

# SouthWings

## Conservation through Aviation

### SouthWings in 2009

SouthWings celebrated a banner year with 175 flight missions requested across a broad range of topics for a diverse group of partners and participants. We welcomed a new Executive Director, Will Callaway, and thirteen new pilots.

We flew a record number of flights in Alabama and Louisiana. Photos from our flights were among the first to hit the media on the coal ash dam break at the TVA powerplant near Kingston, TN at the end of 2008. We continued to fly this issue and disposal of the ash throughout 2009.

We dedicate this 2009 Report to SouthWings' founder and pilot extraordinaire, Hume Davenport, for his commitment to and leadership of SouthWings from 1996-2009.

SouthWings refined its service area in 2009, creating regional divisions that encompass the Southern Appalachians, the Gulf Coast and the Atlantic Seaboard. We continued to focus on three initiative areas, **mountaintop removal coal mining, cypress ecosystem protection** and conservation of the **Nature Coast**, while we respond to flight requests throughout the Southeast.



**"SouthWings truly is a unique tool for the conservation community. As growth pressures continue to degrade ecosystems throughout the southeastern U.S., we are utilizing aviation to show just how pervasive these problems are. If a picture is worth a thousand words, then a SouthWings flight is worth a thousand pictures - sometimes literally."**

Will Callaway, Executive Director, SouthWings

# Mountaintop Removal and Coal

“Thank the good friends at SouthWings for the immediate response to [the coal waste spill at] Widows Creek. We were in the air within 2 hours of my finding out. Amazing work on their part. Thanks to SouthWings’ pilots and staff, we got the first aerial photos from the site.”

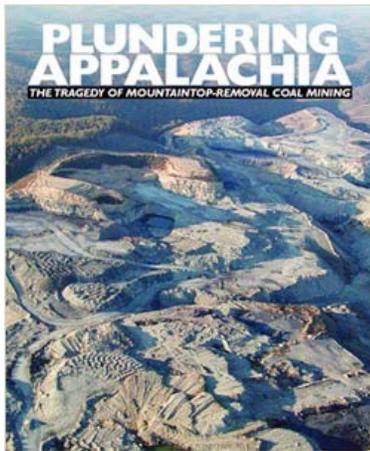
John Wathen, Friends of Hurricane Creek



Pictured left: SouthWings pilot Scott Simonton with actress **Gloria Reuben**



Pictured right: actress **Daryl Hannah**, pilot Scott Simonton, activist **Jerry Cope** of 350.org



American consumers continue to demand cheap electricity, no matter the cost to the environment, fueling water and air pollution caused by the unsustainable mining and burning of coal. **More than 50 percent of 2009 flight work involved coal.**

Typically located far from roads in historically disadvantaged regions, SouthWings’ flights make visible the otherwise inaccessible issue of **mountaintop removal coal mining.**

When a **coal fly ash** storage pond ruptured in Kingston, TN - spilling more than one billion gallons of toxic liquids and solids - SouthWings helped our flight partners gather the information needed to insist on accurate reporting and clean-up. Photo below.



A Film by Mari-Lynn Evans & Phyllis Geller



© Wade Payne/Greenpeace

# Cypress Ecosystem Protection

James Holland (right with old growth cypress tree) is the **Altamaha Riverkeeper** in Georgia. He uses SouthWings flights to monitor his watershed and to protect sensitive wetland areas where cypress grows (photos below show cypress cuts for development and timber). James and other Riverkeepers, like the **Atchafalaya Basinkeeper** in Louisiana partner with SouthWings to educate about the importance of wetlands and cypress and promote sustainable alternatives to cypress mulch.



## Nature Coast, Florida

The Gulf Coast of Florida contains some of the most beautiful and healthy coastal environments in the United States. The area is at risk from sea level rise, has numerous challenges related to water quality and usage, and has great opportunity for creating a sustainable economic future based on protecting the natural systems that make up the area. SouthWings partners with the **Gulf Restoration Network** and local organizations like **Withlacoochee Area Residents**, the **Homosassa River Alliance**, and **Rainbow River Coalition** to promote protection of the area and challenge environmentally harmful projects.



SouthWings: Conservation through Aviation

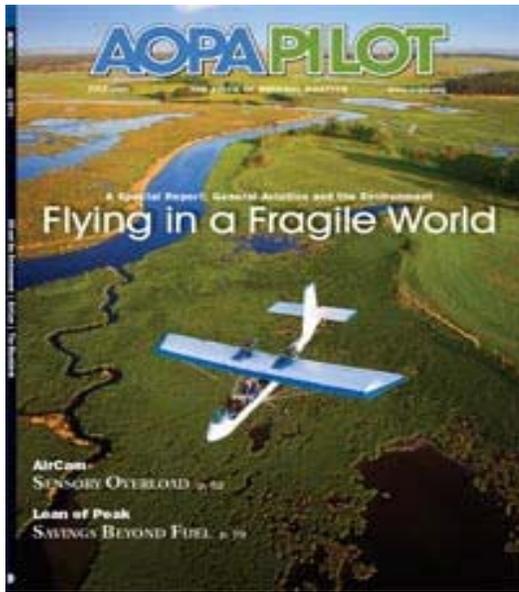
**“SouthWings is a ‘top flight’ organization and I am very pleased that Waterkeepers are taking advantage of the services it provides.”**

Rick Dove, Waterkeeper Alliance

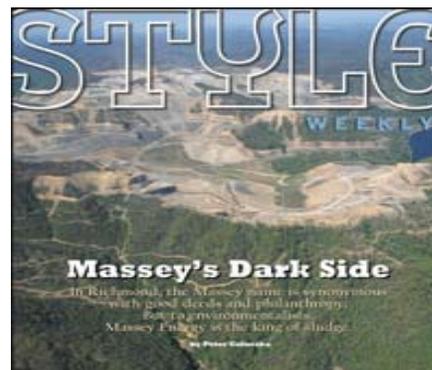
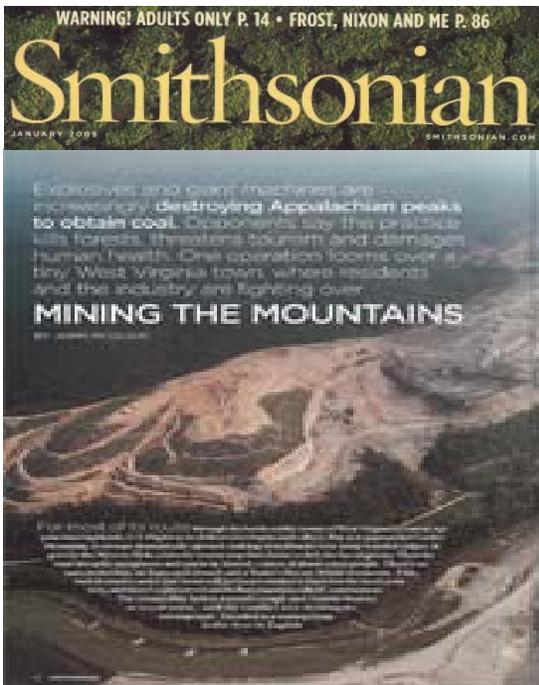
2009 Flight Mission Showcase



**SouthWings in the News:** 2009 was an excellent year for stories and photos from SouthWings flights. Publications covering our work included *Smithsonian*, *GQ*, *AOPA Pilot*, CNN and numerous international media.



Pictured at left are Dr. Sanjay Gupta - CNN, John Wathen - Hurricane Creek RiverKeeper, and SouthWings pilot Hap Endler



**“I am always amazed by how fragile the landscape seems when seen from the air.  
SouthWings is providing an invaluable service.”**  
Jan DeBlieu, North Carolina Coastal Federation



In addition to initiative areas, SouthWings flew numerous flights in 2009 on issues ranging from air quality to habitat protection for manatees and threatened bird species. Coastal impacts from development (left), concentrated animal feeding operations (below left), and papermill pollution discharges (below) are examples of the threats that SouthWings helps to discover every day. Last year we found the most often noted reason for a flight was listed as watershed protection and water quality. Please join SouthWings in supporting the work of our partners in your community.



Photo: Dean Wilson



**THANK**



**YOU!**

All of SouthWings' flights are conducted by volunteer pilots who selflessly contribute their time, costs and the use of their aircraft to make the world a better place for future generations. Please join us in making a difference by educating yourself about environmental issues in your area and getting involved to create a sustainable and healthy future. Visit **SouthWings.org** to learn more.