

# Blue Ridge Wildflower Society

A CHAPTER OF THE  
VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

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## CAN THE QUEEN BE SAVED?

by Sam Ellington

The beautiful and rare Showy Lady's Slipper (*Cypripedium reginae*) site hidden away in a small bog in the Monongahela National Forest, Greenbrier County, West Virginia is in danger of being destroyed. This decline can be caused by a number of factors such as deer browsing, woody shade encroachment, drought, acid rain, a change in the pH of the soil, excessive visitation, and possibly other factors.



Showy  
Lady's Slipper

In 1980 there were over 900 blossoms and we felt we had visited a real spot of paradise. The following years showed a steady decline and in 1986 only 54 blooms. The deer had discovered the orchids were a tasty meal and had eaten the top portion from most of the plants.

A visit was made to the Monongahela National Forest Station in White Sulphur Springs to report on the condition of the orchids and offer any

help the B.R.W.S. could give. The following year, 1987, we were distressed to find only seven blossoms. The deer had really had a banquet! Again we visited the Forest Station with a report and our offer to help in any way we could. This time Morse Reese, District Ranger, was in charge and very interested in conservation.

In the fall, it was determined by the Forest Service to do the shade encroachment reduction and place an experimental fence around a small number of orchids. Mr. Reese had this action taken following a study and recommendations done by Katharine Gregg, Ph.D., Professor of Biology, West Virginia Wesleyan College, and representatives from West Virginia Department of Natural Resources.

A visit in 1988 was not made but it was reported that there were no blooms that year. How sad!

In late March of this year we received a call from Jim Miller of the Forest Service asking if any of our members could help with the fencing of the entire bog area on April 2nd. Bobby Toler, John Walke and myself were able to make the trip to help enclose the bog with an 8 foot fence to discourage the deer. Needless to say, there were three very sore men the next day but each of us had a feeling of pride that an effort was being made to preserve this rare orchid and the B.R.W.S. was a part of this effort. Hopefully this project will be the solution to the problem.

Morse Reese, Katharine Gregg, and representatives from the West Virginia Department of Natural Resources will continue to do research and work on the project and we hope they will ask us to continue our involvement with them.



Morse Reese, Jim Miller and Dr. John Walke at the new gate in the fence.



## Letter From The President

by Bruce Boteler

Birds, Bees, and Wildflowers. That is what we titled our April membership program. It was very appropriate for we all enjoyed an excellent program on birds presented by Dr. Jerry Via and bees presented by Dr. Rick Fell. Both presentations were informative, full of enthusiasm and sprinkled with good humor. After the program, we had a reception sponsored by our host, Virginia Western Community College. During that time, we all enjoyed good fellowship and refreshments. A highlight of the reception was a honey-tasting session arranged by Rick Fell. Everyone enjoyed the unique tastes of honey produced by honeybees from nectar collected from different sources. It was indeed a fine way to spend an evening. Better than 85 people were in attendance.

On the day following, a field trip was planned in the Martinsville area. Approximately 30 people joined leaders Bob Tuggle and Sidney Nash on the field trip to three different sites. We spent time in the Fairystone Park area and along the Smith River basin. We found a nice variety of wildflowers. We finished our field trip walking down a country road with the Smith River on one side and high rocky bluffs on the other side covered with Twinleaf, Bleeding Heart, red and white Trillium and many fern species. All the while, Tiger Swallowtail butterflies were everywhere.

Many thanks to all who helped make the Friday and Saturday events so enjoyable.

I hope each of you has found an abundance of wildflowers this spring and enjoyed them to the fullest.

Permission is hereby given to reprint  
Please give credit.

Bruce Boteler, Pres.

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## Virginia Wildflower of 1989 Virginia Bluebells

Dorothy C. Bliss

The Virginia Native Plant Society has selected as our first Virginia Wildflower of the Year *Mertensia virginica*, a member of the Boraginaceae, the Borage or Forget-me-not family. This rather large family also includes Heliotrope, Comfrey, Forget-me-not, Viper's Bugloss and Gromwell. Some of the names associated with this flower are Virginia Cowslip, Virginia Bluebells and Roanoke Bells. The genus *Mertensia* refers to Franz Karl Mertens, a German botanist, 1764-1831.



Virginia Bluebells

This perennial prefers rich moist woods, especially along streams, and is common in every county in West Virginia, occurs in nearly all counties of Virginia except on the Coastal Plain but is very rare in the Carolinas, being known only from Rockingham County. Northward, this flower grows from New York to Southern Ontario and westward to Minnesota and Kansas. The showy clusters of bluish-purple flowers appearing from late March to May are especially impressive when they

develop in large colonies. The flowers are trumpet-shaped with a slender tube that is pubescent within. The pink buds develop into blue or bluish-purple blooms as the flowers mature. A white form, *F. alba*, occurs rarely. The corolla (2-2.5 cm. long) has a 5-lobed plaited limb with five exerted stamens attached to the inside of the corolla tube. The ovary is 4-lobed and produces 4 dull, roughened nutlets.

The alternate basal leaves (5-15 cm. long) are long stalked with margined petioles while the stem leaves are sessile along the (2-6 dm.) succulent stem. The smooth grey-green foliage dies down a month or so after flowering. Virginia Bluebells are easy to grow in the wildflower garden either in partial sun or shade in damp, humus-rich soil with pH 5.5-6.5. Propagation may be from division of the fleshy rootstock after the foliage disappears. The clumps may be divided as desired or they can be left undisturbed for years. These flowers may also be grown from seeds but two to three years are required for seedlings to mature. Virginia Bluebells are particularly attractive when interplanted with Maidenhair Fern, Wild Bleeding Heart, Columbine or Wild Ginger.

## New Publications of Interest

**Trees, Shrubs and Woody Vines of Virginia: A Checklist.** Compiled by Dorothy C. Bliss, Professor Emerita, Randolph—Macon Woman's College, Lynchburg, Virginia. Based on the 2nd edition of the *Atlas of the Virginia Flora* by Harvil, et al, this 3 1/2 x 7" checklist includes over 400 species, arranged alphabetically by family, genera and species and gives both scientific and common names. They may be ordered through VNPS, P. O. Box 844, Annandale, Va., 22003 for \$1.25 each, including postage and tax. Orders of 12 brochures to one address are 65¢ each plus \$1.20 postage. They will also be available at our General Membership meetings.



If you haven't done so, you will also want to obtain a copy of **Ferns and Fern Relatives of Virginia: A Checklist** and **Spring Wildflower Checklist of the Blue Ridge Mountains**. These were both described in our January Newsletter.

**Encyclopedia of Ferns:** An introduction to Ferns, Their Structure, Biology, Economic Importance, Cultivation and Propagation, by David L. Jones.

**Native Shrubs and Woody Vines of the Southeast:** Landscape Uses and Identification, by Leonard E. Foote and Samuel B. Jones, Jr.

Long awaited and still some time in the future, a complete **Flora of North America**. Floristic researchers have begun networking to produce this monumental work. In essence, the Flora will be a summary of the vascular plants of North America North of Mexico. It will be comprised of twelve printed volumes, issued over a ten-year period beginning in 1990, in addition to a computerized database.

Not new but recently revised, **Mushrooms Demystified** by David Arora. This is a comprehensive guide to the fleshy fungi.

## Westvaco Field Trip

On April 1, a small group of our members enjoyed a field trip to the Westvaco property along Buffalo Creek. There were masses of Spring Beauty carpeting the ground and ferns were abundant. Virginia Bluebells, Saxifrage, Rue Anemones, Beechdrops and Dwarf Ginseng were among the plants in bloom. Soon there will be Mayapples, Jack-in-the-Pulpit and Dwarf Crested Iris.

Deeper into the property is a Hemlock Forest where paths are edged with Trout Lilies (*Erythronium umbilicatum*). There we also found Hairy Ginger and Running Cedar.

Chewed stumps gave evidence of beaver in the area within the past year or so, though there were no fresh cuttings.

## Natural Heritage

The brochure enclosed with this Newsletter, *Protecting Virginia's Plants*, is being distributed by the Virginia Department of Agriculture. Additional copies are available upon request from the Richmond address listed in the folder. One of the photos they have used, *Buckleya distichophylla*, is by Paul James.

## A Better Way

From the Big Meadows Visitor Center in Shenandoah National Park.

There are many ways to pick  
a wild flower-  
You can lie on your stomach  
in a meadow  
and watch it grow.

You can stare at it  
Through a magnifying glass  
To better discern each leaf.  
You can paint it  
sketch it  
etch it.

In whole,  
Or just the bloom.  
You can take its picture  
Then blow the picture up  
Large

Larger

LARGER

And hang it on your wall.  
Or, you can pinch the stem  
between your fingers  
Separating it from the earth  
And kill it.

## U. S. ENDANGERED SPECIES

The following plants have been recently listed or proposed for listing under the U. S. Endangered Species Act:

SCIENTIFIC NAME	COMMON NAME	ACTION
<i>Cirsium pitcheri</i>	Pitcher's thistle	listed threatened
<i>Lysimachia asperulaefolia</i>	Rough-leaved loosestrife	listed endangered
<i>Helonias bullata</i>	Swamp pink	proposed threatened
<i>Sarracenia rubra</i> ssp. <i>jonessi</i>	Mountain sweet pitcher-plant	proposed endangered
<i>Thalictrum cooley</i>	Cooley's meadowrue	proposed endangered
<i>Trillium reliquum</i>	Relict trillium	listed endangered
<i>Arenaria cumberlandensis</i>	Cumberland sandwort	listed endangered
<i>Astragalus osterhoutii</i>	Osterhout milk-vetch	proposed endangered
<i>Penstemon pendandii</i>	Penland beardtongue	proposed endangered
<i>Ranunculus acriformis</i> var. <i>aestivalis</i>	Autumn buttercup	proposed endangered
<i>Solidago houghtonii</i>	Houghton's goldenrod	listed threatened
<i>Asclepias meadii</i>	Mead's milkweed	listed threatened
<i>Campanula robbinsiae</i>	Brookville bellflower	proposed endangered
<i>Justica cooley</i>	Cooley's water-willow	proposed endangered
<i>Marshallia mohrii</i>	Mohr's Barbara's-buttons	listed threatened
<i>Quercus hinckleyi</i>	Hinckley oak	proposed endangered

From Virginia Klara Nathan



## Lynchburg Area Members

by Dorothy Bliss

The Lynchburg Area Group met at Randolph-Macon Woman's College on Wednesday, March 15 for a mini-workshop on identification of woody plants. Following a discussion of descriptive terms, several trees and shrubs were identified by use of a key. All agreed that learning how to use keys can be a lot of fun. Slides of native and exotic shrubs and trees followed the hands-on activity. A display table showed some of the early plants in bloom, among them Winter Cress, *Cardamine hirsuta*, Whitlow Grass, *Draba verna*, Yellow Fumewort, *Corydalis flavula*, and Pussy Willow, *Salix discolor*.

It was suggested that in addition to checking on the two *Erythroniums* in our area, we might record the occurrence and blooming dates of populations of the Virginia Wildflower of the Year, Virginia Bluebells, *Mertensia virginica*. A few specimens occur along Blackwater Creek in Lynchburg and large colonies grow on the Westvaco Property along Buffalo Creek and on the lower north slope of Flat Top. Where else have you found it?

Additional hikes in the Lynchburg Area:

**Sun., April 30, 2:00 P.M.** Trillium walk. Meet at Thunder Ridge Parking Area, MP 74.7 on Blue Ridge Parkway.

**Sun., May 14.** Afternoon Lady Slipper walk on A.T. Bear Wallow Gap, MP 90.9 on Blue Ridge Parkway. Sponsored by Natural Bridge Appalachian Trail Club. Meet at 1:15 at Forest Plaza in Lynchburg or at 2:15 at Bear Wallow Gap. Hannah Burruss and Hugh Whaley, leaders, (804) 846-2392.

**Sat., May 20.** Wildflower walk from James River to Otter Creek Lake. Meet at Boonesboro Shopping Center at 1:30 or at James River Visitor Center at 2:15. Bring a picnic supper. Sponsored by NBATC. Leader, Dorothy Bliss, (804) 845-5665.

## Arcadia Field Trip

Thirty-six people attended the March 25 trip to Arcadia on a "perfect" spring day. Thirteen of these were visitors.

Along Jennings Creek, on the shale barrens, were Trout Lily, Saxifrage, Cutleaf Toothwort, Bleeding Heart, Arbutus, Hepatica and Shale Barren Ragwort as well as other plants in bloom and a number of ferns.

The group enjoyed lunch at the Middle Creek Picnic Area where Wild Ginger was in bloom.

## Field Trip to Blackwater Creek

The BRWS and Friends of Lynchburg Streams and Valleys sponsored a field trip along Blackwater Creek on April 16. The walk began at Thompson Drive where the trail goes through a portion of the Ruskin Freer Nature Preserve as it crosses the Creek a couple of times.

This is always a delightful walk with a wealth of trees and shrubs, flowers and ferns. Morrow's Honeysuckle, Eleagnus, Trout Lily, Ginger, Firepink, Dutchman's Breeches, Bloodroot, Spring Beauty, Yellow Violet and the Silvery Spleenwort fern are just a few of the plants enjoyed that day.

If you have never joined us on this walk, plan to do so next time. You will find it most enjoyable.

## Henry County Events

Friday, April 14, the Virginia Museum of Natural History sponsored a slide presentation at the Museum by Dr. Duncan Porter of Virginia Tech.

Dr. Porter stated that of the 2,700 plant species in Virginia, almost 70 are threatened by development, pollution and natural causes. He discussed why some plants are rare and how others will become rare in Virginia in the future.

About 30 people, including eight from the BRWS, attended.

Saturday, April 22, the BRWS sponsored a field trip to Martinsville. Bob Tuggle and Sidney Nash led a walk along the Iron Mine Trail near Fairystone State Park. There they found Purple Oxalis and Spring Forget-me-nots. After a lunch break near a fairystone (stauroilite) deposit, the group walked beside the Smith River. Virginia Bluebells, Wild Bleeding Heart, Dwarf Ginseng and white and red Trillium grow along this path.

The 28 participants came from Martinsville, Roanoke, Lynchburg and Stoneville (N.C.).

## Plants and Flowers for Hummingbirds

Here are some suggestions for flowers and plants hummingbirds favor. They are readily obtainable from nurseries and seed catalogs.

### Herbaceous Plants

Bee Balm (*Monarda* spp.)  
Blazing Star (*Liatris* spp.)  
Cardinal flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*)  
Century Plant (*Agave americana*)  
Columbine (*Aquilegia* spp.)  
Coral Bells (*Heuchera sanguinea*)  
Dame's Rocket (*Hesperis matronalis*)  
Delphinium (*Delphinium* spp.)  
Four-o'clocks (*Mirabilis jalapa*)  
Fuchsias (*Fuchsia* spp.)  
Gilia (*Gilia* spp.)  
Geranium (*Pelargonium* spp.)  
Impatiens (*Impatiens* spp.)  
Lantana (*Lantana camara*)  
Nasturtium (*Tropaeolum majus*)  
Flowering Tobacco (*Nicotiana glauca*)  
Penstemon (*Penstemon* spp.)  
Petunia (*Petunia* spp.)  
Phlox (*Phlox* spp.)  
Scarlet Sage (*Salvia splendens*)  
Sweet William (*Dianthus barbatus*)

### Shrubs

Azaleas (*Rhododendron* spp.)  
Beauty Bush (*Kolkwitzia amabilis*)  
Butterfly Bush (*Buddleia davidi*)  
Currant (*Ribes odoratum*)  
Gooseberry (*Ribes speciosum*)  
Honeysuckle (*Lonicera tatarica*)  
Hibiscus (*Hibiscus* spp.)

### Vines

Honeysuckle, Trumpet (*Lonicera sempervirens*,  
*Lonicera heckrottii*)  
Morningglory (*Ipomoea* spp.)  
Trumpet Creeper or Trumpet Vine (*Campsis radicans*)

## WILDFLOWER PLANT SALE

Our fifth Annual Wildflower plant sale will be Saturday May 13th, 9:30 A.M. for members (with a 10% discount), 10 - 2 P.M. for the general public, at the home of Paul James. Take Route 220 south to Franklin County line, beyond Greer Gun Shop take a right on 613, cross two bridges and look for signs.

Assistance will be needed in parking, answering questions, selection of plants, transfer of plants to cars and checking out plants. There are many other ways you can help so if you have the time and are willing, please call Dora Lee Ellington at 989-4742.

We will have many of the wildflowers as sold in our previous sales plus some surprises. All plants are grown from seeds or divisions.

### We do not sell Orchids or collect plants from the wild.

Please come, bring your friends and buy, buy, buy. Remember this is our only fund raising project. Let's make it our best yet.