

# The Leaflet

A good walk with the Potowmack VNPS Chapter—Sally Anderson

SUMMER 2012

This spring our Piedmont Chapter co-sponsored a walk at Balls Bluff near Leesburg with the Potowmack chapter on April 7. This was our first chapter hike there in a number of years. Besides the lovely wildflowers on the ravines and bluffs along the Potomac River, the site is a Civil War battlefield. I think we were somewhat discouraged last time by the clearing of trees from a portion of the battlefield around the cemetery. Revisiting the site with leader John DeMary, a retired teacher and naturalist with the Loudoun County school system was worthwhile. We had a large group, with members from across the northern part of the state attending.

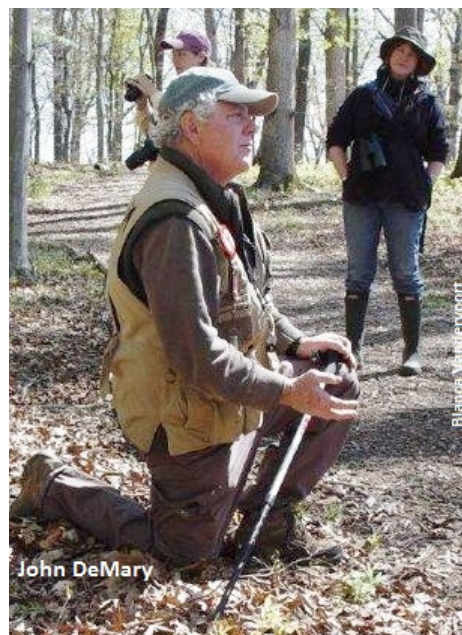
In spite of the early date, the plants were well into the blooming season and some were past peak. Still, we were treated to a long list of flowers, including White Trout Lily (*Erythronium albidum*), Yellow Trout Lily (*E. americanum*), Virginia Bluebells (*Mertensia virginica*), purple Shooting Star (*Dodecatheon meadia*), Spring Beauty (*Claytonia virginica*).

An uncommon plant that we found in abundance was the False Mermaidweed (*Floerkea proserpinacoides*). While it is found across the northern half of the country, the Atlas of Virginia Flora shows it in only five counties in the northeastern part of Virginia. Not a showy plant, it resembles Harbinger-of-spring (*Erigenia bulbosa*) and formed a carpet on a part of the forest floor.



Purple Shooting Star  
*Dodecatheon meadia*

Sally Anderson



John DeMary

Blanda W. Everett

Several shrubs and small trees were also blooming, including Pawpaw (*Asimina triloba*), Redbud (*Cercis canadensis*), Black Haw (*Viburnum prunifolium*) and Flowering Dogwood (*Cornus florida*). It was a lovely day to be out. The cut over portion of the battlefield got not a second glance. After five years it still looks like an open wound, and also probably nothing like the battlefield, so is not really that instructive about history either in my opinion. A photo of the battlefield available online, taken in 1886, gives a much better idea of its former appearance. Three other disappointments were the loss of Walking Fern (*Asplenium rhizophyllum*), Green Violet (*Hybanthus concolor*) and the bicolored form of Birdfoot Violet (*Viola pedata*). Perhaps these plants are still hiding somewhere in the park. Balls Bluff is still worth seeing, but I give the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority and Loudoun County a mixed review for its stewardship of this special habitat on the Potomac.



The Virginia Native Plant Society (VNPS), founded as the Virginia Wildflower Society in 1982, is a non-profit organization of people who share an interest in Virginia's wild plants and habitats and a concern for their protection.

The Piedmont Chapter is a geographically defined subgroup of VNPS in the northern point of Virginia east of the Blue Ridge Mountains. It includes Loudoun, Fauquier, Culpeper, Rappahannock, Warren, Clarke, and Frederick counties.

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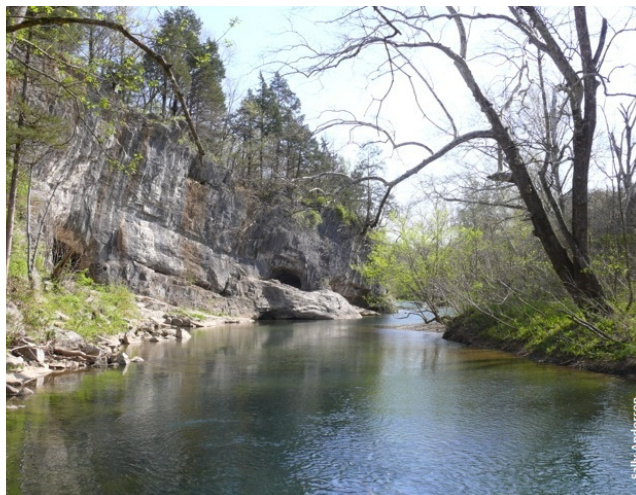
## Cedar Creek Battlefield, Frederick County, in April—Sally Anderson

South of Middletown on Rt. 11, adjacent to the Belle Grove mansion, is the wooded area that was the site of an 1864 battle to control the Northern Shenandoah Valley.

Trenches are still visible, in fact, if I identified them correctly, they are populated by Virginia bluebells (*Mertensia virginica*).

This site is special to botanists because of several areas identified by the Virginia Natural Heritage Program, including a dry limestone cliff with a population of Canby's Mountain Lover (*Paxistima canbyi*) among

stunted Red Cedars (*Juniperus virginiana*) overlooking Cedar Creek. Canby's Mountain Lover is listed G2 (at high risk of extinction) and is listed as threatened or endangered in most of the seven states where it occurs. In Virginia, it is found in 12 counties in the Valley and Ridge province.



Along the gated gravel road and on some of the dry limestone bluffs you can see



Hoary Puccoon  
*Lithospermum  
 canescens*

Hoary Puccoon (*Lithospermum canescens*), a taxicab-yellow wildflower, and its color match—Green and Gold (*Chrysogonum virginianum*). Other plants on the bluffs include Allegheny Stonecrop (*Hylotelephium telephioides*), Rock Twist (*Draba ramosissima*) aka Branched Draba or Branched Whitlow Grass, Round-leaved Ragwort (*Packera obovata*), Red Columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*) and Purple

Cliffbreak fern (*Pellaea atropurpurea*). After a beautiful view from the high bluff, you can take a steep path down to look into the caves below.

Another treat is the purple Shooting Star (*Dodecatheon meadia*), found in a couple of large stands on the property. Also found in moister woods are Toadshade (*Trillium sessile*), Round-leaved Hepatica (*Hepatica nobilis* var. *obtusata*), Wild Pink (*Silene caroliniana*) aka Sticky Catchfly, and Robin's Plantain (*Erigeron pulchellus*) and much, much more. Between the moist woods, sinkholes and dry cliffs, a great diversity of trees and shrubs are found in addition to the many herbaceous plants. As with the rest of the flowers, the peak time was several weeks ahead of its usual time.





## Spring Treasures on Lone Pine Farm—Marjorie Prochaska

We have five or six acres of woods on our property, and, shortly after moving here, I forged a trail through them alongside an intermittent brook. Our first years here my husband and I worked hard to cut out the Multiflora Rose (*Rosa multiflora*) which, when entwined with Greenbriar (*Smilax* spp.), could bring down whole trees. We have freed countless Dogwoods (*Cornus florida*) from their burden of Japanese Honey-suckle (*Lonicera japonica*), and we fancy we can hear the trees uttering sighs of relief as they straighten up over the seasons and each year increase their bloom. This year the Dogwoods were particularly beautiful.

Each spring I go out to see what has come up. This year I found five or six Jack-in-the-pulpits (*Arisaema triphyllum*) blooming, where last year I had one plus leaves-only plants in another half-dozen spots. The one or two *Trilliums* I have planted have completely disappeared, and the lone Bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*) leaf was still without flower, but I did discover that this year the Perfoliate Bellwort (*Uvularia perfoliata*) were flowering. They were all over. I was thrilled. Earlier there had been a nice display of Spring Beauty (*Claytonia virginica*) throughout the woods, but the winter leaves of the Crane-fly Orchid (*Tipularia discolor*) I haven't seen in several years.

Each year I plant a few Bluebells (*Mertensia virginica*), and they have been struggling. Only three out of fifteen bloomed this spring, but I protected them with wire and they were able to escape predation by the deer. A Royal Fern (*Osmunda regalis*), which I had transplanted from a neighbor's property, leafed out, and I found another one I'd never seen before. Have they always been there and I just did not know enough to identify them correctly?



Each time I went out, I literally stumbled on something new—nothing exotic, but a Wild Geranium (*Geranium maculatum*) right in the middle of the trail. Coming home one day I spied a pair of what had to be basal orchid leaves. I thought about them overnight, figuring I could never identify the plant without the flower, but I dwelt on the small size and the slightly bluish-gray color, and I thought, “Maybe Showy Orchis (*Galearis spectabilis*)?” And sure enough, the next day, I walked right past the basal leaves and further down the trail was greeted by a *Galearis spectabilis* in bloom. And I am not done yet! That same day I discovered Southern Adder's Tongue (*Ophioglossum vulgatum*). I do not know what possessed me to look so closely at the forest floor to see these tiny ferns, but they were growing in three places that I could see. I debated *un peu* between Northern Adder's Tongue and Southern Adder's Tongue, but with the help of a copy of the *Atlas of the Virginia Flora*, which Carrie Blair had given me, I could conclude that we do not get the northern species in my area. My most recent find was a Downy Rattlesnake Plantain (*Goodyera pubescens*), again growing right in the middle of the trail.

I have puzzled over these woods, which were probably grazed half a century ago, and I must admit, I had half-written them off as impoverished. I stand corrected. I have had such joy this year making new discoveries. I have seen leaves only of several species which I hope I can report next year as blooming.

Elsewhere on the property I have found Iris which I did not plant growing in two wetland areas. Having taken five ticks off me so far this season, I have not been eager to wade in to identify them. My most curious find has been Striped Wintergreen (*Chimaphila maculata*) in bloom under a Willow Oak (*Quercus phellos*) growing in a bed of (ugh) non-native St. Johnswort (*Hypericum perforatum*). So even though we have lost the pine (my nephew calls us No Pine Farm now), nature keeps giving back, and I have been vastly encouraged to continue to do more to see that our native plants have a fighting chance.



<b>Sunday</b>	<b>Jun 10</b>	<b>1pm</b>	<b>Second Sunday Walk</b>
<b>Fauquier County.</b> Bull Run Mountains. Executive Director of the Bull Run Mountains Conservancy will lead a walk through the woodlands of the Bull Run Mountains Natural Area Preserve. Meet at the Conservancy at 1pm. Request information at <a href="mailto:piedmontvnps@gmail.com">piedmontvnps@gmail.com</a> .			
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>Jul 8</b>	<b>1pm</b>	<b>Ice Cream Social</b>
<b>Fauquier County.</b> Environmental Studies on the Piedmont's Clifton Farm. Request information and directions at <a href="mailto:piedmontvnps@gmail.com">piedmontvnps@gmail.com</a> .			
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>Aug 12</b>	<b>1pm</b>	<b>Second Sunday Walk</b>
<b>Warren County.</b> Dickey Ridge Trail Loop. Join master naturalist Richard Stromberg for a 2 hour hike on the Dickey Ridge and other trails in the Shenandoah National Park leading past overgrown meadows of old homesteads and a stream. This is a fairly easy walk. Wear sturdy shoes, bring water, bug spray and sunscreen. Meet at the Dickey Ridge Visitor Center, just before milepost 5. Request information at <a href="mailto:piedmontvnps@gmail.com">piedmontvnps@gmail.com</a> .			

## 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Calmes Neck Bluffs Wildflower Walk—Blanca Vandervoort

18 enthusiastic people came together at the annual walk and joined Gary Fleming, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, Division of Natural Heritage, who shared with us everything that he knows about the plants we ran across. This was a unique opportunity to explore and learn about the rich diversity and value of native plants and their habitats of this region and this special location. This fine day added nine new plant species to Gary's list of vascular plants on Calmes Neck.

After the walk many of the participants gathered by the Shenandoah River to enjoy a sandwich and admire a large Bur Oak (*Quercus macrocarpa*) growing at river's edge. This tree is listed in the Virginia Big Tree Database as being the second largest of its kind in the state.

Enjoy the photos taken by Patrick Wamsley during this walk.



## Going Paperless

We put each issue of The Leaflet on the VNPS website. If you would like to see this newsletter electronically instead on paper via snail-mail, please send an email to [piedmontvnps@gmail.com](mailto:piedmontvnps@gmail.com) requesting that we put you on the list of electronic recipients. We will send you an email each time a new Leaflet is uploaded to the website. This will save trees, save the chapter the cost of printing and mailing, you will see the pictures in color, and you will get The Leaflet right away instead of having to wait for it anxiously at your mailbox.



**Editor's Corner**

Shale barrens are hot, dry areas, usually on steep slopes. The surface is an accumulation of thin, flat, coarse stone fragments. I missed VNPS trips to shale barrens, but have been thinking about them recently because I have come across areas that fit the description. I did some scrambling off the trails on Signal Knob, the northwest end of the Massanutten Mountains and came across areas that fit the shale barren description. Like most desert-like places, they are not bare of plants. I saw our native Prickly Pear cactus (*Opuntia humifusa*), certainly an indicator of dryness, and Shale Barren Pussytoes (*Antennaria virginica*).

Next instance was along the road to my house. On a steep, stony hill beside the road were many yellow daisies. Yellow daisies at this time of year around here are Ragworts (*Packera*). I identified them as Pussytoes Ragwort (*P. antennariifolia*), so named because the grayish, fuzzy leaves look like the leaves of a Pussytoes. It is also known as Shale Barren Ragwort.

Later I went to Shenandoah River State Park at Bentonville between Front Royal and Luray. The trail at the southwest end of the Park is called Shale Barrens Trail, and it goes straight up a crumbly rock strewn hill. At the northeast edge of the Park, Wildcat Ledge Trail goes up a similar hill, and there I found Shale Barren Ragwort again.

So maybe we don't live so far from shale barrens. Maybe that explains why the Prickly Pear thrives above the retaining wall by my driveway as does the Shale Barren Aster (*Symphyotrichum oblongifolium*) next to it.

— Richard Stromberg

## Wildflower Weekend at Shenandoah National Park—Richard Stromberg



Shenandoah National Park offered a special event the first weekend of May, "Wildflower Weekend". The Park offered sixteen events led by park rangers and other experts, including members of the Piedmont Chapter: Cathy Mayes, Ann and Rob Simpson, Kristin Zimet and myself. Cathy led a walk up Stonyman Mountain where she monitors the plant communities as part of the Park's Adopt-an-Outcrop program. The Simpsons held a program about Violets at the Byrd Visitor Center and a walk on the gentle trails of Limberlost. Kristen led a walk down the more difficult but richly vegetated Mill Prong Trail. I led two walks near the Dickey Ridge Visitor Center: Snead Farm and Fox Hollow.

Both go through old farms abounding with artifacts though mostly reforested. The Snead Farm barn still stands as does the Fox family graveyard. A large Sycamore stands along the Fox Hollow Trail. In 1976 Lemuel Fox Jr. told Park rangers that he remembered it as a large, lone tree in the 1920s. I knew the highlight of the Snead Farm walk

would be the large population of Yellow Lady's Slippers (*Cypripedium parviflorum*) at the junction of the Snead Farm Loop Trail and Dickey Ridge Trail. It did not disappoint. The Snead Farm Road on the way to the Farm is kept clear by the Park, so is often floristically boring, but I was



Yellow Lady's Slipper  
*Cypripedium parviflorum*

surprised to see a clump of *Phacelia* and then realized the petals were fringed, so it was Miami Mist (*P. purshii*), not the more common Small-flowered *Phacelia* (*P. dubia*). In fact, the Digital Atlas of Virginia Flora does not recognize that *P. purshii* grows in the Park though the Park Vascular Plant List includes it.



Miami Mist  
*Phacelia purshii*



Shale Barren Ragwort

*Packera  
antennariifolia*Shale Barren  
Pussytoes*Antennaria  
virginica*

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*The**Leaflet*

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Curlyheads (*Clematis ochroleuca*)