

Blue Ridge Wildflower Society

A CHAPTER OF THE
VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

Vol. 12, No. 4

October, 1995

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

- October 7** R-MWC and Freer Nature Preserve Field Trip. A tour of the Randolph-Macon Woman's College Botanic Garden followed by a fall walk through the Freer Nature Preserve in the Blackwater Creek Area in Lynchburg. Please meet at 2:00 P.M. in the lower end of the parking lot on Norfolk Avenue near the entrance to Martin Science building on R-MWC campus.
- October 21** Leaf Identification Walk. Meet at Explore parking lot by the New Mountain Mercantile at 10:00 A.M. Bring a lunch. There is a \$4.00 admission fee for each person attending. A tree finder book will be available to purchase for \$2.40. You will also need to bring a hand lens. Butch Kelly, leader.
- October 23** General Membership Meeting, 7:00 P.M., Center in the Square. Stan Bentley will present the program, "Wildflower Names".
- November 11** Winter Tree Identification Walk. Learn to identify trees in their leafless state by bud, bark and growth patterns. Meet at the Peaks of Otter restaurant for breakfast at 8:00 A.M. or at the Visitor Center at 10:00 A.M. A winter tree finder book will be available to purchase for \$2.40. A hand lens is essential for winter identification. Butch Kelly, leader.
- November 27** An Evening of Shared Memories. Members are invited to bring 5 - 10 of their favorite slides to show the group during this General Membership Meeting. There will also be a seed exchange. Come and share slides, seeds and refreshments!
- December 8** "The James River From the Headwaters to the Bay" will be the program presented Friday evening at 7:30 P.M. by Butch Kelly. Meet in the Martin Science Building on Randolph-Macon Woman's College campus. Come and bring a friend.

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

PROGRAM: Wildflower Names

SPEAKER: Stan Bentley

DATE: October 23, 1995

TIME: 7:00 P.M.

PLACE: Fifth Floor, Center in the Square

Come and Bring a Friend

Letter From The President

by Richard "Butch" Kelly

The wildflower season is winding down once again. I hope everyone had ample opportunity to enjoy all of nature's botanical gifts.

Recently, Betty and I took a brief vacation to the Great Smoky Mountain National Park. I experienced a unique way to enjoy nature's gifts. Cade's Cove offers wildflower viewing from April to October on the quiet side of the Smoky Mountains.

Wednesday and Saturday mornings from 7:00—10:00 A.M., the 11-mile loop road is closed to cars in Cade's Cove. It is open for walking and bicycling only. With a camera and tripod, biking offers a great opportunity to get close to wildlife as well as plant life.

Early morning in the Cove provided fog, dew, spider webs, deer, bear, red wolves, cardinal flower and many composites. The Cove is full of historic buildings. Habitats vary from open meadows to forest and wetlands.

So the next time you go to the Smokies, try and see it up close on a bicycle.

Attention: Officers and Board Members

The next Board Meeting will be Sunday, January 7, 1996, at Hugh and Bunny Smith's. Details and directions will be mailed before the meeting.

If you have suggestions for speakers, programs or field trips or any items which need to be on the agenda, please mail them to Butch as soon as possible. His address is 8564 Gravel Hill Road, Catawba VA 24070.

Permission is hereby given to reprint.

Please give credit.

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Rosebay Rhododendron Site

Dot Bliss

On September 1, Sandra Elder and I visited the Rhododendron Site in Altavista. This registry is now owned by the Ross Laboratories and the present procedure requires that we sign a release form each time we wish to enter the property and upon our return.

We found that there had been considerable but not devastating damage from the flood waters of the previous June. Several large trees had fallen across the Rhododendrons and some silt and gravel was piled up along the banks of the creek. Most of the ferns including the Chain Fern, *Lorinseria areolata*, had appeared to be recovering. The most evident damage was from the high water level which was causing the death of those

Rhododendrons whose roots were still in the water-logged soil. Death has probably occurred because of a lack of oxygen to the roots. Perhaps as much as five percent of the population has been affected.

The creek was partially blocked near the drainage underpass resulting in an increased flooded area where there was some evidence of loss of a portion of the Princess Pine community. This area also included several stagnant bodies of water that were cut off from the creek. Sandra and I removed some rocks and debris that had nearly blocked the main creek flow.

We do not foresee any further rehabilitation of this site but believe that nature will heal most of the scars and that the area will recover.

The Plant Puzzle

Neal Fletcher

Can you identify this wildflower? Unless you think you recognize the description of the plant, then use the keys found in a wildflower guide such as *Newcomb's Wildflower Guide*. Once you think you know what the plant is, then look for the answer elsewhere in this issue.

The pretty scarlet red flowers of this plant open flower after flower all summer long and sometimes into the fall depending on growing conditions. Its leaves are simple, entire and heart-shaped to oval (cordate to ovate) arranged along vining green stems. The flowers are 3/4 to 1 1/4 inches long. the corolla is composed of five parts united into trumpet-shaped (salverform) tubes. When it is in bud, the corolla is twisted into a spiral, like a rolled umbrella. The five sepals are bristle tipped. The ovary is superior and the style undivided. There are five stamens. The fruit is a capsule developed from a 2 locular ovary. The dry globe shaped capsule usually has four seeds. By the way, the individual blossoms last only one day.

(Answer on page 4)

Buffalo Creek Nature Area

Dorothy C. Bliss

This VNPS registered site was severely damaged as a result of the destruction of the Timberlake Dam in Lynchburg. The tremendous overflow of storm water last June raised the level of water in Buffalo Creek more than 14 feet and altered much of the environs of the creek. At present the area is closed to the public but Frank Coffey is arranging a work trip to clear some of the debris and it is expected that members of VNPS and the Natural Bridge Appalachian Trail Club will help out in this endeavor.

The extent of the damage to special plant communities such as the Dwarf Ginseng and Bluebells which lie buried under layers of silt and gravel is unknown at this time. The outcome of this disaster will not be evident with certainty until next spring or later. The VNPS sign was washed downstream but has been located intact and can be remounted. Progress reports on this site will be available from time to time.

Flowerpot Island

Dorothy C. Bliss

As I read in our latest VNPS State Bulletin the interesting article "Impressions of the Bruce Peninsula Trip" by Nicky Staunton, I re-lived the many wonderful experiences we shared for that memorable week. All the excursions and walks were special, but the day's trip to Flowerpot Island from the town of Tobermory at the northern tip of the Bruce Peninsula was one of the outstanding events.

The Niagara Escarpment is a rocky limestone ridge that extends from Niagara Falls to Tobermory and after submerging under Lake Huron emerges as the Georgian Bay Islands. This portion of Lake Huron with its 19 islands and numerous shipwrecks comprises Canada's Fathom Five National Marine Park. Flowerpot is the best known island in the Park.

Our jumping off point for the island was the harbour of Tobermory. This town has had many names including Collins' Harbour, Bury Inlet, The Tub, etc., but the present name was given to this village by a homesick sailor after his hometown of Tabor Moray in Scotland which means, "well of the Virgin Mary". In its early years lumber and fishing were important industries but today it is an active tourist center for glass bottom boats and divers that visit the shipwrecks and Flowerpot Island.

We arrived in Tobermory around 8:00 in the morning only to find the harbor socked in by a heavy fog. Our leaders had chartered a small boat to take us to Flowerpot Island but because of the many hazards of old shipwrecks and larger excursion boats in the Lake we were not allowed to leave until we could follow a larger boat equipped with radar. After a couple of hours we

crowded into our small boat and followed in the wake of a radar-equipped boat. Soon the fog began to lift and spectacular views of the Lake Huron shore and several islands came into view. In a short while we reached Beachy Cove, disembarked and began our walk around the small island. A well maintained trail, although rocky in some areas, led us along the shore where we soon had close views of two of the spectacular flowerpots. These are limestone rock remnants in which the cap rock resisted erosion leaving these strange formations. In the 1930's both of these flowerpots were capped with concrete and mortar was added to their bases to slow erosion. Today this artificial treatment would presumably not be allowed even though it is undoubtedly effective in preserving the rock formations.

On extensive limestone ledges surrounding one of the large caves, several ferns of interest grew, among them Brittle Bladder Fern, Green Spleenwort, Maidenhair Spleenwort and Stellar's Cliffbrake. Among the orchids encountered along the trail were *Corallorhiza* spp., a northern species related to our Rattlesnake Orchid, *Goodyera oblongifolia*, the latter with more elongated leaves. The dainty *Calypso bulbosa* was spotted growing beside Dwarf Cornel, *Cornus canadensis*, Twinflower, *Linnaea borealis*, and Gaywings, *Polygala paucifolia*.

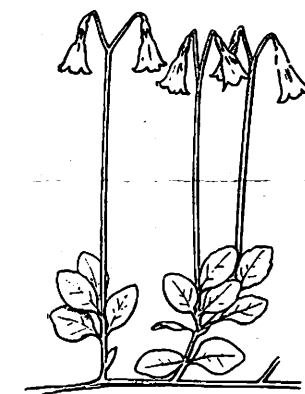
With its caves, limestone bluffs, rich woods and marl beds, this island was truly a botanist's paradise. My wish is that you will be able to visit the Bruce Peninsula and especially the unique Flowerpot Island in the coming years.

The Ecological Importance Of Eastern Red Cedar

If you are seeking an attractive, evergreen screen, windbreak or landscape specimen for sun or light shade, consider the eastern red cedar, *Juniperus virginiana*. Probably no other plant characterizes the landscape of the mid-Atlantic states as this small tree. In old fields throughout our region, red cedar and Virginia pine colonies restore the land to forest by producing humus deposits for tree seeds to germinate and grow. It is also of major ecological importance to the diversity of wildlife that depend upon it for food and shelter. (Fifty species of birds alone eat cedar berries.) In urban settings, it tolerates poor air quality, salt, drought and heat. It is deep rooted, long lived, and holds its form without pruning.

You can help this notable but under-appreciated tree remain numerous throughout its range by choosing it over inferior, non-native species such as Leyland cypress, Austrian pine and oriental arborvitae when planting.

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Vol. 3, No. 2, August, 1995



TWINFLOWER

Seed Exchange

There will be a seed exchange at the November General Membership Meeting. Now is the time to check your gardens and fields for an abundant harvest as plants complete their growth cycles. If you have extra seeds you would like to share with other members, please bring them to the meeting. All seeds need to have the containers clearly labeled; common names are sufficient. Fall is a good time to sow wildflower seeds and this is an excellent opportunity to increase the variety in your and a friend's garden at no expense. If you have not been growing wildflowers, this is a good time to try some of the more easily grown varieties.

Lynchburg Area Members

by Dorothy C. Bliss

This has not been a good year for gardens and wildflowers. The creek flood waters and the extended extreme heat and drought of the month of August have taken a toll of plant life. In the early morning hours of September 2, Lynchburg finally received some much needed rain. This may alleviate some of the signs of damage from the lack of rain such as the premature coloring of foliage and early dropping of leaves. The high waters of the past June that deposited a foot or more of silt and gravel on various stream banks may result in the smothering of ground cover plants, especially our early spring flowers. Some will recover but there will undoubtedly be many changes in these creek-side ecosystems.

R-MWC Botanic Garden

On the morning of August 12, six participants struggled in the heat and humidity, pulling weeds which had covered much of the garden hillside. By the end of the month most of the weeds has been removed and additional mulch added.

There has been some loss and damage to plants chiefly due to the extremely long hot dry spell. Several of the *Leucothoes* show severe evidence of stress and may be removed and planted nearer the shade of the Science Building. The hillside may be too sunny and hot for these shrubs and I expect they should be replaced with more sun-tolerant plants. I have observed a groundhog waddling up to his burrow in the bank. He is undoubtedly responsible for nibbling off some of the Tennessee Coneflowers, *Echinacea tennesseensis*, an endangered species. The plants have since recovered and are now blooming. Ron Gettinger of the R-MWC Biology Department has volunteered to try his luck at capturing the critter(s) in a live trap and then removing him (them) to a far away place.

Some of the blooms that have been evident recently are those of Swamp milkweed, several Asters, Black-eyed Susans, Heart-leaved Skullcap and Boltonia. The spectacular large white

flowers of the Franklinia tree have been appearing a few at a time over a period of several weeks.

A sign designating this hillside as the R-MWC Botanic Garden will be in place soon. Several suggestions have been proposed concerning the best method to designate the small, meandering paths that surround the flower beds. Natural flat field stone is an idea but unless there is a local free source, the price is prohibitive. Another possibility is to use pine needles on these paths which would distinguish them from the mulched beds. Any source of needles? Other ideas?

Visitors are always welcome! During October many new plants will be added and help will be appreciated. If any of you in or near Lynchburg would like to be a part of this project, would you please call me at 804-845-5665?

Field Trip

October 7, 2:00 P.M., A tour of the R-MWC Botanic Garden followed by a fall walk through the Freer Nature Preserve in the Blackwater Creek Area in Lynchburg. Please meet in the lower end of the parking lot on Norfolk Avenue near the entrance to Martin Science Building on R-MWC campus.

Evening Meeting

December 8, 7:00 P.M., An evening meeting will be held in the Martin Science Building on the R-MWC campus. A program entitled "The James River From the Headwaters to the Bay" will be given by Butch Kelly, our Blue Ridge Wildflower Society chapter President. Come and bring a friend or two.

Fern Foray at Peaks of Otter

Dorothy C. Bliss

Twenty-six members and friends of our Blue Ridge Wildflower Society participated in the Fern Foray at the Peaks of Otter on August 20. A short walk up the Elk Run Trail, which skirts a small creek and some marshy areas, yielded a total of 12 different species of ferns with the most common being the Sensitive Fern, *Onoclea sensibilis*, and the evergreen Christmas Fern,

Polystichum acrostichoides. The two largest ferns were the Cinnamon Fern, *Osmunda cinnamomea*, and the Royal Fern, *O. regalis*. Periwinkle, Yucca, Peppermint and Forsythia gave evidence that former homes had been located on this mountainside. Much of the wooded area was excessively dry which is not an ideal habitat for ferns.

On the shores of Abbott Lake were masses of the Marsh Fern, *Thelypteris palustris*, and very large specimens of the Sensitive Fern. Among the interesting flowering plants that were encountered were the spectacular fruits of Doll's Eyes, *Actaea pachypoda*, Witch Hazel, *Hamamelis virginiana*, our only fall blooming shrub, and large clusters of the attractive metallic grayish-blue fruits of Silky Dogwood, *Cornus amomum*. A Persimmon tree, *Diospyros virginiana*, loaded with hard green persimmons, grew beside the trail but although I offered fruits for the eating, no one even wanted to taste them, preferring to wait. I wonder why?

Following the walk about 15 joined in a picnic supper at the Big Spring Picnic Area.

Answer to the Plant Puzzle

The mystery plant for this month is *Ipomoea coccinea*, Red Morning Glory.

Did you recognize the description? If not, were you able to key it out?

Alien Plants Threaten Smoky Mountains

Butch Kelly

The Smoky Mountain National Park has 1500 species of flowering plants. Three hundred are non-native and thirty-three are considered invasive. Some of the most obnoxious are periwinkle, kudzu, English ivy, princess tree and Oriental bittersweet.

These plants can displace native plants. Even more frightening, some are hybridizing with natives and even threatening the gene pool of native plants.

There is good news. The National Park Service has hired 11 employees to treat non-native sites. They are pulling plants as well as selectively spraying. The program is scheduled to last three years. It is the first of its kind in the National Park system.