

POTOWMACK NEWS

Volume 28. No. 6

Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

November/December 2010

BRINGING NATIVE PLANTS AND WILDLIFE INTO THE MANAGED LANDSCAPE NOVEMBER 11, GREEN SPRING GARDENS

Cliff Fairweather, a naturalist for the Audubon Society of Northern Virginia, will give a presentation at Green Spring Gardens at 7:30 p.m. on November 11 on Bringing Native Plants and Wildlife into the Managed Landscape. He will tell us about creating home wildlife habitats and deals with some of the touchy issues involved such as stinging insects, cats, and snakes.

Cliff Fairweather is the Environmental Education Coordinator and Naturalist for the Audubon Society of Northern Virginia. His primary responsibility is managing the ASNV Audubon at Home program, which promotes restoration of native habitat on homeowner and other properties.



NOTES FROM THE ANNUAL MEETING

The VNPS annual meeting was held October 17 at Green Spring Gardens. It began with a reception featuring a wonderful array of treats. During the annual business meeting, the membership unanimously re-elected our current officers and passed an increased budget including a donation of \$5,000 to the Flora of Virginia. A highlight of the meeting was a presentation to Greg Zell by Rod Simmons on behalf of the Virginia Native Plant Society for his outstanding contributions to the conservation of natural areas in

Arlington County and in Northern Virginia throughout his distinguished career as Chief Naturalist. Rod Simmons, Greg Zell, and Charles Smith then gave fascinating presentations on the unique and rich flora of Alexandria, Arlington County, and Fairfax County.

Following the annual meeting, we had a brief plant sale from the propagation beds, including giving away free native seed packets. Then Rod Simmons led about 30 people on a walk in Turkey Cock Run Park, a pristine example of an upland gravel terrace forest featuring Chestnut oaks, Blackjack oaks, several species of *Vaccinium*, black gum, and several species of poverty grass. *See pages 3 and 5 for photos from the annual meeting and the walk.*

“The third edition of Global Biodiversity Outlook has recently shown that species worldwide continue to disappear at up to 1,000 times the natural background rate. The report further warns that without concerted action massive further loss of biodiversity is projected to occur before the end of the century and that ecosystems are approaching tipping points beyond which they will be irreversibly degraded, with dire consequences for human wellbeing.”

Ahmed Djoghlaif, the executive secretary of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Friends,

Our annual meeting is just concluded and I am confident and proud of the state of our chapter. We finished the year strongly with an engaging and informative presentation by three of our local experts Rod Simmons, Greg Zell and Charles Smith. Fifty folks showed up for the social and talk and over twenty-five went on the walk to Turkeycock Run.

Our officers agreed to stand for re-election and were unanimously returned to office, along with a strong mandate to use some of our reserves to further the aims of our organization. I am gratified by your vote of confidence.

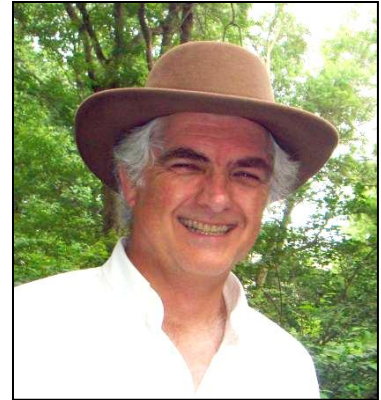
On another note, we are planning to offer you an option to receive this newsletter electronically only. This will save some money in printing and postage and may be preferable to the hardcopy you are holding. We hope to integrate the calendar feature to make it easier to plan to attend our events.

If you are interested please email me at amford@acm.org. I would like to know if you want to receive the newsletter as an attachment to an email or prefer an alert type notice and link to the current newsletter. We expect to transition over the next few months and will continue to send a hardcopy newsletter until you direct us otherwise.

Finally, I want to let you know of our plans for the coming year. You may have heard of the recent decision by the Environmental Protection Agency to mandate limits on the major pollutants adversely affecting the Chesapeake Bay. To meet these goals the entire region will be challenged to reduce fertilizer use and control erosion runoff from development and farming alike. This is our watershed and we are all impacted by this problem. I invite you to join us during 2011 as we explore the nature of this magnificent estuary and our interaction with it. We will look at the role of native plant communities in creating and maintaining the water quality and our role as stewards of the forests and meadows which provide this critical habitat.

I hope you have a healthy and productive fall and look forward to hearing from you.

Alan Ford



DYKE MARSH WALK by Pat Salamone

We had a great turnout—almost 50 people—and a gorgeous day for the fall colors walk at Dyke Marsh on October 23, which we co-sponsored with the Friends of Dyke Marsh. Unfortunately, our scheduled walk leader was unable to join us due to a last-minute work emergency, which was a bit of a “yikes,” but the walk proceeded with FODM members stepping in as substitute leaders and with help from knowledgeable participants (including Ginny Yacovissi and other VNPS members). We enjoyed the colors of Virginia creeper, poison ivy, sweetgum trees, and pokeweed. Not much was in bloom, of course, but we observed a number of native plants, including swamp milkweed, swamp dogwood, biennial gaura, groundnut, leafcup, white vervain, and bur cucumber. We also saw the results of NPS-led weed-whackers’ efforts in removing invasive exotics (including a large pile of bush honeysuckle that they have “whacked”) and planting new native shrubs and woody plants.

And, despite the big “yikes,” we got a lot of positive feedback from walk participants.

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Potowmack News is published 6 times per year, in January, March, May, July, September, and November. The deadline for submissions is the 15th day of the month prior to publication. Call Mary Ann Lawler for more information or e-mail her at malawler0@gmail.com or Susan Wexelblat at susanwexelblat@gmail.com

VNPS POTOWMACK CHAPTER ANNUAL MEETING, OCTOBER 17, 2010



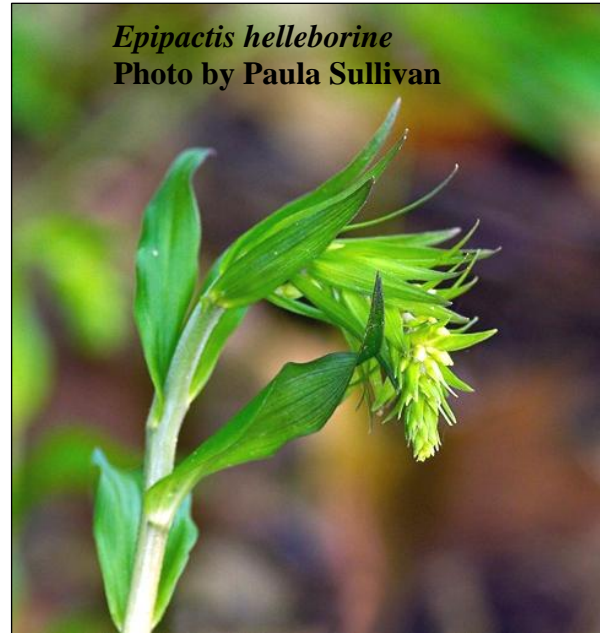
Annals of the City of Alexandria Herbarium By Rod Simmons

A regular series featuring field botany updates, notable collections, and scientific contributions largely from the City of Alexandria, Arlington County, and Fairfax County, Virginia, but occasionally including other locales in the Washington, D.C. area as well.

Broad-leaved Helleborine (*Epipactis helleborine*) (L.) Crantz): This non-native orchid is steadily increasing its range throughout our area, especially in disturbed sandy-gravelly-loamy soils of glades, open areas, and edges of upland forests dominated by oaks. It was observed and photographed earlier this year by Paula Sullivan at Monticello Park and later by Scott Knudsen, Susan Crawford, and Rod Simmons at Park Fairfax Woods. Both sites are natural areas in the City of Alexandria within the Four Mile Run drainage.

Only two plants of this species were known in Alexandria when it was first observed at the former Winkler Botanical Preserve at the western edge of the City in the early 1990s. However, ten years later it had greatly increased there in a successional ecotone at the edge of cleared forest.

It was collected in Arlington County at Lyon Park years ago during floristic surveys by Greg Zell and Rod Simmons, and reported from similar habitats at the northwestern edge of the county near Minor Hill by Laura Beaty and from southeastern Arlington by Mary Ann Lawler.



Epipactis helleborine
Photo by Paula Sullivan



Scott Knudsen and Susan Crawford
with *Epipactis helleborine*
Photo by Rod Simmons

As a result of these newly discovered stations for this taxon in the D.C. area, Jil Swearingen, Invasive Species Coordinator for the National Park Service, National Capital Region, added this species to the upcoming 4th edition of *Plant Invaders of Mid-Atlantic Natural Areas* as a "Plant to Watch": "This attractive, non-native orchid superficially resembles several native lilies that occur in our region, including Virginia Bunchflower (*Veratrum virginicum*), Appalachian Bunchflower (*Veratrum parviflorum*), and Green False Hellebore (*Veratrum viride*). Broadleaf helleborine has irregular, bilaterally symmetrical flowers with 5 petals and all the *Veratrum* have regular flowers with 6 petals. This is an exotic plant that is becoming increasingly invasive throughout the region, especially in dryish, gravelly soils of forest and woodland edges. It has been documented in the eastern U.S. for a long time and occurs throughout the Northeast in most counties from Pennsylvania to Maine, and in scattered locations in the mid-Atlantic and Great Lakes region, as well as occasional locations in the central and western states. The state of Wisconsin included this plant in its control manual for ecologically invasive plants in 1997."

Lamont and Stalter (2007) note that, "although several authors have described *E. helleborine* as an aggressive weed (Brackley 1985, Soper and Murray 1985, Lamont 1994, Chapman 1997, Brown 2003), it has yet to exhibit such aggressiveness on Atlantic coast barrier islands. Homoya (1993) reported *E. helleborine* from "sandy, acidic dune forests bordering Lake Michigan" (also see Swink 1966)."

Slender Ladies-tresses Orchid (*Spiranthes lacera* (Raf.) Raf. var. *gracilis* (Bigelow) Luer: This diminutive native orchid was newly discovered for the City of Alexandria in August of this year, growing in dry, gravelly-loamy soil in a hillside meadow dominated by native warm-season grasses and wildflowers behind Hammond School. This site is one of several native meadow and “no mow” areas that are actively managed by the City of Alexandria, Dept. Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities, Horticulture and Natural Resources Section.

Despite a long history of scientific exploration and collecting by botanists from the Smithsonian Institution, National Arboretum, local universities, and others, Slender Ladies-tresses Orchid was never reported for the City of Alexandria, including the area in the City’s west end that was formerly part of Fairfax County (Simmons 2008). The D.C. and Vicinity Collection of the U.S. National Herbarium at the Smithsonian Institution does not contain any specimens of this plant from Arlington County, though the Virginia Digital Atlas shows it to be collected from there, with the voucher specimen(s) possibly housed at the Ted R. Bradley Herbarium at George Mason University. Botanist Nellie Knappen who apparently did not collect locally but explored many locales throughout the greater D.C. region in the 1920s reported Slender Ladies-tresses Orchid from Virginia Highlands (Aurora Hills area between Ft. Scott and U.S. Route 1) on August 6, 1921. This species is also known to grow in an open, dry to mesic meadow at Runnymede Park in the Town of Herndon on silt-loam soils closely overlying diabase bedrock, though that population may have been destroyed by parking lot and roadway expansion.

Slender Ladies-tresses Orchid is fairly small and very thin and blends in with graminoids, but has conspicuous white flowers. It seems not to occur on strongly acidic soils, but prefers largely undisturbed, dryish open grassy areas, often rocky or gravelly, with a diversity of native grasses (especially *Dichanthelium* spp.) and sedges (*Carex* spp.). It is well distributed throughout its range, but is uncommon to rare in our region.



Spiranthes gracilis
Photo by Rod Simmons

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TURKEYCOCK RUN WALK, OCTOBER 17, 2010



ARLINGTON COUNTY RiP PROGRAM. Free. For ages 9 to adult. Come and help rescue our parks from the alien plant invaders! We meet monthly at the locations listed below. If you have your own garden gloves and tools, please bring them along. Some supplies will be provided. Be sure to come dressed for work, wear sturdy shoes, long pants, long sleeves, and perhaps a hat. You may want to bring along a reusable water bottle. **Information is accurate at the time of printing; however unexpected changes may occur.** Please register by email or calling to assure that you have the most up-to-date information. Register at mpierce@arlingtonva.us or 702-228-1862.

Second Saturdays @ Lacey Woods
1200 N. George Mason Dr., Arlington, VA 22205
Nov 13, Dec 11 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM
Meet at the N. Frederick St. & 11th St. N. entrance.

Third Saturdays @ Tuckahoe Park
2400 N. Sycamore St., Arlington, VA 22213
Nov 20, Dec 18 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
Meet in front of Tuckahoe Elementary

Second Sundays @ Gulf Branch Nature Center
3608 Military Road, Arlington, VA 22205
Nov 14, Dec 12 1:00 – 3:00 PM

Third Sundays @ Long Branch Nature Center
625 S. Carlin Springs Road, Arlington, VA 22204
Nov 21, Dec 19 2:00 PM - 5:00 PM

First Tuesdays @ Zachary Taylor Park
Meet at 2533 N. Utah St., Arlington, VA 22207
Nov 2, Dec 7 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Fourth Saturdays @ Benjamin Banneker Park
1500 N. Sycamore St., Arlington, VA 22205
Nov 27 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

LOCAL EVENTS AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Sat. Nov. 6: OAKKey-dokey 2:00-3:00pm Green Spring Gardens. Hike our forest to meet the mighty oak and other fantastic trees in their fall glory. Then look what you can make with a leaf: masks, skeletons, rubbings and more! \$6 Registration and non-refundable prepayment to FCPA required for all programs. Call 703-642-5173.

Sat. Nov. 6: Volunteer Work Day 10:00-11:00am Potomac Overlook Park. Spend a morning with park staff and volunteers helping with indoor and outdoor projects in your favorite park! Reservations NOT required — meet at the nature center.

Sun Nov. 7 Fall Flowers and Fungi Hike 1:00 to 3:00 pm. \$3 fee. Adults and families with children ages 9 and up. Autumn wild flowers are in bloom and fantastic mushrooms, fungi and lichen abound. Join us on this early fall hike to see what the season will bring! We'll hike thru the back of the park to Pimmit Run, then down along the palisades, and back to Gulf Branch for a 2.5 mile loop over occasionally rough terrain. Information: 703- 228-3403. Meet at GBNC. Program #612840-C To register: by web, go to <https://registration.arlingtonva.us/>; by Phone--Call 703-228-4747 or Walk-in-- Registration Office located at 3700 S. Four Mile Run Dr., Arlington, VA 22206.

Tues. Nov. 9: Water Efficient Landscaping 10:00am-3:00pm Green Spring Gardens. Attend this informative rainwater harvesting and water efficient landscaping class that goes beyond the basics. Gain greater understanding of sustainable practices through exercises and instruction. Come away with practical information that helps our environment and gives you a marketing edge. Prerequisites are basic experience with landscape design and the ability to read an engineering and architectural scale. Call site by October 26 to order a vegetarian or non-vegetarian lunch for \$12. \$65 Registration and non-refundable prepayment to FCPA required for all programs. Call 703-642-5173.

Sat. Nov. 13. Potomac Heritage Trail: Riverbend Park to Great Falls Park, VA. 9:30am to 1:30pm Leader: Stephanie Mason. Enjoy the natural beauty, wildlife, and lingering fall color along the Potomac River on this round trip hike from Riverbend Park to Great Falls (VA) Park. Our riverside trail includes some uphill and downhill, a few rocky areas, and a potentially muddy surface. We'll add some exploration at one or both parks for a total of 4.5 miles. Members: \$20; Nonmembers: \$35. For information or to register call: 301-652-9188 x16 or visit: <http://www.audubonnaturalist.org/> for a registration form.

Sat. Nov. 13 Long Branch 38th Birthday Bash 2:00 PM - 4:00 PM Families with children 3 and up. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Come one, come all to the nature center's 38th Birthday Jubilee! Visitors will get to meet the animals on display as well as ones that are not. Party go-ers are also welcome to participate in a scavenger hunt, make a craft, and look at a slide show of Long Branch Nature Center, past and present, and help blow out the candles on a tasty treat that us naturalists enjoy. The cake will be cut at 3:00 pm. Please submit photos to be included in the slide show to mneff@arlingtonva.us. Registration is required and \$5 donation is greatly appreciated and encouraged. Please contact us at 703-228-6535 if you have any questions. Free. Register at <https://registration.arlingtonva.us/>. Program #: 912950-M

Sat. Nov. 13: Tree Identification: Conifers 1:30-2:30pm Green Spring Gardens. Learn to distinguish a pine from a fir or spruce in this session with Green Spring Director, Mary Olien. Look at the scale needle conifers and learn how to distinguish the junipers, cedars and cypresses. Bring a 10X hand lens or magnifying glass. Dress for the weather. \$20 Registration and non-refundable prepayment to FCPA required.. Call 703-642-5173.

Sun. Nov 14. Sugarloaf Mountain Van Trip 9am to 3pm Adults. Hike on the many miles of trails that wind around the Piedmont's only mountain. We will enjoy a crisp November hike of approximately 5 miles and learn some of this mountain's interesting natural history, keeping our eyes open for late season hawks and resident ravens. For information call 703-228-6535. Vans leave from Lubber Run Center parking lot, 300 N. Park Dr., Arlington. VA 22203. \$25 fee due upon registration. Register at <https://registration.arlingtonva.us/>. Program #: 612950-R

Sun. Nov. 14: Wild Side Wagon Ride 4:30-6:00pm Huntley Meadows. Take a 90-minute tractor ride with a park naturalist to parts of the wetland that are difficult to reach on foot. Look for and learn about songbirds, wildflowers, butterflies and waterfowl, then stop for a snack at the observation platform. Meet at South King's Highway park entrance. \$6 Registration and non-refundable prepayment to FCPA required for all programs. Call 703-222-4664.

Wed. Nov. 15: Turkey Walk 7:00-8:00pm Ellanor C. Lawrence Park. Take a nighttime walk with a naturalist to search for wildlife. \$5 Registration and non-refundable prepayment to FCPA required for all programs. Call 703-222-4664.

FAIRFAX COUNTY'S INVASIVE MANAGEMENT AREA (IMA) PROGRAM

The IMA program is a volunteer-based project that is working towards habitat restoration. Help us remove invasive plants, learn new species of invasive plants, and work outdoors during the following workdays:

Wed. Nov 3, 12:30-3:30pm, Lake Accotink	Wed. Nov 24, 12:30-3:30pm, Lake Accotink
Wed. Nov 10, 2:00-5:00pm, Americana	Wed. Dec 1, 12:30-3:30pm, Lake Accotink
Wed. Nov 17, 12:30-3:30pm, Lake Accotink	Wed. Dec 8, 12:30-3:30pm, Lake Accotink
Sat. Nov 20, 9:30am-noon, Huntley Meadows	Wed. Dec 22, 12:30-2:30pm, Lake Accotink
Sat. Nov 20, 10:00am-noon, Pohick Stream Valley	Wed. Dec 29, 12:30-2:30pm, Lake Accotink

For more information contact: Katherine.Frederick@fairfaxcounty.gov or call 703 324 8681. Check out the IMA schedule of events and activities at: www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/resources/nrp-ima.htm.

FALLS CHURCH HABITAT RESTORATION TEAM UPCOMING EVENTS

Join the City of Falls Church Habitat Restoration Team in restoring the local ecosystem in city parks. We will be removing damaging invasive plants as well as planting natives that benefit our local birds and butterflies.

November 20, 2010 Hamlett/Rees Track 10am-Noon

Directions: Hamlett/Rees Track - From West Street head east on Broad Street/Rt. 7. Turn right onto South Virginia Avenue then right again to stay on South Virginia Avenue. Then a right onto Rollins, the street dead-ends at the Park. Enter from the end of Rollins Street. *More parking is available at TJ Elementary School.

For more information: contact Jeremy Edwards, City of Falls Church Senior Urban Forester, 703-248-5016 or email jedwards@fallschurchva.gov or: contact Melissa Teates, 703-538-6961 or melanite@verizon.net.

INVASIVES CONTROL WORK PARTIES AT TURKEY RUN PARK ALONG THE POTOMAC

Join with The Nature Conservancy to help control invasive plant species on National Park Service lands in the Potomac Gorge at Turkey Run Park off the GW Memorial Parkway. Wear work gloves and boots or sturdy shoes, and bring water, snacks, and hand saws or loppers if you have them. Time is 10-1 on each workday. Date: **Nov. 4**. Contact Alan Ford: 703.732.5291 or amford@acm.org or Mary or Jamie at volunteermd@tnc.org.

Chapter Events Calendar



Nov 11 **Bringing Native Plants and Wildlife into the Managed Landscape with Cliff Fairweather**
Green Spring 7:30pm

**Potowmack Chapter
Virginia Native Plant Society
P.O. Box 5311
Arlington, VA 22205**

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