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Want to see the colors of fall?

Visit area state parks to view autumn beauty

Sumter area residents wanting to see color this fall won't have to travel far. The S.C. State Park Service wants to make it easy for residents to find "the promised land of reds, yellows and all the hues in between" without leaving the state.

Now available on the Park Service's home page at *www.SouthCarolinaParks.com* is a 2009 Fall Color Tour Map that lists particularly promising places for the annual color show in the mountains of the Upstate.

While not as spectacular at found in the Upstate and the Mountains, fall color will be easy to see at area state parks: Lee State Natural Area, Woods Bay State Natural Area and Poinsett State Park.

Lee State Natural Area Park Ranger Laura Kirk said the park's hardwood trees are already showing signs of color change.

"While our colors are in no way as spectacular as the mountains," said Kirk, "you'll see plenty of color at our parks. It will be November before we reach our peak."

Maple and gum trees provide the natural area with most of its color, Kirk said.

Plenty of red and yellow leaves will be visible at the park during the peak of the season, she said.

Poinsett Park Ranger Hardy Collier said the mountains have "nothing on Poinsett."

"We are just as beautiful as the mountains," Collier said. "We have color down here too. We have gorgeous scenery here at Poinsett."

A wide variety of hardwoods and softwoods will create significant change in the color of the leaves by late October, Collier said.

Maple leaves will turn a reddish brown, and the sweet gum trees will take on a brownish yellow color, he said.

Several trails located at Poinsett will provide visitors plenty of opportunities to experience fall beauty.

"This is my favorite time of year," Collier said. "It's easier to identify the different trees in the fall because the colors are changing."

On the state parks Web site, the colors in the mountains will be the focus of attention.

Adding life to the displays of living color are videos posted on Facebook featuring some of the sites, such as Lake Jocassee at Devils Fork State Park and Station Cove Falls near Oconee Station State Historic Site. Visit "South Carolina State Parks" at *www.facebook.com* to see the videos.

The videos are part of the ongoing fall color tour by Kenneth Reed and Gwen Davenport, the park service's retail sales and marketing managers, respectively. The pair is touring the state again, following up on a similar recent venture – visiting all 47 state parks in seven days to promote the park service's new book: "Beautiful Places: The Timeless Beauty of South Carolina State Parks."

The park service also will soon start posting area fall color reports from Ranger Scott Stegenga at Table Rock State Park, and a webcam atop that park's visitors center gives visitors to *www.SouthCarolinaParks.com* a ready view of the color changing at Table Rock Mountain anytime they care to click.

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