

BLUEBRIDGE CHAPTER

OF THE

VIRGINIA WILDFLOWER PRESERVATION SOCIETY

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November 1986

IMPRESSIONS OF A WEST AUSTRALIAN WILDFLOWER TOUR

by Dorothy C. Bliss

If there ever was a perfect trip it was this fall's West Australian Wildflower Tour, sponsored by the Virginia Wildflower Preservation Society and the American Horticultural Society. In late September eight of our VWPS members with thirteen others flew from San Francisco to Sydney, then to Adelaide and Perth. Our trip included city tours, gala dinners, a cruise of Sydney Harbour, visits to Botanical gardens, National and State Parks and Reserves, but it was our 9-day bus tour on the west coast, north and south of Perth, that gave us our real introduction to the unique flora of this country 'Down Under'. Here we found a wealth of native wildflowers, unsurpassed for their masses of colorful blooms and exotic appearances.

The flora of Western Australia is distinctive for no where else in the world do we find as great a diversity and uniqueness as here on the west coast. Why should there be so many species and genera of plants found only in this area? This flora has been separated for millions of years from the rest of the world and even from the rest of Australia by the Indian and Southern Oceans to the south and west and by deserts in the interior. Through the ages these plants have developed in isolation and today a distinctive flora has evolved. Many of these plants have become highly specialized for pollination by birds, especially the honeyeaters and mammals such as the marsupial opossums as well as insects.

Although some of the flowers are similar and can be recognized as a member of the legume or iris or orchid family, most were unfamiliar. In the bushland and in the forested areas there were delicate spider and strange bee and donkey orchids specialized for insect pollinators. These terrestrial orchids grew in dry and pebbly soils, a seemingly inhospitable habitat for such fragile beauty. Among the oddities in the lily family were

the strange blackboys with their fringe of grass-like leaves above a dark rough trunk. Growing only an inch or so a year a 200 year old specimen may be less than 15 feet tall. The 3 to 4 foot flower stalk produces hundreds of tiny lily-like flowers along its margin.

Perhaps the most bizarre and unique flowers are the Kangaroo-paws and Cats'-paws, sometimes placed in the Amaryllidaceae but preferably in the Haemodorraceae. The blooms are strikingly colored in reds, greens, black or yellow and densely covered with wooly hairs. The red and green Kangaroo-paw is the state emblem of Western Australia. These tubular flowers are pollinated by nectar seeking birds which often tear or split the corolla as they probe for the sugary nectar at the base.

The Banksias with their amazingly large cones or spikes of flowers are endemic, that is occur only in Australia. Their massive showy blooms in crimson, scarlet or yellow are breathtaking in their unusual beauty. Here we also found a mistletoe that is a tree, partially parasitic on roots of nearby host trees. At Christmas it is spectacular with brilliant orange flowers.

Among the familiar genera were *Clematis*, *Hybanthus*, several *Drosera* and the fern, *Pteridium aquilinum*, the latter the same species of Bracken fern common in dry and burned over areas in the United States.

The forested areas were impressive with their magnificent canopy trees, *Eucalyptus* sp., towering some 300 feet in height. Perhaps as many as 600 species of *Eucalyptus* occur in Australia. In some habitats the understory was dominated by colorful sprawling masses of *Clematis*, yellow Acacias and several conspicuous red and blue flowering shrubs and vines. In other areas the understory was open and park-like with scattered blackboys or ferns and *Zamia* palms, a cycad

distantly related to the conifers. At one time nine fire towers were constructed in top of the tallest *Eucalyptus* trees. Today only one remains, the Gloucester Tree near Pemberton. None of us climbed to the dizzying height of 200 feet but several of us scaled the ladder part way.

Today there is a growing appreciation of the uniqueness of this great biological diversity and serious efforts are being made to protect this unparalleled ecological asset from destruction by lumbering, mining, agricultural expansion, trail-bike riding, over-use of recreational areas and spread of (dieback) disease. Fire is an ever present danger and periodic controlled burning programs are being instituted to maintain the forest canopy and understory and prevent catastrophic fires that may occur without such management.

Increasing acreages are being set aside as state and national forest reserves, conservation and/or recreational areas to preserve representative areas of forest and bushland for future generations. In addition, in order to protect this treasure of native flowers, a 66 foot strip on either side of main highways has been reserved in its natural state for the enjoyment of all.

Impressions of this memorable trip also include Black Swans on Lake Manger, Koala Bears in a Wildlife Reserve, an Emu running alongside our bus, orphaned baby Kangaroos in pouches made from old sweaters, but most vivid are memories of roadsides lined with masses of gray smoke bushes, like waves of mountain peaks, broken by scarlet flowers on the Banksias, brilliant blue clumps of *Lechenaultia*, carpets of pink and white everlasting on the floor of a grove of trees and fields golden with expanses of feather flowers. All this and much more awaits a return visit to this remarkable country.

MEMBERSHIP MEETING

DATE: December 4, 1986 **TIME:** 7:30 P.M.

PLACE: Multi Purpose Room - Center in the Square

PROGRAM: Dorothy Bliss - Slide/lecture

Recent trip to Australia sponsored by the American Horticultural Society
and the Virginia Wildflower Preservation Society.

PLEASE ATTEND AND BRING A FRIEND

From the Chapter President

I guess I'm supposed to thank you for electing me as your new president. I do consider it an honor to work with a group such as this which has wildflowers at the center of its existence. If you have ideas and concerns, I do want you to feel free to call me at VWCC or at home.

At our planning meeting in November, we put together a program for the first 6 months of 1987. Our meetings are going to have to be changed to Monday evenings and the only Monday open at the Science Museum is the 4th Monday of each month. Be sure and mark your calendars now for our meetings in February, April and June. You will also note that there are several field trips and other activities scheduled. More information about these at our meetings. Other work days and activities will be scheduled as they are needed.

We have already started meeting with the Science Museum about the Wildflower Pilgrimage in April. Be sure and get your "field trip leading" skills sharpened! As plans and needs develop, we'll let you know at future meetings and newsletters.

One final note - We need help with this newsletter. Bobby and Frieda Toler have been putting it together for the past two years. Needless to say, they have done an excellent job! See me or Frieda, if this tickles your fancy! **Volunteer or we'll draft you!!**

Let's make 1987 a good year for the Blue Ridge Chapter of VWPS.

Meeting Date Change

The December General Membership Meeting will be the **First Thursday** - December 4, 1986. After that the meeting will be changed to the **Fourth Monday** for the 1987 General Membership Meetings. Please mark the dates on your calendar.

1987-88 Officers

President:
Richard Crites
Vice President:
Bruce Boteler
Secretary:
Sharon Vest
Treasurer:
Ken Wieringo

Your Comments Please ...

In an effort to improve the BRC, we are asking Members for criticism, useful comments about programs, the newsletter, field trips, and education and preservation goals.

Please feel free to offer any suggestions.

Of Note

by Virginia Nathan

Native Plant Societies

The New England Wildflower Society has compiled a list for distribution of over 60 U.S. Botanical Clubs and Native Plant Societies. For those who travel or move to other parts of the country, this list could be a valuable aid in locating other wildflower enthusiasts. To obtain a copy, send \$1.00 to the New England Wildflower Society, Inc., Garden-in-the-Woods, Hemenway Road, Framingham, MA 01701.

F1 Hybrid Wildflower

Weddle Native Gardens, Inc. of Palisade, Colorado has announced the introduction of *Eustoma grandiflora* F1 hybrid 'Colorado Bluebell' derived from crossing two strains of the endangered Texas bluebell. It is the first *Eustoma* of American origin to be introduced commercially. Early florists overharvested the Texas bluebell to the point of near extinction as it has exceptional keeping qualities as a cut flower. 'Colorado Bluebell' is said to grow about twice as fast as the wild strains; native plants have tiny seeds which require special care for good germination. Seedlings of wild plants tend to be weak and slow growing.

Endangered and Threatened Plants

In February 1986, *Oxypolis canbyi*, Canby's dropwort, was added to the U.S. List of Endangered and Threatened Plants. *Oxypolis canbyi* grows in freshwater wetlands on the lower plain of the mid-Atlantic coast.

The Endangered Species Technical Bulletin is published monthly by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and reprinted and distributed by the University of Michigan. Each issue of the **Bulletin** gives a brief summary of species proposed for listing to the U.S. List of Endangered and Threatened Species as well as those removed or added as final listings. It also includes summaries of most approved recovery plans for listed species; a Regional Briefs column for news of what is happening in the field; and from time to time, feature articles. To subscribe, send \$12.00 for a year's subscription to: Technical Bulletin Reprint, Wildland Management Center, School of Natural Resources, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI 48109.

The Department of the Interior's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has released its cumulative list of **Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants** (50 CFR 17.11 and 17.12) which is current up to January 1, 1986. The **Endangered and Threatened Plants** section (17.12) contains the names of all species of plants treated as endangered or threatened. It also lists the species treated as endangered or threatened because they are similar in appearance to endangered or threatened species. Important information (including scientific names, family, historic range, area of listing, critical habitat designation, if any, special rules for experimental populations and common names) is noted. Copies of this list are available from the Publication Unit, 148 Matomic, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, D.C. 20240.

A related list, **Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants: Review of Plant Taxa for Listing as Endangered or Threatened Species** (50 CFR part 17) was published September 27, 1985. This publication includes all species under consideration for listing as Endangered or Threatened. Plants are categorized according to their vulnerability and perhaps this list provides a more complete picture of the status of our native plants. This candidate list also identifies plants thought to be extinct in the wild which is not included in part 17.12. For copies, write to the Publications Unit, 148 Matomic, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, D.C. 20240.

Publications of Interest

The Public Garden is a new publication of the American Association of Botanic Gardens and Arboreta. The first issue (Vol. 1, No. 1) contains excellent articles on the theme of plant conservation including "Federal Protection for Plants" by E. La Verne Smith, Assistant Chief of the Branch of Biological Support, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and several items on the North Carolina Botanic Garden plant conservation program. Copies may be requested from AABGA, P.O. Box 206, Swarthmore, PA 19081.

New England's Rare, Threatened and Endangered Plants compiled by Garrett E. Crow in collaboration with the New England Botanical Club Endangered Species Committee is available for \$11.00 from Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. Request stock number 024-010-00605-6.

Endangered Plant Species of the World and Their Endangered Habitats: A Compilation of the Literature is a listing of nearly 2000 papers from The Council of Botanical and Horticultural Libraries. For more information write the Council at the New York Botanical Garden, Bronx, NY 10458.

(The Publications Committee invites all chapter members to contribute short items "Of Note" to this column.)

NOVEMBER FIELD TRIP

by Paul James

Our November field trip at the Peaks of Otter was a great success even though the weather was less than desirable. Some came early and had breakfast at the lodge and by ten o'clock we had about twenty-eight hearty souls ready to take on the mountains. However, by this time the rain and fog had settled in and we decided to head back toward Roanoke and try a lower elevation trail. We ended up at Black Horse Gap but had only gone a short distance when the rain caught up with us again. By this time everyone was getting a bit soggy and we had to call it quits for the day.

Even with the rain which we needed badly, everyone had a good time and I urge you if you have not joined us on our field trips to please do so. We have a lot of fun getting to know one another and we always see something interesting.

New Mailing Address

Blue Ridge Chapter of the
Virginia Wildflower Preservation Society
P.O. Box 20385
Roanoke, Virginia 24018-0039

To All BRC Members

It has been a privilege to serve as officers these past two years. In that time, we have seen the organization of the chapter and the goals of the society set in motion.

Through field trips we have acquainted members with many fine areas to enjoy Virginia flora. At our meetings, hopefully the programs have encouraged each one to test their ability to grow their own plants from seed or purchase plants from nurseries that propagate them from seed or cuttings rather than disturb those in the wild.

Several surveys have served to catalog the flora of some of our vital areas. These include the Chestnut Ridge Loop Trail and the Booker T. Washington National Park.

Membership support has always been outstanding in projects such as the Wildflower Pilgrimage, Plant Sales, and the VWPS State Auction and Annual Meeting.

We consider the new friendships we have made among our greatest rewards.

Thanks to each of you for your support.

Paul S. James

Richard W. Criske

Sam Ellington

Frieda Toler

BOG RESCUE

by Sam Ellington

Here in Southwest Virginia we are fortunate to have mountain bogs which provide us with an unusual display of flora.

There is one of these bogs near White Rocks Recreation Area at the foot of Mountain Lake in the Jefferson National Forest. This bog has intrigued several of us in the Blue Ridge Chapter for a number of years. Can you imagine not being able to walk for fear of stepping on tiny red sundews? Throughout the summer and fall you will find green adders mouth, woodland, yellow fringed, purple fringed, ladies'-tresses, bog twayblade and broad leaf twayblade orchids. Sphagnum moss, staghorn or wolf's claw clubmoss, creamy white cotton grass and breath taking Grass-of-Parnassas. All this flora is surrounded by interrupted, cinnamon and royal ferns, red-berried verticillate holly, rosebay rhododendron, mountain laurel, yellow St. Johnswort and Alders.

Now to the rescue — Gradually this beautiful spot is losing ground to the Alders so we decided to approach the National Forest Service in the Blacksburg District to see if we could remove some of the Alders. The National Forest Service was glad to cooperate.

Chapter members including myself, Dora Lee, Paul James, Bobby Toler and John Walke went to the bog in October to clear the Alders causing the trouble. We were very careful to remove only Alders and walk gingerly to keep from injuring this fragile flora. We feel good about the bog and hope this will tend to help preserve what is a fascinating and delicate area.

Six Months Schedule of Events 1987

- 1 - December General Membership Meeting - Time & Place incomplete - Dorothy Bliss to present slide/lecture on her recent trip to Australia.
- 2 - February General Membership Meeting - Time & Place incomplete.
- 3 - March 14, 1987 Field Trip - Westvaco Nature Trail.
- 4 - March 28, 1987 One day trip to North Carolina Botanical Garden for a tour.
- 5 - April General Membership Meeting - Time & Place incomplete.
- 6 - April 18, 1987 Third Annual Plant Sale.
- 7 - May 1, 2, 3, 1987 Great Smoky Mountain Field Trip.
- 8 - May 8, 9, 10, 1987 Mount Rogers Naturalist Rally.
- 9 - June General Membership Meeting - Time & Place incomplete.

New Members

Louis & Jill Bass
Route 2, Box 305
Vinton, Va. 24179

Mrs. Yvonne Ball
Rt. 2, Box 45
Evington, Va. 24550

Michael Bentley
2315 Wycliffe Ave., SW
Roanoke, Va. 24014

Jeanette Boone
P.O. Box BB
Sweet Briar, Va. 24595

Adrian Ragan Childress
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Hardy, Va. 24101

John D. & Betsy Coles
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Russell E. Fisher
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Rocky Mount, Va. 24151

Jeffrey & Catherine Founds
P.O. Box 714
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Audrey L. Hicks
3306 Hollins Rd., NE
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Rev. Steve A. & Ruth Spangler
3616 Cedar Lane, SW
Roanoke, Va. 24018

Burt & Marjorie Sherwood
1148 Magnolia Ave.
Norfolk, Va. 23508

Barbara Taylor
2307 Woodgate Lane
Salem, Va. 24153

Judith F. Vogelback
3606 Manton Dr.
Lynchburg, Va. 24503

Mrs. Richard Weiford
109 E. Main St.
Moorestown, N.J. 08057

PLANT RESCUE

by Bob Tuggle

We are all beginning to recognize the potential plant rescues that occur and pass us by everyday. Inevitably, as our population increases, new construction becomes a necessity. Except for occasional patches of endemic rarities, wilderness areas, sensitive habitats or parks, it is generally impossible and usually undesirable to stop the construction. New relationships need to be established between conservationists and the construction industry.

Contractors and developers are usually very attentive to requests to come onto a project site. Their attention quickly homes in on anything that could cause a delay in a project's schedule. An understandable attitude since most construction projects have a time limit for completion and if the project is not complete within the contracted time period, the contractor has to pay a penalty of one hundred to one thousand dollars for each day over the time limit. When asking permission to remove plants, first assure everyone concerned that you will be in and out before the construction even begins, then you will become not a threat but an agreeable option.

(The terms owner, contractor, and developer, are used interchangeably throughout this text, the intent being to refer to the person with the authority to grant permission.)

As soon as you notice signs of impending construction around plants that you hate to see bite the bulldozer, (they don't have to be rare or endangered), find out as quickly as possible the owner or contractor and ask permission to rescue. Tell them of your respect for their schedule and their commitments and ask when would best suit them for you to rescue the plants. Describe exactly how you intend to conduct the rescue: whether by yourself or with a group, and be very honest about it. If you are taking a group to help, the developer will be suspicious of allowing persons unknown on site. Verbally assure him that you assume responsibility for the entire operation. Let him know you trust your rescue group. Ask for his input and get his help in identifying any potential problems. Tell him how to get in touch with you if he has additional questions. Then, most importantly: follow

through! Let the construction industry know that we are available and offer a safe working relationship that presents no danger to their livelihood.

An attempt at following the above procedures produced a successful rescue operation at Boones Mill in Franklin County on June 21, 1986. After about seventeen years of trying, this town was finally to get its own public sewer system, complete with an acre of lagoon. The lagoon was to be put on property owned by the Continental Homes manufacturing firm and would stretch across a small valley with two hillsides serving as dikes. One hillside was scrub pine. The other slope was a typical, second growth, deciduous woodland. The woods were full of ferns: only the common ones like Christmas and Ebony, but still beautiful and useful landscaping plants.

Finally in April the newspapers announced that funds assured the construction of a very worthy sewer project. I sent a letter to the Hon. Frances McNeil, Mayor of Boones Mill and told her: of my desire to rescue the hillsides plants; that the VWPS was a responsible outfit; that I would be responsible for the operation; and also that I would contact Dillard Powell, President of Continental Homes, and tell him what we wanted to do since the site was located inside their perimeter fences. A month passed without a word and I assumed no was the implied answer.

A Wednesday afternoon in June and I got a phone call from Ms. Katherine Eaton, Sec./Treas. of the town and after questions like: What will happen to the plants and how many vehicles would be involved, she said that the Mayor had agreed to allow us to conduct the rescue. The ground breaking ceremony would be the next week and the construction would soon follow. She verified that I would communicate with Continental Homes.

First I called Sam Ellington in Roanoke and asked for local help. He did some calling and rounded up two to four people to be available the upcoming Sunday morning. Pretty good considering the short notice.

The next step was getting in touch with Continental Homes. Be appreciative of the number of times a phone call to the

President of a Company is screened. After assuring the secretaries that my call had to do with the lagoon site, I told Mr. Powell of our proposed rescue and of the Mayor's permission and asked his permission to conduct a rescue. Considering the idea, he began to ask questions. Sunday became quickly untenable. The plant did not work on Sunday and it would be a problem with plant security to allow us in at that time. Only one option was left and after assurances that we were cognizant of his situation and that we would cause no disruption of the Company's operations, he agreed to let us take a truck to the site during the facility's half-day operation on Saturday.

It's now Friday and back to Sam again to see if anybody he had talked to could meet tomorrow morning at seven! He would try to arrange something but almost everyone was already gone or committed for the weekend. We decided on a meeting place and what to do with the rescued plants after they were collected. (The latter being a very important consideration.)

Saturday morning found myself, Sidney Nash and Ken Wieringo assembling at Doc's Texaco in Boones Mill with our rescue implements. We very unobtrusively drove through the plant site and began our rescue. At ten o'clock we decided we had rescued as much as we could handle and left the hillside to fulfill its new role. The Ellingtons, both Dora Lee and Sam, were at Paul James' place selling plants to several people who had shown up a week later for the previous weekend's successful Annual Wildflower Sale. There were now five of us. We unloaded the back of the truck (which was just a little less than half full) and carted plants behind the house to Paul's intensive care plant facility. Very quickly we put the almost four hundred woodland plants into pots where they could be easily attended.

Four months later the plants rescued by the cooperative efforts of the Blue Ridge Chapter membership, local industry, and local government, enjoy about a ninety-five percent survival rate. The lagoon that had taken so many years is under construction, and with relocation, some of the obliterated hillside's flora remain to be objects of pleasure and study.