

file

Blue Ridge Wildflower Society

A CHAPTER OF THE
VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

Vol. 30, No. 3

Fall 2009

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

September 25-27 **VNPS Annual Meeting:** There will **not be** a regular Blue Ridge Wildflower Society meeting this month due to the busy schedule of the VNPS Annual Meeting. Please come to the VNPS meeting and hear great speakers and go on a field trip. See your latest VNPS newsletter for all details or go to www.vnps.org.

October 24 **Field Trip, Fall Color on the Blue Ridge Parkway.** Did you ever wonder why some trees are yellow, while others are red and orange? Here is your chance to find out. We will look at trees up close and at great distances and learn not only what species you are looking at, but why they look the way they do. Join leader Rich Crites 774-4518 at Cave Spring Middle School at 10:00 a.m. There will be little walking. Bring a lunch and we will be traveling south on U.S. 221 to Bent Mt. and go south on the Blue Ridge Parkway. Cave Spring Middle is south of Cave Spring Corners off Rt. 419.

October 26 **Chapter Meeting; 7:00 p.m.** We will meet at the Roanoke Church of Christ at 2606 Brandon Ave. Rich Crites will share with us his trip "Rambling Through the West" from this past summer. He will show scenes of the west and share with us plants of the Lewis and Clark Trail. It should be an interesting and entertaining evening.

November 23 **Chapter Meeting; 7:00 p.m.** Join us for an evening of sharing of photos, seeds, good food and fellowship. This is always interesting to see the photos folks have taken over the past year. They can be plants, landscapes or anything from the natural world. If you have photos or seeds to share or just a warm smile, please come.

Refreshments are served at all meetings. Visitors are welcome. All field trips are free to anyone anxious to learn about wildflowers and the diversity of life we are so lucky to have in this beautiful valley and its surrounding hills. Regular meetings are held on the 4th Monday of the month in February, March, April, May, September, October and November unless otherwise specified. Executive board meetings are held in January, May and August. Feel free to contact board members with ideas and suggestions at anytime.

From the President

The fall season is just around the corner. As I write this letter, the weather forecast is for a cool week in the low 70's. Some of the leaves, along with the fruits of the dogwoods are already showing color. By now the black locust leaves are almost all brown after the little leaf miners have worked the leaf mesophyll over for food. The ironweeds, goldenrods, and asters are starting to bloom while some of the late summer flowers including cardinal flower are nearing their end. I have a patch of New England asters behind my house that are ready to burst forth any day with purple. The robins have already made their appearance in greater numbers and they are acting goofy as they get ready to move on through. A few of the monarchs are making stops on their long trek south. The signs are starting to show. And the show goes on!

This has been a terrific year for the wildflowers as well as our forests. The abundant and timely rainfall has served them well as our mountains have been carpeted with a lush green color. Connie and I were able to take a 30 day, 8000 mile driving trip to the west coast. We passed through several biomes. We vacationed from the Grand Canyon in the south to Montana and North Dakota in the north. What a beautiful country we live in. It is truly America the Beautiful!!! The national parks are awesome and I am so thankful that individuals along the way had enough interest and desire to set them aside for us and future generations. Each has its own special scenery and unique characteristics that serve to "WOW" us. However, when we returned home, our deciduous forest covered mountains are still outstanding. There is nothing that compares to our "great forest" as it passes through the various stages brought forth by the different seasons. Learn a few of our common trees and their fall colors and you will enjoy our mountains even more. You will begin to learn the general environments preferred by the various trees - read the general landscape as you enjoy your favorite drives. As botanists, there is so much for us to enjoy in Virginia.

The annual state meeting of the VNPS is nearly upon us. Note the schedule and other information in the newsletter. Over 100 folks have already pre-registered and more will come. We will need help for the weekend activities and items for the silent auction. If you haven't volunteered yet, give Butch and Betty Kelly a call at 384-7429. Let's have a good meeting.

Rich

Annual Picnic

By Betty Kelly

What do you think of in your recipe for the ideal picnic? Sunshine, low humidity, no rain and a variety of good food with good fellowship. Well, some of those ingredients were present at our annual BRWS picnic held at Garst Mill Park.

The prep work included clearing the debris from the previous nights' rainfall from the picnic area. The barbecue was plugged in to simmer as the BRWS board meeting began at 10:15 A.M. As President Rich Crites stirred and contemplated the upcoming VNPS annual meeting, among other agenda items, the skies opened up with a heaping amount of rain. But the members stayed dry under the shelter as they wondered in anticipation who would brave the weather to join us at noon.

The tablecloths were carefully placed on the picnic tables as the rain decided to stop. Drinks were opened and rolls piled high with barbecue as members opened their specially prepared dishes. The blend of these dishes and great fellowship was enjoyed by the sixteen members present.

The 25th anniversary cake was cut and passed around to all present. Members could be seen chatting over the albums of past activities that had been prepared with dedication by Freida Toler.

One ingredient not welcome was in good supply. Most of the pesky flies, however, flew into the wild blue yonder as Rosemary Bush's home remedy was placed into action. You had to be there to see it work. Thanks, Rosemary.

A short walk was led by Rich Crites down the Garst Mill Greenway. He pointed out seasonal plants as several members strolled down the beautiful trail. The end product was a cool day with good food. The recipe for the picnic was a success even though we missed the members who were not present.

Member Recognition!

Please see the article on page 4. Hugh Smith, one of our society's longtime members has been featured in a recent edition of the Virginia Western Educational Foundation Alumni and Friends News.

Geology, Geography & Generosity

Most people probably aren't aware that the United States is divided into 23 geographic/geologic settings and that Roanoke is easily accessible to 5 of those. But those privy to any of Dr. Hugh Smith's geology or geography courses at Virginia Western were sure to know. Chances are they visited those settings, too, on their class field trips.

The geography that surrounds Western is one of the key reasons Smith came to Roanoke, and it's one of the reasons he has stayed—all the while generously sharing his time and talents with his students.

Although he has been retired since 1986, Dr. Smith is still giving to Virginia Western students. He has made a significant gift to the Virginia Western Educational Foundation's Annual Fund to support scholarships for future students. A product of a two-year college education himself—he received his associate degree in geology from San Francisco Junior College—Dr. Smith wants to help others get the same jump-start on education that his college gave him. Dr. Smith says, "I was not a great student in the earlier days, but junior college gave me the leverage I needed to get going with my education."

In fact, Dr. Smith didn't stop his educational pursuit until he received his doctorate from the University of Utah at age 48. After earning his bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of California-Berkeley, Dr. Smith went to work for Shell Oil Company as a micro-paleontologist. In other words, he worked with small, single-cell organisms to date various geological materials used to identify oil-containing formations. But the oil industry wasn't for Dr. Smith, and after 10 years in the business he decided teaching was a profession better suited for him.

The head of the Department of Natural Science at Virginia Western responded to an ad Dr. Smith posted in a professional publication and invited him to Roanoke for an interview. "I was very impressed with the department and was treated so well here during my visit," says Smith. "I knew the geographic setting here made this an ideal place to teach geology and geography."

Dr. Smith relocated his family to Roanoke to accept the teaching position at Western. "The longer I was here, the more I decided I had made a very fine move," says Dr. Smith, who loved the area almost as much as teaching. "The most rewarding part of teaching was the contact with the students—dealing with them in life situations and seeing some of them go on to earn Ph.D.s, as well as other degrees." Dr. Smith adds, "Having a part in helping students pursue advanced education was a major consideration for me to take the job at Western."

Today, Dr. Smith continues to play a role in helping students pursue their education through his generous gift. When asked what he misses most about teaching, he doesn't hesitate. "Oh, I miss the students—but definitely not all the grading that had to be done!"

Reprinted with permission from Virginia Western Educational Foundation Alumni & Friends News Volume 2 Issue 1 Fall/Spring 2008

Permission is hereby given to reprint original material. Please credit author, if named, and source.

*Rich Crites, President
(540) 774-4518*

*Butch Kelly, Editor
(540) 384-7429*

*Blue Ridge Wildflower Society
P.O. Box 20385 Roanoke, VA 24018*