

The Leaflet

Chapter Annual Meeting and Piedmont Prairie Walk—Richard Stromberg

WINTER 2014

After a potluck lunch and business meeting to elect Chapter officers and directors (see list on page 2) at Mountain Run Lake Park in Culpeper County, we drove to the piedmont prairie along Raccoon Ford Road



for a walk with Chris Ludwig of Virginia Natural Heritage and *Flora* author. Chris explained that the twenty foot grassland along both sides of the road has not been overtaken by woody plants because it is periodically mowed. He noted that the trees in the woodlands beyond the grasslands are primarily those that tolerate poor, compacted soil of the region, such as Post Oak (*Quercus stellata*). We saw the dominant species of the prairie: Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*) and Indian Grass



(*Sorghastrum nutans*). Another typical flower of this ecological community type we saw was Bushy Aster (*Symphyotrichum dumosum*). Other striking flowers still in bloom included Blue Waxweed (*Cuphea viscosissima*), Grass-leaf Blazing Star (*Liatris pilosa*), Gray Goldenrod (*Solidago nemoralis*), Lion's foot (*Nabalus serpentarius*) and Slender False Fox-glove (*Agalinis tenuifolia*).

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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The Leaflet can be seen online in color at www.vnps.org/piedmont

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The Leaflet

Third Winchester Battlefield Walk—Marie Majarov

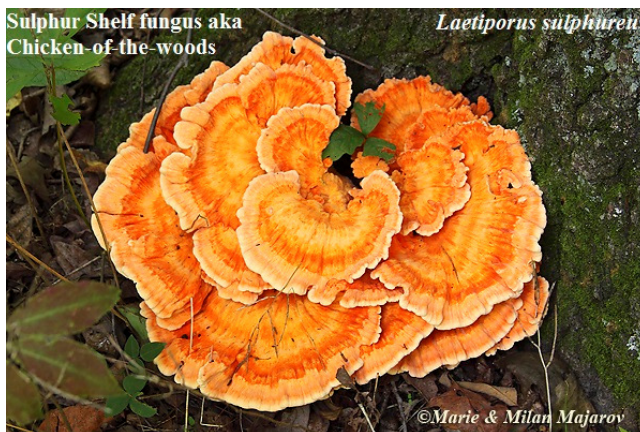
A beautiful nature tract and hallowed ground, the Third Winchester Battlefield has been protected by Shenandoah Valley Battlefield Foundation, the Civil War Trust, the Virginia Outdoors Foundation, and the Virginia Departments of Historic Resources and Game and Inland Fisheries. Since 2001 more than 600 mostly contiguous acres of woodland, meadow, and farmland crossed by Redbud Run have been acquired. September 19, 1864 in the largest, most significant, and bloodiest Civil War battle fought in the Shenandoah Valley, an almost inconceivable 8,630 combined Union and Confederate soldiers were killed, wounded or missing by the end of the day.

Today over 5.5 miles of walking paths, begun in 2007, and the conservation of this nature rich landscape honor the many lives lost here.

The October 12 walk was led by Marie Majarov, VNPS member, Virginia Master Naturalist, and monarch butterfly advocate. We saw oak-hickory woodlands scattered with Virginia Pine, Redbud, Serviceberry and Hackberry along with meadows of tall grasses and a few *Bidens* still in bloom in the rich wetlands around Redbud run, and the historic middle battlefield just recently



opened. Third Winchester is beautiful in all seasons and home to varied bird species, colorful fungi, deer, small mammals, reportedly a black bear, a thick pink carpet of Spring Beauties (*Claytonia virginica*), and numerous insects and butterflies. A late migrating Monarch was even seen as the twelve individuals attending crossed the middle field before entering an allee of Osage orange (*Maclura pomifera*).





Phelps WMA Walk—Cathy Mayes

Our November Second Sunday walk was in the Chester F. Phelps Wildlife Management Area, led by Phelps' Lands and Facilities Manager Ron Hughes. We scouted only a tiny portion of the area's 4,539



acres, mostly meadow, mostly located in southern Fauquier County. As chapter president Sally Anderson observed, we walked little more than a flower an hour. Who would have expected a site that is intensively managed for hunting to be so rich in native wildlife? And of course, it is a comprehensive outdoor exhibit of invasive plants as well.

The stand-out plant along the trail to the pond is a monstrous Shortleaf Pine (*Pinus echinata*). Once the predominant tree of the Coastal Plain of Virginia, the tree is now much less common than our Loblolly Pine (*Pinus taeda*), because it's seedlings are dependent upon "cool" fires to compete with other understory growth. In fact, the seedling actually "sheds" fire. Before people started suppressing fire, the area of the Phelps WMA burned as often as every 3 years.

So late in the year, nearly all the plants were past their flowering stage, showing the many diverse ways they have of presenting and dispersing their seeds.



Bristly Locust
Robinia hispida

Sally Anderson



Sally Anderson



The Habitat Game—Sally Anderson

For several years now Clarke County 4th graders have been invited to attend the Clarke County Conservation Fair, a day of learning about environmental topics at Powhatan School near Boyce. Students move in groups of up to 20 from one activity to the next, and are at a station for about 25 minutes. The challenge is to engage them in an activity that teaches them something about nature and/or conservation and perhaps show how they can impact their environment. The Piedmont Chapter has attended several times. Our previous activity was a skit about invasive plants, with active participation from the students.

This year the organizers declared a theme, Habitat. So we decided to invent a new activity. Led by board member Kristin Zimet, Emily Southgate, Mary Keith Ruffner, Jocelyn Sladen, Carrie Blair and Sally Anderson met several times to hash out details. The result is The Habitat Game. It evolved from boxes of dirt through a three dimensional habitat and finally ended up being table cloths using various fabrics to represent habitat features, and lots of wildlife, realistic and otherwise. A yard and house were added, since one of the ideas we most wanted to get across was (let's hear it kids) Your Choices Matter! Cards for the game were native, non-native and invasive plants that could be chosen for a yard. Tokens were awarded for helpful choices, and taken away for choices that might negatively impact the adjacent woodland (in the Wildwood Acres neighborhood) or wet woodland (at Flowing Springs Estates).



Making the cards was an amazing exercise for all of us. We had to choose and research the plants, which meant looking up wildlife benefits, soil and water impacts and so on. I think the committee (and the chapter board, who tried out the game at a meeting) learned a lot of things. Part of what we learned is

just how much there still is to find out about the plants we love. The ones we don't love were easier, but still presented challenges, because even invasive plants can provide food and cover for animals.

My biggest worry was that the game would be too long and complicated for the time allotted, but on the gorgeous fall day, with a backdrop of a running stream, bird song and some Oriental Bittersweet as a good demonstration, we had five classes of students gather around our two habitats and complete the game. It was really fun to assist as they negotiated with each other on which 15 plants to choose. They took it quite seriously (for a game), reading cards aloud, advocating for the plants they liked and adding up the tokens. They were knowledgeable about what constituted habitat, and we had time to discuss their choices and count up the tokens they won. A good time was had by all.

We think the game is suitable for 4th grade through adult learners. It includes directions, and is available if anyone can come up with another use. Please ask, and we will loan the game to you and demonstrate how to use it.



Mary Keith Ruffner (left) and Emily Southgate (right) conduct the Habitat Game at the Clarke County Conservation Fair



Emily Southgate helps with the Habitat Game

Blue Ridge Coalition—Sally Anderson

Last week, Emily Southgate and I attended a meeting meant to launch the Blue Ridge Coalition. At least 30 others attended the half day gathering. We had speakers and also broke into groups to address what we might do and/or represent as a group. Also attending were representatives of Friends of the Blue Ridge, Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy, Appalachian Trail Conservancy, The Downstream Project, Shenandoah National Park, and others.

Most of the area of the focus of the effort is private land between Shenandoah and Harpers Ferry National Parks. Purposes that the group discussed included

- education of landowners on good stewardship of mountain land, encouraging conservation easements
- threats to sections of the Appalachian Trail from power lines, pipelines, road projects, etc.
- advocating for various types of conservation oriented regulation from the six counties and two states that make up the region.

The organizers and many of the attendees were interested in a more limited membership based on local non-profit organizations that would actually do the work of the coalition, rather than a large membership of organizations that only lent their names to the project, at least at first. However, ideas for broader membership were also floated and included individual and business community members. While much is left to be decided, this seems like a group we need to try to work with.

The group is also asking for a \$250 donation for the organization, partly because some money is needed up front to run the organization, but also to ensure that committed groups will form the organization's working core. As we discussed in our recent board meeting, we are currently living beyond our means, and perhaps we need to try a fundraising venture to carry out the projects we feel are important.

Our mission is the preservation of native plants and the habitats where they live, and this seems like a way to fulfill that mission. There is amazing expertise in the coalition, yet we seem to be one of the best voices for recognizing and saving good native habitat. Our chapter covers both sides of the mountains, while many of the organizations are focused either on the east or west side. We have several areas of interest on the mountains, such as the G. Richard Thompson WMA and Robin Williams' and others work with the Friends of the Blue Ridge invasive plant removal efforts (for which we won an award a few years ago).

The next meeting will be on December 3. We plan to attend again to see how some of these issues are resolved.



Sunday	Dec 14	1pm	Shenandoah River State Park Second Sunday Walk
Warren County. Richard Stromberg will lead a walk along the banks of the South Fork of the Shenandoah and then up to the Park Visitor Center. For more information contact piedmontvnps@gmail.com .			
Sunday	Jan 11	1-3pm	Biscuit Mountain Second Sunday Walk
Fauquier County. Carrie Blair will lead a tree walk in the Broad Run area. To RSVP and request more information, email piedmontvnps@gmail.com . Limit 25 people.			
Sunday	Jan 25	2-3:30pm	Winter Speaker Series: Adventures in Plant Identification
Tri-County Feeds meeting room (upstairs), Marshall (No dogs allowed). Virginia Master Naturalist Richard Stromberg will describe tools, tips, and tricks he has used to unravel the mystery of the identity of the plants he has come upon on hikes in various places in the USA and Europe. For more information, email piedmontvnps@gmail.com .			
Sunday	Feb 8	1pm	Sky Meadows Second Sunday Walk
Walk at Sky Meadows State Park with Chris Lewis. To request more information, email piedmontvnps@gmail.com .			
Sunday	Feb 22	2-3:30pm	Winter Speaker Series: Familiar Flora & Siberian Splendor
Tri-County Feeds meeting room (upstairs), Marshall (No dogs allowed). Dr. Emily Southgate will tell why she felt at home, botanically, in Eastern Siberia and will tell a tale of drifting continents and volcanoes and glaciation to help explain why we share so many genera of plants with eastern Asia. For more information, email piedmontvnps@gmail.com .			
Sunday	Mar 8	1pm	Second Sunday Walk
Being planned. To request more information, email piedmontvnps@gmail.com .			
Sunday	Mar 22	2-3:30pm	Winter Speaker Series: Spring Wildflowers
Tri-County Feeds meeting room (upstairs), Marshall (No dogs allowed). Marion Lobstein, Professor Emeritus of Biology at Northern Virginia CC will talk about our spring wildflowers and their western U.S. relatives. For more information, email piedmontvnps@gmail.com .			

2015 Winter Speaker Series

Tri-County Feeds Conference Room, 7408 John Marshall Hwy, Marshall, VA 20115

Sunday, January 25, 2 pm

Join Richard Stromberg...

Adventures in Plant Identification: Tools, Tips, and Tricks for identifying plants when you are away from home



Scarlet Loco, Photo by Richard Stromberg

Richard is editor of the Piedmont Chapter of VNPS newsletter. As a Virginia Master Naturalist he monitors rare plant communities in Shenandoah National Park and surveys plants for the Virginia Working Landscapes project. He also leads hikes and maintains trails for the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club. He will describe how he has unraveled the mystery of the identity of the plants he has come upon on hikes in various places in the USA and Europe.

Sunday, February 22, 2 pm

Join Dr. Emily Southgate...

Familiar Flora amid Siberian Splendor



Photo by Emily Southgate

Emily teaches graduate courses in botany and ecology at Hood College in Frederick, MD. Her major research interest is the historical ecology of the Eastern United States, especially New York, New Jersey and Virginia. She found that she felt at home, botanically, in Eastern Siberia and will tell a tale of drifting continents and volcanoes and glaciation to help explain why we share so many genera of plants with eastern Asia.

Sunday, March 22, 2 pm

Join Marion Blois Lobstein...

Our Spring Wildflowers and Their Western U.S. Relatives



Spring Beauty (Claytonia virginica) by M.Lobstein

Marion is Professor Emeritus of Biology at Northern Virginia Community College, member of both Piedmont and Prince William Chapters VNPS, and Vice-President of Flora of Virginia Project. She still volunteers for workshops and walks at the State Arboretum of Virginia.

All lectures are free. Refreshments provided.



Adventures in Plant Identification —Richard Stromberg

Last May my wife and I visited her brother in Soller, Mallorca, one of the Balearic Islands off the coast of Spain. We have visited several times. Of course, I was on the lookout for wildflowers, but I didn't see much that was new to me. On a hike from Soller to Deja, I got excited when I saw two species that had no leaves and reminded me of the parasitic Coralroot (*Corrallorhiza*) orchids that grow in Virginia. I took pictures of them for reference. I got on the computer and went to the "Virtual Herbarium of the Western Mediterranean" database (<http://herbarivirtual.uib.es/eng-med/>) that I had discovered a few years ago. It does not have detailed search capabilities, but does offer "search by family". I tried the orchid family, but did not find a match. Then I noticed that it offers to list parasite plants, and there I found the answers. They are both Broomrapes (*Orobanche*). Glandular Broomrape (*O. clausonis*) parasitizes the Madder family (*Rubiaceae*). Ivy Broomrape (*O. hederæ*) parasitizes English Ivy (*Hedera helix*). The picture shows it coming up through English Ivy. I thought, "Maybe it would be a control on this invasive alien species." But, based on the masses of Ivy I saw growing on walls in Mallorca, it is not a very successful control.



Neither reminds me of the one Broomrape species back home, One-flowered Cancerroot (*O. uniflora*), but are reminiscent of our Squawroot (*Conopholis americana*), which is in the Broomrape family and was once *Orobanche americana*.



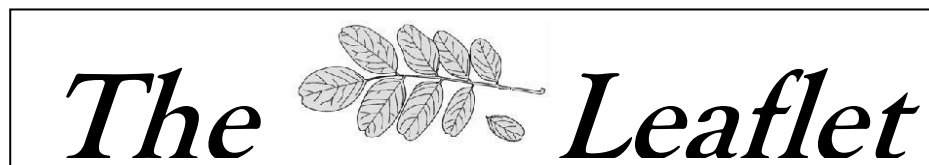
This is an example of a case that will be presented at the January 25 Winter Speaker Series (see Calendar, page 6.)



Piedmont Prairie Plants



Please check the date at the bottom of your mailing label below. It is your VNPS membership expiration date. If your membership has expired, please contact VNPS at 540-837-1600.



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