

## Park History

Land for Poinsett State Park was donated by Sumter County in 1934. The park was developed by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), a New Deal Program created by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The program was designed to provide employment during the Great Depression while addressing national needs in conservation and recreation.

The CCC was instrumental in the development of many of South Carolina's state parks. A number of buildings built by the CCC in the 1930s are still in use at Poinsett.

## Park Information

### Activities:

- Fishing, boating, hiking

### Park Hours:

- 9a.m.—6p.m. (extended hours Friday to Sunday during daylight savings time)

### For More Information:

- Phone: (803) 494-8177
- Website: [www.southcarolinaparks.com](http://www.southcarolinaparks.com)
- E-mail: [poinsettsp@scprt.com](mailto:poinsettsp@scprt.com)

## Nature has inspired people for thousands of years. How will it inspire you?

*"In all things of Nature there is something of the marvelous."*  
Aristotle

*"The snake that cannot shed its skin perishes. Likewise those spirits who are prevented from changing their opinions; they cease to be spirits."*  
Friedrich Nietzsche

*"The frog does not drink up the pond in which he lives."*  
Native American Proverb

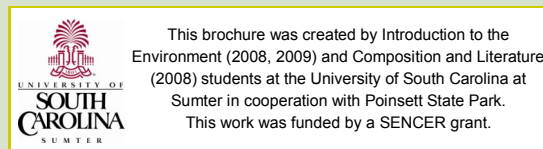
*"The free bird leaps on the back of the wind and floats downstream till the current ends and dips his wings in the orange sun rays and dares to claim the sky."*  
Maya Angelou

*"How strange that Nature does not knock, and yet does not intrude!"*  
Emily Dickinson



## Poinsett State Park

## Habitats, Plants and Animals of Poinsett State Park



## Poinsett — A Crossroads of Life

### Biodiversity at Poinsett

Poinsett State Park features a remarkable diversity of plants and animals for a 1,000 acre park. This high diversity in such a small area is due to the presence of four different habitat types within the park boundaries. The park is located near the northwestern edge of the Coastal Plain ecoregion of South Carolina, but also has species and habitats more commonly found in the Sandhills, Piedmont and Blue Ridge ecoregions.

*"The creation of a thousand forests is in one acorn."*  
Ralph Waldo Emerson

### Upland Forests/Bluffs

Upland forests are rare in the Coastal Plain but common in the Piedmont. Dominant trees tend to be oaks, hickories and pines. Species may include white oak (*Quercus alba*), black oak (*Quercus velutina*), pignut hickory (*Carya glabra*), loblolly pine (*Pinus taeda*) and flowering dogwood (*Cornus florida*). In Poinsett, this habitat also contains mountain laurel (*Kalmia latiflora*), a species more typically associated with the more mountainous Blue Ridge ecoregion.



*"It is only when the cold season comes that we know the pine and cypress to be evergreens."*  
Chinese Proverb

### Pine Woodlands

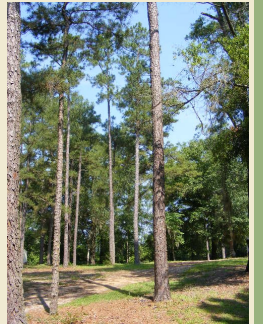
Pine woodlands are one of the most dominant habitat types in the Coastal Plain ecoregion. The habitat is typically dominated by one or more pine species, though the mix of species depends on soil type, elevation, fire history, moisture content and human activity. Species may include loblolly pine (*Pinus taeda*), longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris*), wax myrtle (*Morella cerifera*) and holly species (*Ilex* spp.).



### Sandhills Pine Woodlands

Sandhills pine woodlands are a variation of pine woodlands, characterized by sandy soils.

This is the dominant habitat of the Sandhills ecoregion. The sandhills are hilly, unconnected bands of sand left from ocean dunes formed 10-20 million years ago. Dominant species include longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris*), loblolly pine (*Pinus taeda*), turkey oak (*Quercus laevis*) and wiregrass (*Aristida* spp). Sandhills pine woodlands are a fire dependent community. The dominant longleaf pine is fire adapted, and requires frequent fires (every 5-10 years) to reduce competition from other pines and hardwoods. The practice of fire suppression, combined with timber harvest and urbanization, have severely reduced the amount of longleaf pine habitat in the southeast. Only about 3% of this habitat is considered to be in good, healthy condition.



*"I enter a swamp as a sacred place, a sanctum sanctorum. There is the strength, the marrow, of Nature."*  
Henry David Thoreau.

### Blackwater River System/Bottomland Forests

Many streams in the southeast are known as "blackwater" streams. The dark, tea-like color of the water comes from tannins leaching out of decaying plants. Bottomland forests are associated with the broad floodplain of larger river systems and are dominated by hardwoods. At higher elevations typical species include: sweetgum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*), loblolly pine (*Pinus taeda*), various oaks (*Quercus* spp.) and American holly (*Ilex opaca*). At lower elevations, this typical bottomland forest is replaced with a subtype characterized by seasonally flooded swamps. Typical species include bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*), water tupelo (*Nyssa aquatica*), swamp gum (*Nyssa biflora*) and red maple (*Acer rubrum*).



# Common, Unusual and Interesting Plants and Animals of Poinsett State Park

## PLANTS



**Longleaf Pine** (*Pinus palustris*): Evergreen tree. Reaches 80 to 100ft. Leaves 8-18", green, needle-like, occurring in bundles of three. Cones 6-10", conical. Bark scaly, orange-brown to gray. Land cover reduced by >95% since pre-colonial times due to timber harvest and fire suppression.



**Mountain Laurel** (*Kalmia latifolia*): Evergreen shrub/tree. Reaches 35 ft (usually 10ft). Leaves 2-5", simple, elliptical, alternate. Flowers star shaped, color ranges from white to purple. Blooms May-July. Bark dark brown/red, with ridges and furrows.



**Bald Cypress** (*Taxodium distichum*): Deciduous tree found in swampy areas. Reaches 120 ft. May form buttresses and characteristic "knees." Leaves 1/4-7/8", flat, alternate. Cones 1", round, with thick scales. Bark is reddish-brown.



**Spanish Moss** (*Tillandsia usneoides*): Epiphyte (plant growing on other plants), not actually a moss. Absorbs water and some minerals from the air. Leaves heavily scaled, gray to green. Flowers small, inconspicuous. Once used to stuff mattresses.

## INSECTS



**Dragonflies and Damselflies** (Order Odonata): Large, compound eyes. Long tail-like abdomen. Two pairs of wings. Larvae aquatic, adults terrestrial. Live near water. At rest, dragonflies hold wings out, while damselflies fold them along their backs. Eat mosquitoes and other small insects.



**Water Striders** (Order Hemiptera, Family Gerridae): Found on the surface of still water. Small hairs on elongated legs allow it to walk on water. Eat small insects.



**Eastern Tiger Swallowtail** (*Papilio glaucus*): Large butterfly; up to 6.5" wingspan. Yellow with black stripes; some females with all black wings. Found in woodland areas. Eat leaves of trees/shrubs.



**Golden Silk Orb-weavers** (aka Banana Spider; *Nephila clavipes*): Females yellow and brown; males smaller, inconspicuous reddish/brown. Silk yellow in color. Commonly spin webs across trails. Bite produces redness, irritation; symptoms usually disappear in 24 hours. Eat small to medium insects.

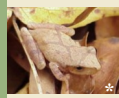
## FROGS, LIZARDS & TURTLES



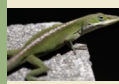
**Bullfrog** (*Rana catesbeiana*): Green or brown, with large blotches on adults; often bright green around face. Largest North American frog; 3.5 to 8". Large tadpoles. In large ponds, lakes and streams. Eat insects, crayfish, small vertebrates.



**River Frog** (*Rana heckscheri*): Rare in SC, abundant at Poinsett. Olive or brown, no bright green coloration. White specks around mouth. Adults 3-5.25". Large tadpoles, with black along tail; travel in large schools. In blackwater swamps, rivers, streams. Eat insects, crayfish.



**Spring Peeper** (*Pseudacris crucifer*): Tan, brown or gray, with prominent dark X-shaped marking on back. Adults 0.75-1.5". In woodlands, living under forest litter and undergrowth. Eat small insects.



**Green Anole** (*Anolis carolinensis*): Color changes from green to olive to brown to gray. Adults 5-8". Defending or courting males head bob and display pink throat fan. Seen on fences, buildings, vines, trees, shrubs. Eat small insects and spiders.



**Five-lined Skink** (*Eumeces fasciatus*): Five light stripes on dark background, large males lose stripes. Young have blue tails; breeding males have reddish heads. Adults 5-8". In wet habitats, near rotting logs, rivers, swamps. Eat insects and spiders.



**Yellow-bellied Slider** (*Trachemys scripta*): Yellow spot behind eye connecting two yellow stripes on neck. Young have shells streaked with light stripes, adult shells can be black. Adults 5-12". In rivers, lakes, ponds, swamps. Young eat insects; adults eat plants.

## FISH



**Largemouth Bass** (*Micropterus salmoides*): Upper jaw extends past eye. Top greenish, fading to white underneath. Dark blotches form line along the side. Adults 5-38". In warm, calm, clear water. Young eat insects; adults eat fish, crayfish, frogs.



**Eastern Mosquitofish** (*Gambusia holbrooki*): Gray, with black bar below eye, upturned mouth, head flattened on top. Adults 0.8-2.5". In vegetated areas of slow/still water. Feeds on surface insects and algae. Often seen just below surface.

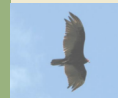
## BIRDS



**Great Egret** (*Ardea alba*): Large white wading bird, yellow bill, black feet and legs. Up to 39", 51" wingspan. Nests in colonies in trees/shrubs. In wetlands. Eat small fish, reptiles, amphibians, crayfish.



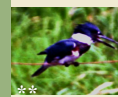
**Wood Duck** (*Aix sponsa*): Male has colorful plumage, green crest, white bridle; female has short crest, white tear-drop eye patch. Up to 18.5", 30" wingspan. In woodlands near ponds, rivers. Eat acorns, fruits, seeds, insects. Use nest boxes.



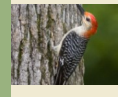
**Turkey Vulture** (*Cathartes aura*): Blackish brown feathers, red non-feathered head. Underside of wings have silver/white flight feathers. Up to 26", 67" wingspan. Holds wings in a V shape while soaring. Eat variety of carrion.



**Red-tailed hawk** (*Buteo jamaicensis*): Variable plumage, brown above, light below, red tail. Broad, round wings; short wide tail. Up to 19", 49" wingspan. In open habitats. Eat mammals, birds, snakes.



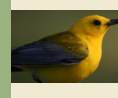
**Belted Kingfisher** (*Ceryle alcyon*): Large, thick bill, shaggy crest; blue-gray head and back, white underneath, blue breast band; females have red belly band. Up to 13", 20" wingspan. By streams, ponds, lakes. Eat fish, crayfish, insects.



**Red-bellied Woodpecker** (*Melanerpes carolinus*): Black and white back, white underside, light red patch on belly. Top and back of head red in males, just back of head red in females. Up to 9.25"; wingspan 16". In forests, wooded suburbs. Eat insects in bark crevices.

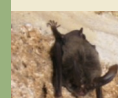


**Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** (*Polioptila caerulea*): Blue-gray above; long tail black above, with white along edges. Up to 4.5", 6" wingspan. In woodlands, extremely active. Eat insects and spiders.



**Prothonotary Warbler** (*Protonotaria citrea*): Black eyes, yellow head/chest, greenish back, gray wings. Up to 5.5", 8.75" wingspan. In woodlands near water. Eat insects. Use nest boxes.

## MAMMALS

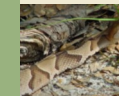


**Rafinesque Big-eared Bat** (*Corynorhinus rafinesquii*): Medium sized, brown/gray bat, with very large ears. Up to 4.2" Roosts in caves, trees, buildings. Forages in forests. Eat mostly moths. State endangered species.

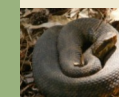
## SNAKES

Poinsett's diverse ecosystems include snakes. Generally snakes only bite humans to defend themselves. To avoid being bitten wear sturdy shoes, watch where you put your hands and feet, don't provoke or capture snakes. If bitten you should immediately seek medical attention. In the table below are tips for telling venomous snakes apart from non-venomous ones:

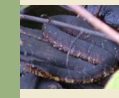
Venomous	Non-Venomous
• Triangular head	• Rounded head
• Elliptical pupils	• Rounded pupils (generally)
• Single row of scales on the underside of tails	• Two rows of scales on the underside of tails
• Pit midway between nostrils and eyes (pit vipers)	• No pits between nostrils and eyes
• Fangs	• No fangs



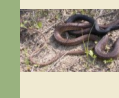
**Copperhead** (*Agkistrodon contortrix*): Venomous. Light brown or gray, with dark, hourglass shaped crossbands on back. Young have bright yellow/green tails. Up to 45". In variety of habitats, including woodlands. Eat insects, amphibians, reptiles, small birds and small mammals.



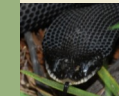
**Cottonmouth** (*Agkistrodon piscivorus*): Venomous. Dark crossbands on a yellow and brown body; can be all brown or black. Young have yellow tails. Up to 65". By freshwater areas. Eat lizards, fish, small birds, small mammals and other snakes.



**Banded Watersnake** (*Nerodia fasciata*): Non-venomous. Dark crossbands on brown, gray or reddish black body. Crossbands thicker on top than sides. Up to 30". In ponds, lakes, swamps, rivers and marshes. Eat fish, frogs, salamanders, crayfish and tadpoles.



**Coachwhip** (*Masticophis flagellum*): Non-venomous. Black on head and front of body, becoming paler towards the rear. Eyes red or gold. Tail resembles a braided whip. Long snake, up to 85". In woodlands, grasslands, cultivated areas. Eat lizards, other snakes, small birds and small mammals.



**Eastern Hognose** (*Heterodon platirhinos*): Non-venomous. Distinctive upturned snout. Color varies; usually brown or gray body, with large, dark blotches. Up to 45". In woodlands and grasslands. Eat primarily toads. When threatened, will first puff up like an adder, then play dead.

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