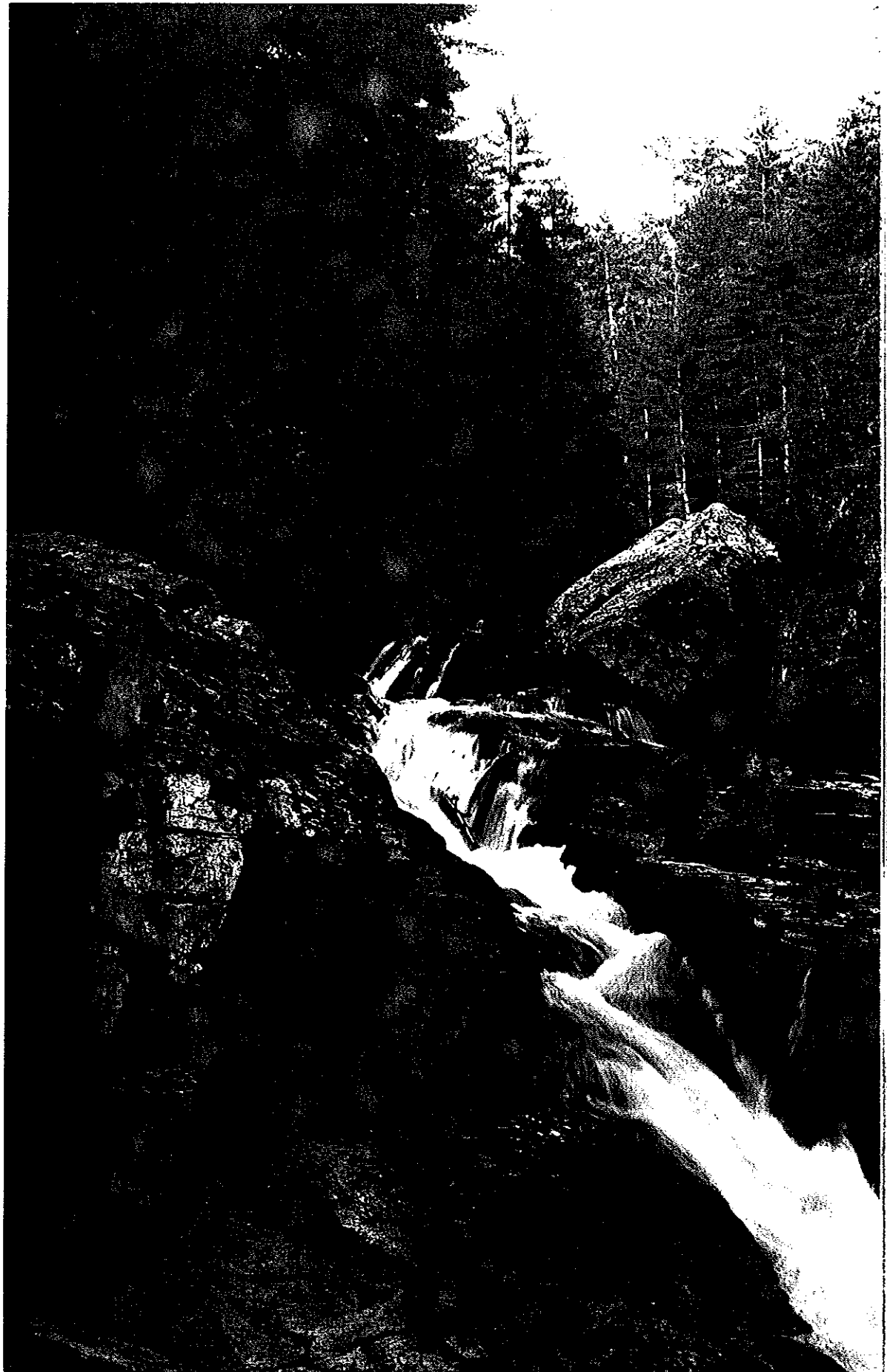


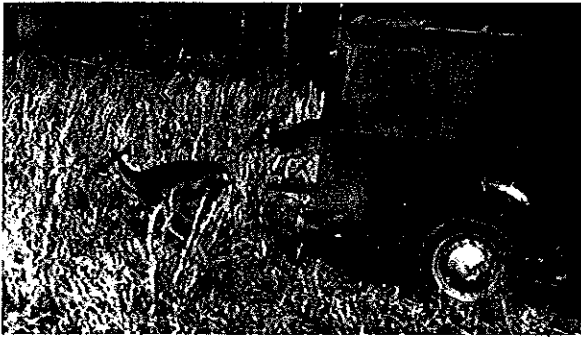


Far left, a cool carpet of New York ferns surrounds a snag, a remnant of the mountains' past days when only stumps were left from the overharvest of timber. Soon the old tree trunk itself will decay to join the vegetation of the forest floor, where wildflowers such as the Carolina lily, left, below, lend a flash of color to a green world.

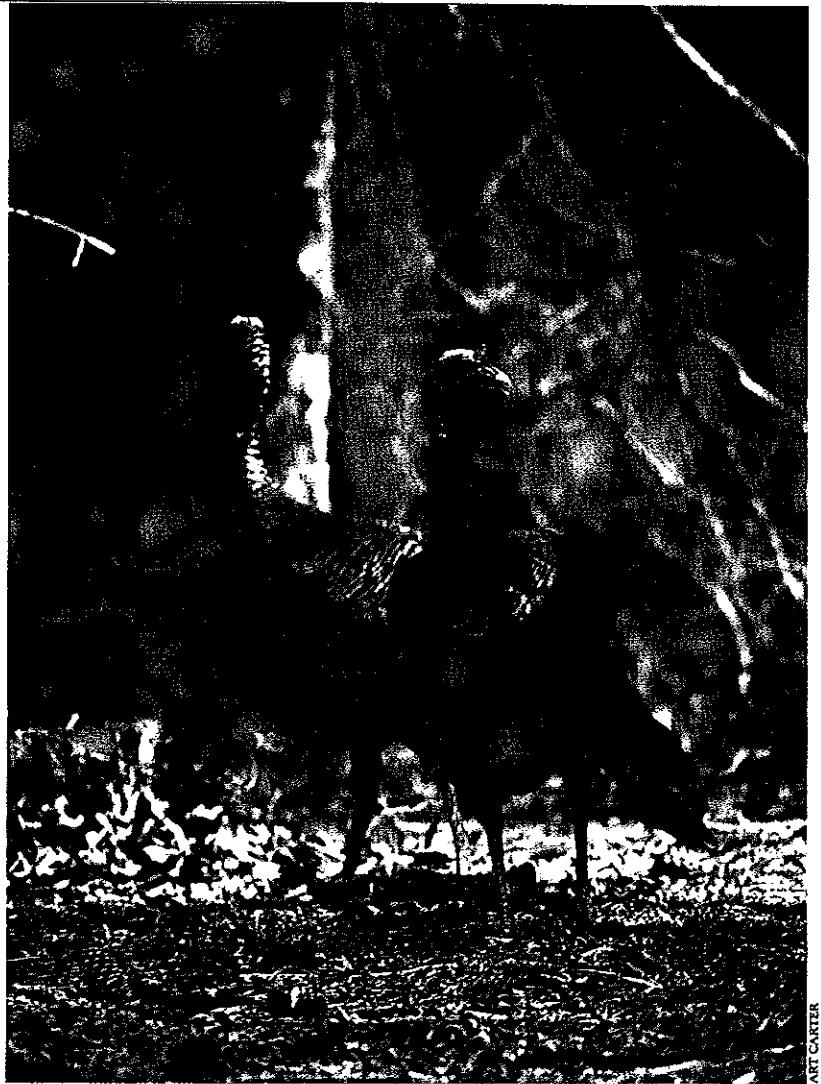
Where man interrupted nature's provision of habitat for its creatures in the past, he now attempts to replace vegetation. Above, Perry Shatley and Jim Abercrombie of the U. S. Forest Service inspect autumn olives planted as part of the permanent wildlife opening program. Below, an old roadbed has been seeded with a mixture of grasses that serves a dual purpose, reducing erosion and benefiting wildlife.

The Chauga River plunges from placid pools to a rocky narrows, right, within the 3,300-acre scenic area that bears its name in the Andrew Pickens Ranger District of the Sumter National Forest.

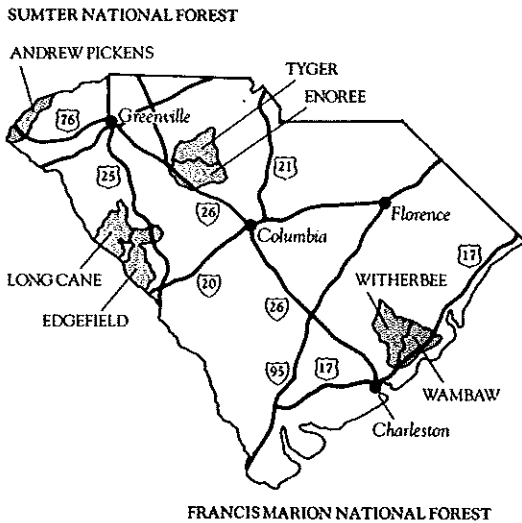




In 1954 Gordon Brown of the wildlife department photographed the piedmont release of deer trapped on the Francis Marion. Both deer and turkey were captured in the Waterhorn Unit beginning in 1952 and relocated to Sumter forest lands.



ART CARTER



LOCATION OF NATIONAL FOREST LANDS IN SOUTH CAROLINA

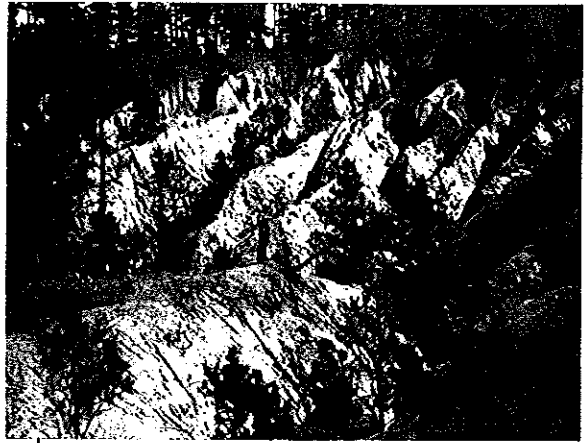
Sumter National Forest is made up of five U.S. Forest Service Ranger Districts: Andrew Pickens, Tyger, Enoree, Long Cane and Edgefield. Francis Marion National Forest consists of two districts: Witherbee and Wambaw. Detailed maps of districts may be obtained for \$1 from Forest Supervisor, 1835 Assembly Street, Room 333, Strom Thurmond Building, Columbia, South Carolina, 29202, and from district offices. General maps and other information are available free of charge.

FIFTY YEARS OF SERVICE

The Forest Reserve Act of 1891 authorized reservation of forestland areas in the interest of the public. Within two years 17,000,000 acres, mostly in western states, had been put aside. In 1905 the U.S. Forest Service was formed as responsibilities of the U.S. Department of the Interior's General Land Office were transferred to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The brief outline below shows some of the significant events since establishment of South Carolina's Sumter and Francis Marion national forests.

- 1936 President Roosevelt proclaims the Francis Marion and Sumter national forests and authorizes land purchases in South Carolina for timber production, watershed management and public recreation.
- 1937 National forest ownership in South Carolina totals 484,199 acres. CCC camps provide work for several thousand men.
- 1942 Fire prevention campaign aids recovery of national forests.
- 1947 The Calhoun Experimental Forest is set aside on the Sumter's Tyger District to provide for forestry research projects.
- 1948 Under Presidential Proclamation, by cooperative agreement between South Carolina's Wildlife Department and the U.S. Forest Service a 50,600-acre wildlife sanctuary is established on the Francis Marion from which deer and Eastern wild turkey populations will be managed for eventual hunting and restocking of other state lands.
- 1950 Combined value from 13 years of timber sales on these lands, formerly considered to be of little value, reaches \$100,000.

- 1951 State wildlife department, in cooperation with the forest service, establishes the piedmont's first Wildlife Management Unit on the Sumter, consisting of two 15,000-acre tracts.
- 1952 State game biologists begin restocking piedmont lands within the Sumter with deer and turkey trapped from the Francis Marion.
- 1955 National forest ownership in South Carolina totals more than 586,000 acres.
- 1956 First deer and turkey hunts held within the Francis Marion's special wildlife management area. Francis Marion's Hellhole Bay becomes the first waterfowl management area within the Southern Forest Region.
- 1957 Open hunting seasons established in the piedmont for deer and turkey on restocked lands within the Sumter's districts.
- 1960 Congress passes Multiple-Use Sustained Yield Act directing U.S. Forest Service management for recreation, timber, wildlife, water and forage. Annual use for recreation totals more than 500,000 visitors for the Sumter and Francis Marion.
- 1963 Ellicott Rock, Long Cane, Broad River and Guilliard Lake scenic areas established within national forest lands.
- 1964 Wilderness Act creates a system of protected areas wherein fish and game populations are largely protected from other forms of resource development. First greentree reservoir for waterfowl established on Nicholson Creek, Francis Marion.
- 1966 A cooperative agreement between the forest service and wildlife department coordinates wildlife management on the national forests between the two agencies, providing a strong nucleus for the state's future public Wildlife Management Area program.
- 1967 Permanent wildlife management opening program begins on the Sumter Forest.
- 1971 First public rifle range built at Indian Creek on the Sumter's Enoree District.
- 1974 Congress names the Chattooga River, bordering the Sumter's Andrew Pickens District, as the South's first Wild and Scenic River.
- 1975 Congress names Ellicott Rock as South Carolina's first Wilderness Area.
- 1976 National Forest Management Act directs U.S. Forest Service to prepare comprehensive land management plans.
- 1977 First helicopter stocking of trout in Chattooga River using a 75-gallon bucket designed to drop water on forest fires. First forest service use of archeological surveys prior to timber sales and construction approval.
- 1980 Congress creates Hellhole Bay, Wambaw Swamp, Wambaw Creek and Little Wambaw Swamp wilderness areas on the Francis Marion.
- 1985 Francis Marion and Sumter land management plans completed for review — first in the Southern Region — create Chauga, White Rock, Station Cove, Lee Falls and Turkey/Stevens Creek special areas.
- 1986 Just prior to this 50th Anniversary for the Sumter and Francis Marion national forests, 20,639 deer were taken in the South Carolina piedmont and Francis Marion; 4,460 turkeys were taken statewide. Timber sales over the past 50 years total more than \$170 million. National forest ownership of land in South Carolina now totals more than 630,000 acres.

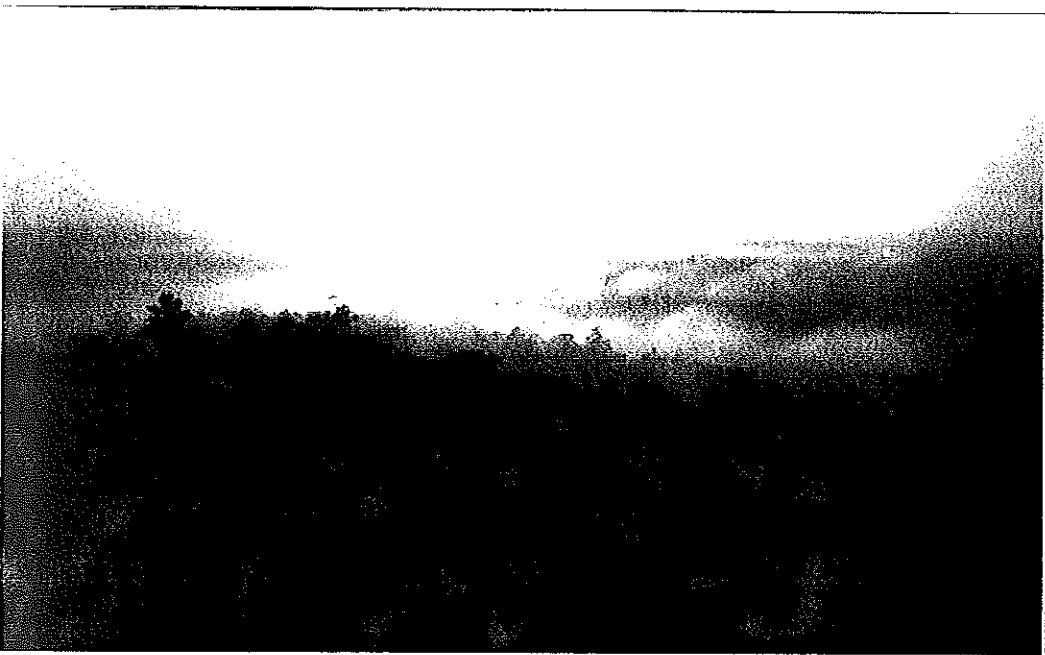


TED BORG



TED BORG

Years of continuous cultivation took their toll on the land and resulted in gaping gullies like this one shown at top in a 1965 U.S. Forest Service photograph by David D. Devet. The effects of neglect were seen throughout the piedmont, and plans for stabilizing soil movement included construction of check dams and seeding. Center, efforts begun nearly 50 years ago when CCC workers hand-filled and planted gullies now bear fruit as forest land erosion has been minimized, with pine and undergrowth providing needed wildlife habitat. Bottom, today machines can handle in hours what it took many man-days to accomplish. Bulldozers and tractors level, fill in and terrace, preparing the soil for the seeding of grasses to reduce erosion and the planting of tiny tree seedlings for future forests.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY TED BORG

Congress designated the Chattooga a "Wild and Scenic River," providing special protection to a 50-mile corridor extending one-quarter mile on each side of this nationally-famous whitewater river.

For South Carolina's two national forests, 1986 is a special year. The Francis Marion and Sumter are celebrating "Fifty Years of Caring for the Land and Serving People." It is a special year also because both forests are taking a change in direction brought about by the implementation of new land management plans that will influence the future of our forest lands.

Impetus for the endeavor came ten years ago when the National Forest Management Act directed all national forests to prepare comprehensive management plans. From five years of effort, stacks of computer printouts, solicitation of public input and no small amount of controversy came the documents which will guide U.S. Forest Service management through future decades.

The plan's strict guidelines will help balance the management of diverse resources — timber, wildlife, soil and water, recreation, endangered species, cultural resources, wilderness and jobs in an effort to balance the wants and needs of the American people with the responsibilities of sound natural-resource stewardship.

Far from resolving all management conflicts, the new plans have already raised many questions. Standards set to protect the controversial red-cockaded woodpecker have already run headlong into standards for timber production. The task of locating future harvest sites has become more

methods that aid in assuring a healthy, fast-growing forest.

While timber production is one of the forest's benefits, many South Carolinians prize these lands for the wildlife produced. Restocking and protection of species such as deer and turkey, combined with recovery of the lands, have brought back healthy levels of game and nongame animals.

When the wildlife department began its Game Management Area program in 1971 (today's Wildlife Management Area program), the Sumter and Marion stood as cornerstones in this cooperative lease program. Last year's harvest records on these two forests show that 6,800 deer and 2,300 wild turkeys were bagged.

National forest lands account for more than 40 percent of the 1.3 million acres now open for public hunting and recreation through the Wildlife Management Area (WMA) program. Roughly 51,000 acres of forest service lands are prescribed-burned, seeded, bush-hogged or in some way improved as wildlife habitat each year.

Lease fees from WMA hunt permits are paid by the state's wildlife department to the forest service through a cooperative agreement. These funds, combined with federal money and coordinated efforts among forest service personnel and state biologists and law enforcement, are, in turn, directed toward wildlife management on the forest lands.

In addition to their role in enhancing South Carolina's game populations these national forests also provide important habitat for unique and endangered species and hundreds of nongame birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians. The remote swamps of the Francis Marion were once home to the ivory-billed woodpecker and

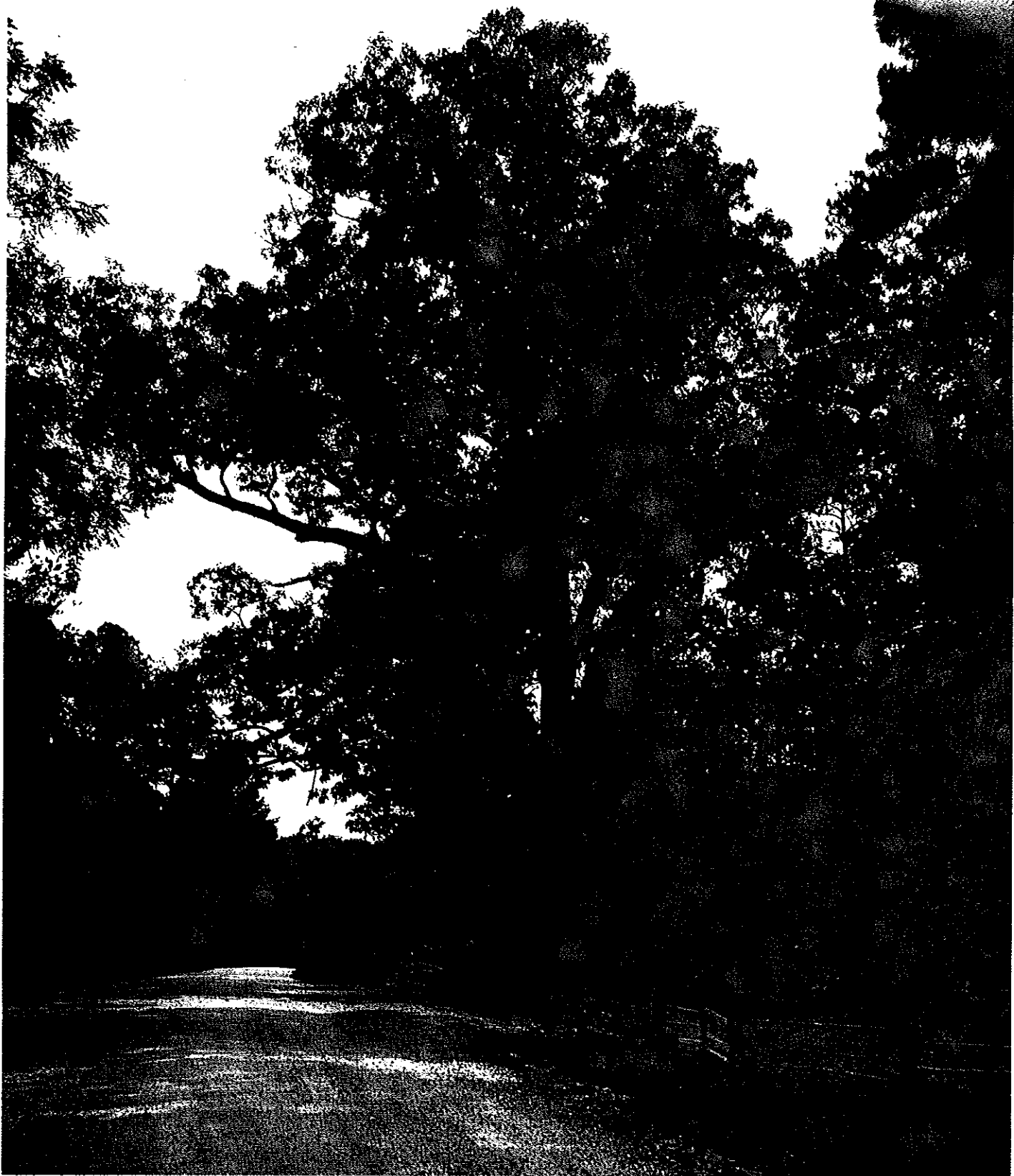
Bachman's warbler — both now feared to be extinct although rumors of sightings persist. More than 500 colonies of the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker still exist throughout the Marion and are protected and managed by the forest service. Bald eagles, American ospreys, swallow-tailed kites, American alligators and scores of rare and unique plants such as climbing fetterbush also receive protection on these forest lands.

AS our two national forests provide habitat for diverse species, they also provide recreation for people with varying interests. The largest percentage of these come just to see and enjoy the woods and nature. Many of these prefer to stay in their vehicles, rarely straying from the beaten track. Others choose to camp at ten developed campgrounds and 28 hunt camps. Boat ramps, swimming areas, picnic sites and rifle ranges are scattered throughout these lands. The more adventurous visitor may also strike out cross-country on 358 miles of hiking, horse, motorcycle and canoe trails.

Some of our state's more beautiful and remote places are given special status and protection as "Wilderness" and are managed to preserve their natural character. Roads, motorized vehicles and manipulation of the habitat are not allowed. Five areas totaling 17,000 acres from Hell Hole Bay in the coastal Francis Marion to Ellicott Rock in the mountainous regions of the Sumter have been given this national forest protective designation.

An additional 8,500 acres have been classified as "Scenic Areas" — a slightly less restrictive status than "Wilderness" created to preserve their uniqueness as sites where man may visit but not remain. In 1974





Uncontrolled fires ravaged acres of timber land before the '40s, but the philosophy behind "Only you can prevent forest fires" became part of Americans' life style, helping to restore vistas such as this at upper left, eastward from Parsons Mountain fire tower, and wildlife habitat to support tens of thousands of white-tailed deer.

Excellent waterfowl hunting has resulted from cooperative management by wildlife and forest service biologists. Enoree Waterfowl Area, left, is planted in corn then flooded in the fall, providing a welcome stopover for migratory birds. Above, the largest white oak in South Carolina stands in the Long Cane District, one of many record-sized trees afforded protection in the state's national forests.



In contrast to the drier Sumter forest, the Francis Marion is dotted with bays and swamps, some of the sites former rice fields (top) whose dikes are now covered by the tides. Limestone outcrops (bottom) can be found near Guilliard Lake at the edge of the forest, witness to the long-past presence of the sea. The limestone also contributes to the crystal-clarity of several blue springs nearby (below). Their pure, quiet waters and lush vegetation provide important breeding and nesting habitat for hundreds of nongame mammals, reptiles, amphibians and birds like the snowy egrets at top right. "Cut and run" practices once took the tallest, straightest trees and left only culls, but now 7,000 acres of national forest are regenerated each year through replanting, ensuring future generations' use of fine timber like that from this loblolly stand, left.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY PHILLIP JONES



complex due to management requirements designed to enhance other wildlife populations. The only practical solutions to such problems come from coordination among disciplines, innovation, technology and common sense among federal, state and private interests.

This balancing act must be accomplished within a framework of escalating complexity and dwindling budgets. A national mood for state and federal budget reductions as evidenced by the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings Act could force a shrinking corps of employees and less program funding to cope with a variety of impacts while a growing population makes increasing demands.

Recent withdrawals of privately-owned timber holdings from South Carolina's WMA program coupled with predictions of more withdrawals to follow prompted the

state's legislature to enact a significant increase in the WMA hunting permits from which lease funds come. While additional revenues from permits were obviously necessary if our public hunting program were to continue, population increases and public lands already lost will bring more sportsmen to public lease lands, including the two national forests.

The majority of these sportsmen and other visitors mean well. National forest lands, like other public areas, must also suffer the impact of thoughtless vandals, malicious arsonists, litterbugs, the irresponsible, and abusive four-wheelers. Such self-centered individuals leave a wake of signs to replace, costly wildfires to fight, and roads and gates to repair. Unfortunately, the cost of their illegal and unethical activities must be borne by the

forest and by the public.

In spite of such formidable obstacles, the direction set by the new plan is clear — manage the land in the forest service tradition of true "multiple use." Resource managers must learn to provide more with less. Genetically superior seedlings, intensive wildlife and fisheries habitat improvement, a permit and scheduling system for commercial raft trips and an increased dependence upon volunteers are examples.

In 1905 James Wilson, then Secretary of Agriculture, wrote to Gifford Pinchot, the forest service's first chief... "all land is to be devoted to the most productive use for the permanent good of the whole people and not for the temporary benefit of individual companies... Where conflicting interests must be reconciled, the question will always be decided from the standpoint of the greatest good of the greatest number in the long run."

Though painful memories of the national forest's origins may have dimmed, Wilson's words remain to guide those who must make the complex decisions that will determine the future of these lands. In following them we will not repeat the mistakes of our forefathers. Traditions which began a half-century ago will continue so that present and future generations may enjoy and benefit from the natural resources of the Sumter and Francis Marion. 🍄

Jim Fenwood, a wildlife biologist with the U.S. Forest Service at Sumter National Forest, has contributed to professional journals and state publications.

