

Natural Getaways

Places worth visiting
off South Carolina's
beaten path

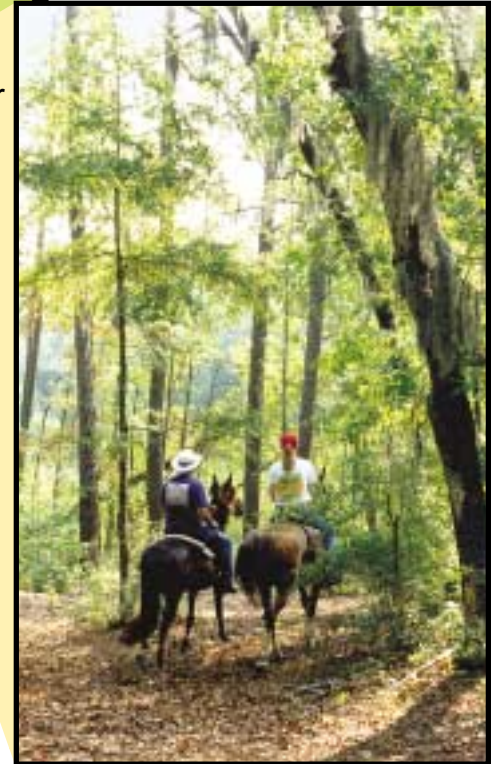
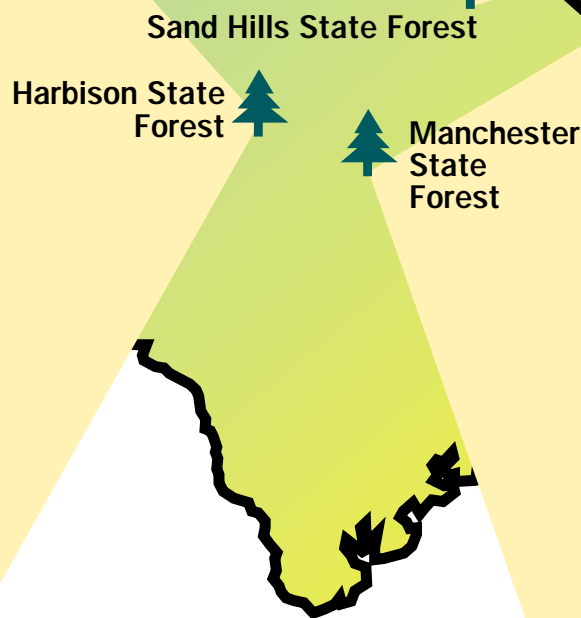
Forests for all seasons



Road rally enthusiasts take to the trails of Sand Hills State Forest during late winter for the National Auto Sport Association's Sandblast racing event.



Bikers enjoy one of the largest urban green spaces east of the Mississippi River at Harbison State Forest.



Manchester State Forest offers 35 miles of trails and hosts major equestrian events.

The Palmetto State's system of state forests offers recreational opportunities galore

Fishing, birding, biking, and hiking are only part of the fun at all three of South Carolina's major state forests, some of the best-kept secrets in the Palmetto State.

Not to be confused with parks, South Carolina State Forests are multiple-use, self-funded facilities that exist to serve the purposes of wildlife management, timber management and recreation. Our special in-state travel issue of *Living in South Carolina Magazine* kicks off with a look on the following pages at a multitude of recreational

opportunities offered by the three major state forests in South Carolina. Fees are required for some activities, and donations are welcome. For fees and other information, please log onto The South Carolina Forestry Commission Web site, www.state.sc.us/forest, or call:

- Sand Hills State Forest, (843) 498-6478
- Harbison State Forest, (803) 896-8890
- Manchester State, (803) 494-8196

Sand Hills State Forest

South Carolina's largest state forest, Sand Hills State Forest, is part of a unique ecosystem between the piedmont and coastal plain in Chesterfield and Darlington counties.

There, some 46,000 acres of deep sands deposited by a prehistoric sea are home to rare and endangered species, including the red-cockaded woodpecker that nests in the cavities of old growth living longleaf pine trees. Forestry Commission employees closely monitor the birds, with the goal of doubling their population in coming years.

Sand Hills offers 40-plus miles of horseback trails, 10 miles of mountain bike trails, camping, hiking, birding, fishing and hunting. One 26-mile horse trail connects Sugarloaf Mountain to neighboring Cheraw State Park.

The state forest's H. Cooper Black Jr. Memorial Field Trial and Recreation Area each year hosts hundreds of hunting dogs and their owners who take part in national, regional and local field trials. Eight of 22 events will take place during April and May.

Equestrian paradise

Cooper Black features 24 campsites with electricity and water, 33 primitive sites, two comfort stations, a 24-stall barn, clubhouse, corrals and lighted arena. Reservations are required. The facility hosts many horseback riding events such as the Sand Hills Stampede Endurance Ride to take place April 22-24.

During late winter, hundreds of road rally enthusiasts take to the roughly 100 miles of deep-sand trails in Sand Hills State Forest for the National Auto Sport Association's Sandblast racing event.

Pee Dee Electric Cooperative serves Sand Hills State Forest.

Stone and timber picnic shelters, a fishing lake and nature trail combine with a unique geological formation to make Sugar Loaf Mountain one of the most popular recreation areas in the region. Thought to be the remnant of a giant sand dune, Sugar Loaf towers above the surrounding terrain.

For Sand Hills State Forest information, write Sand Hills State Forest, P.O. Box 128, 16218 Highway 1, Patrick, SC 29584, e-mail Shsf@shtc.net or call (843) 498-6478.

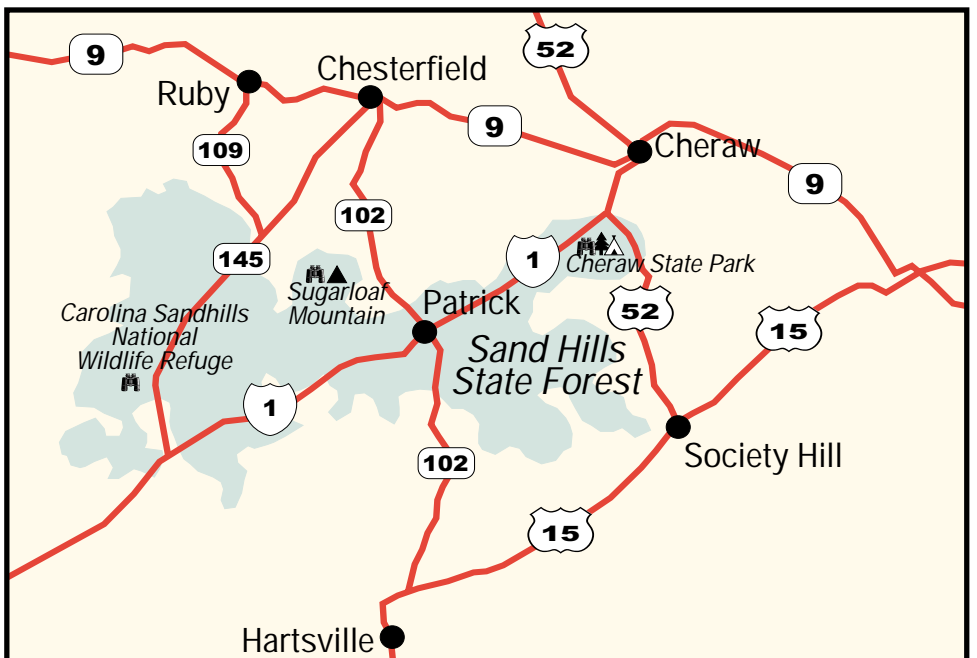
continued on page 16



Surrounded by pines painted to mark nests of the red-cockaded woodpecker (inset), Brian Davis, assistant director, points out that Forestry Commission employees closely monitor the birds with the goal of doubling their numbers in coming years.



Sand Hill State Forest's H. Cooper Black Jr. Memorial Field Trial and Recreation Area hosts many horseback riding events such as the Sand Hills Stampede Endurance Ride to take place April 22-24.

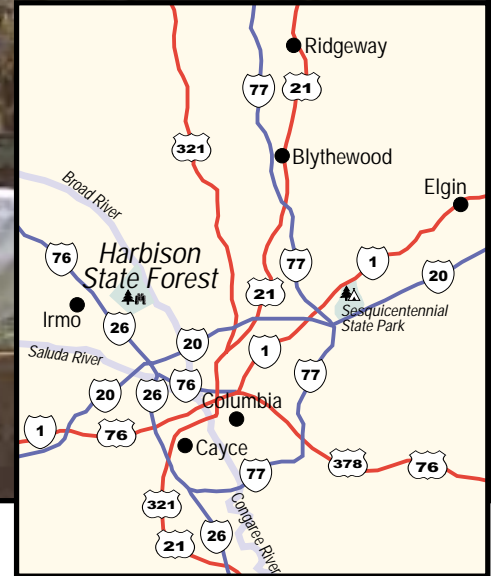


continued from page 15



File

Russell Hubright, director of Harbison State Forest, shows a working sawmill and steam-powered timber loader that are on display.



Tina Burke

Harbison State Forest

Over 20 miles of roads and trails weave through the pines and hardwoods of Harbison State Forest, crossing wandering streams and descending through leafy glades to the Broad River.

Harbison State Forest's trails for walking, jogging, hiking and bicycling range from moderately easy to difficult. A canoe landing located near the Broad River provides access for kayaks and canoes. New this year at Harbison is Friends Day sponsored by the Friends of Harbison State Forest, from April 22 to April 24. Events will include a nature walk with Rudy Mancke of Nature Scene, the Firebreak 4-Miler off-road foot

race, a backyard wildlife habitat workshop, a beekeeping demonstration, an outdoor photography workshop, and a Native Plant Society nature hike. There will be a mountain bike race and demonstrations, paddling trips and more. For event information, log onto www.friendsofhsf.org or call (803) 896-8893.

Volunteer opportunities

Harbison State Forest's emphasis is on natural resource education, providing demonstrations of forestry practices as well as recreation. Visitors are encouraged to volunteer and help with the development of

this valuable urban forest, one of the largest in the eastern United States.

Harbison's Environmental Education Center, a 5,000-square-foot log building, is surrounded by a series of woodland trails and outdoor classrooms with lessons designed to increase awareness of the complexity of forest ecosystems. Visitors can view a working sawmill, visit a fire tower and see a steam-powered timber loader as they stroll around the grounds.

For information, write Harbison State Forest, 5500 Broad River Road, Columbia, SC 29212, call (803) 896-8890 or log onto www.state.sc.us/forest/refharb.htm.

Manchester State Forest

Hunting, fishing and riding — whether by horseback, motorcycle or all-terrain vehicle — are all major attractions at the 28,000-acre Manchester State Forest in Sumter County, served by Black River Electric Cooperative. The park is unique in that it features characteristics of the state's piedmont, coastal plain and sand hills all within its boundaries.

Fishing area acquired

Five ponds, plus a newly acquired section of the Wateree River Swamp, provide ample opportunity for anglers. Motocross trails, plus a small track, attract two motorcycle events, the Hare Scramble in the fall, and the Enduro Ride during late winter. The Enduro utilizes 75 miles of Manchester State Forest trails.

Manchester attracts three statewide equestrian events each year, including the Manchester Trail Ride in the fall and spring, and the South Carolina Horseman's Council Ride during the fall. The forest features about 35 miles of horseback riding trails.

Manchester State Forest surrounds Poinsett State Park, which offers cabins, canoe rentals, camping, swimming, hunting, fishing and more.

About 12 miles of the state-wide Palmetto Trail pass through Manchester State Forest. Plans call for another eight miles of the trail to open, mostly in the Wateree River Swamp.

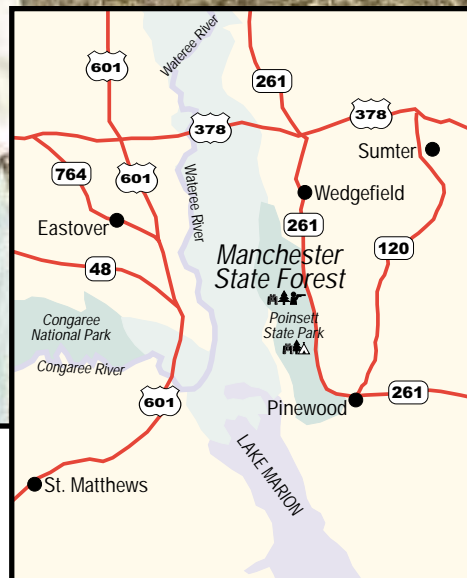
New state forest

Under management by Manchester is a brand-new state forest under development in Williamsburg County. Wee Tee State Forest, served by Santee Electric Cooperative, attracts freshwater anglers to its 12,500 acres of oxbow lakes.

For information on Manchester State Forest, write Manchester State Forest, 6740 Headquarters Road, Wedgefield, SC 29168, call (803) 494-8196 or log onto www.state.sc.us/forest/refman.htm.



T. Harvey Belser, director of Manchester State Forest, stands in front of a 1890s home built by the family of Gov. Richard Manning and once used as the governor's summer residence.



Tina Burke