

Blue Ridge Wildflower Society

A CHAPTER OF THE
VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

Vol. 6, No 4

October 1989

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

A Blue Dot On Your Newsletter Means It Is Time To Renew

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

The VNPS has adopted a new policy of membership renewal. All memberships are now on a rolling basis. You will renew one year from the month in which you joined. Most memberships are renewed in October. However, if you have joined since July, you will not need to renew till next October. If you have a blue dot on your newsletter, it indicates that you should renew your membership in October. Please renew promptly because the State will drop your membership at the end of the month. If you have joined since July, you will receive a full year from October of this year, just as in the past. All rolling memberships will begin during the upcoming year.

Thank you for your support of preservation and conservation efforts of the VNPS and the Blue Ridge Chapter. Let us make this a year in which we try to reach out to someone else in our community and make them aware of what we do as a society and all the interesting and fun things we do as a chapter to further interest in all native plants.

Look for your blue dot and act promptly. Renew today!

- October 21 Field trip to Rock Castle Creek Gorge. Meet at Rocky Knob Visitor Center (milepost 169, BRP) at 10 A.M. Bring a bag lunch. Learn tree identification; practice the skills learned during our August meeting.
- October 23 General Membership Meeting, 7 P.M., Center in the Square. Hugh Smith will present "What Rock is That and What Does It Mean?"
- December 6 Wednesday evening program. Meet at 7:30 P.M., Martin Science Building, Room 215, Randolph-Macon Woman's College, Lynchburg. Dot Bliss will present the VNPS collection of Wildflower Habitat slides. An opportunity to see a portion of what we missed during the State Meeting in September.
- Feb. 26, '90 General Membership Meeting. Scott Davis, a Parkway Ranger, will present a program on Lyme Disease.

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

DATE: October 23, 1989

TIME: 7:00 P.M.

PLACE: Hopkins Planetarium, 4th Floor Center in the Square

Speaker: Hugh Smith

Program: What Rock is That and What Does It Mean?

Come and Bring a Friend

Letter From The President

by Bruce Boteler

An anesthetic (curare) used in surgery comes from a tropical plant. Native Americans in the Amazon forests use more than a thousand different tropical plants for medicinal purposes. One fourth of all pharmaceuticals used in the United States come from tropical forest plants. This includes pharmaceuticals used in the treatment of heart disease and cancer. Thousands of plant species remain to be studied by the biochemist for their beneficial uses. These statements are from *The Endangered Kingdom*, a book by Roger L. Di Silvestro, with the Audubon Society. Plant and animal species are becoming extinct at an increasing rate. The State of Virginia recently placed ten plants on the State's endangered list. As a plant species disappears, something else disappears with it.

The Virginia Native Plant Society and the Blue Ridge Chapter are dedicated to the preservation and conservation of our native plants. Become more involved in your Chapter. Attend our meetings and voice your concerns. Be an advocate for preservation and conservation.

Update on the Showy Lady's Slipper

Sam and Dora Lee Ellington

This is to bring you up to date concerning the Showy Lady's Slipper project which appeared in the April, '89, BRWS Newsletter.

In June, Dr. Katharine Gregg, Ph.D., Professor of Biology, West Virginia Wesleyan College, reported that the 8-foot fence is keeping the deer away from the orchids. As a result, there were 170 plants which were knee high but no buds or blooms. Dr. Gregg said that it may take several years for the plants to recover enough to reach blooming state again.

She recommended that this fall the Forest Service do more shade reduction and also mow all vegetation within the fenced area.

Hopefully, next year some of these lovely orchids will again bloom.

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Please give credit.

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Northwoods Calling

Willard P. Verduin

It was not that I was tired of the same old flowers. The Pink Lady's Slippers in my woods were just as beautiful as ever—though with great difficulty I did refrain from taking another picture. It's just that a friend was telling me about yellow—yes, yellow—Lady's Slippers growing in the roadside ditches like weeds. This I had to see.

And see I did. Mid-afternoon of the third day, as we neared the end of our 900 mile journey, there they were, clumps and patches of 10, 20, 50 magnificent Yellow Lady's Slippers, *Cypripedium calceolus*, right at the peak of their bloom. Aware of the distance we had to cover, we had resisted fairly well the temptation along the way to "pull over and check out" interesting looking areas, but for this it was stopping time. Although we saw hundreds while we were there, I'll never forget the thrill of this first patch of Yellows "growing like weeds in the ditches."

"We" is a group of botanist friends from the Hendersonville, N.C., area, two of whom had been there before. "There" is the Bruce Peninsula, that narrow strip of land between Lake Huron and Georgian Bay in Ontario, Canada. This is a different land—the Canadian Northwoods, a varied land with sand dunes, cobble beaches, fens, bogs, coniferous forests, limestone outcrops and a multitude of micro ecosystems. It's a fascinating land, so completely different from our southland, different trees, shrubs, herbs, but still with some old familiar faces like yarrow and ox-eye daisies.

The high point of our first day, which we spent at Dorcus Bay Nature Reserve, was the Ram's Head Lady's Slipper, *Cypripedium arietinum*, a very rare species here as elsewhere. We found two in good condition and a couple more past bloom. It's rare, I'm glad I saw it, but it's small and not really all that beautiful. However, the Star Flower, *Trientalis borealis*, and the Bird's-eye Primrose, *Primula laurentiana*, are also small but, oh, so beautiful in the patches which are typical for these species.

On the Huron shore, the cobble beach had large numbers of Butterwort, *Pinguicula vulgaris*, with a profusion of small, dark blue flowers. Here and elsewhere we found Silverweed, *Potentilla anserina*, surely the most beautiful of the cinquefoils.

The second day, we drove to the very tip of the peninsula and went by boat (through fog) to Flower Pot Island—so named because of rock formations. The whole island is a nature reserve and well it should be! The "find" was again an orchid, the very rare Calypso or Fairy Slipper, *Calypso bulbosa*. Again, only two or three

specimens, even though we walked the "long" trail around the island. The highlight for me was a whole section of trail along which grew thousands of Gay Wings, *Polygala paucifolia*. They were almost a carpet along one side of the trail for several hundred feet. Ferns of the island were especially lush. Many were new for me: Holly, Green Spleenwort, Wall Rue, Bulblet, Northern Lady, Slender Cliff Brake (the next day we found Hart's Tongue). Eye-catching, though not new, was a spectacular display of the delicate Maidenhair Spleenwort.

The first day was well worth the trip, the second day was icing on the cake—but the third day put gorgeous decorations on the icing. At Petrel Point, again, a nature reserve, we saw the *piece de resistance*, the Showy Lady's Slipper, *Cypripedium reginae*. Now that is the ultimate of beauty in the plant world! A clump of 14 stopped all conversation. No way to describe the exquisite form and color of these gems. We saw perhaps two dozen or so. In the same area, we found Grass Pink, *Calopogon pulchellus*, White Bog Orchids, *Habenaria dilatata*, Pink Pyrola, *Pyrola asarifolia*, and others. Bird's-foot Trefoil, *Lotus corniculatus*, made a spectacular splash of color along the road where we stopped to eat lunch.

And so it went, on and on. There were many more plants common in that area but unknown down south, the beautiful little twin-flower, the Canada anemone, Herb Robert, Star-flowered Solomon's Plume, to name a few. It was a long way to go, but a super-great area to visit. I heartily recommend it for a whole new look in flowers.

Dr. Verduin is President of the Western Carolina Botanical Club. Anyone interested in a trip to the Bruce Peninsula who would like additional information or tips may contact him through Pam Wieringo.

Mt. Rogers Field Trip

Rich Crites & Frieda Toler

On Saturday, July 15, some members of the Blue Ridge Chapter joined my class from VWCC on a field trip to Mt. Rogers. The group stopped in Sugar Grove to see the Round-leaf Birch before going on to the Mt. Roger's visitor's center. After some short walks to observe the wildflowers in the various habitats, a picnic lunch was enjoyed in the grass bald area. Some found a "better" dining area in the red spruce forest.

Our next stop was the Grayson Highland's State Park. If you have never visited the park, you must put it on your list!

The group returned to Roanoke about 7:00 P.M.

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Fairystone Field Trip

Sidney H. Nash

On Saturday, September 9, eleven people turned out for the geology walk in the Henry and Patrick County area.

The ten were led by Hugh Smith and included Bobby Toler, Sam and Dora Lee Ellington, Ken and Pam Wieringo, Rich Crites, Bob and Jay Tuggle, Bobby Coe and Sidney Nash.

Our tour started at Stanleytown Elementary School by viewing maps which showed the kind of minerals we might expect to find at the various sites we planned to visit, which included a stop at Philpott Dam, two sites within Fairystone State Park and two more sites on Philpott Lake. While at Stanleytown, comment was made concerning the abundance of Jewelweed growing along the creek beside the parking lot.

We then drove to the first site, which was at the base of Philpott Dam, on the Smith River Trail. On this trail we saw veins of tourmaline in the rocks which had been blasted for the building of the dam. Some of the rocks still showed the bore holes which were drilled for placing dynamite charges.

Also along this trail were seen Southern Harebells, Mountain Spleenwort, Christmas Fern, Ebony Spleenwort and Hayscented Fern. On this trail we had an excellent view of the dam towering above us. A sign warned that the water is subject to violent, sudden rising but everyone was assured that the water never covered the path. Jay and Bobby took great delight in climbing on the rocks and beating on them with Hugh's rock hammer.

Then we went to the overlook at Philpott for lunch and a good look at the lake proper. There was, in fruit, what is believed to be an American Chestnut, *Castanea dentata*. After lunch and sight-seeing and picture-taking, we mounted up to drive to the next site.

At the next site we were allowed (encouraged) to hunt for Fairystones in the rough. For those who don't know about Fairystones, they are twin crystals of Staurolite which sometimes form crosses. There are three types of crosses, Roman, Maltese, and St. Andrews (which is the most commonly found). In this area we also found Pinesap blooming.

Our next stop was in Fairystone Park to view an abandoned iron mine. There are several old shafts on this hill. Along the trail we saw Ebony Spleenwort, Sensitive, Christmas and several other ferns, plus an Autumn Coralroot, Cardinal Flowers and Downy Lobelia, which has all its flowers on one side of the stem. There was also Shining Clubmoss and Running Cedar beside the trail. On the way back down, we spotted a Lily-leaved Twayblade.

At a site near Union Bridge on Philpott Lake, we viewed an outcropping of graphite and growing in it was a "strange" spleenwort which was left unnamed. We also paused for a long look at Beechdrops on the way to the next site, which was on the shore of Philpott Lake, to view a block of asbestos. We lingered there for a while, trying to skip rocks on the lake and there was a consensus that Sam was probably the best.

Then back to the cars for good-byes and farewells.

On our way home, Bob Tuggle, Bobby C., Jay, and I stopped at an interesting place on the upper Smith River, and as the sun was going down, we found a beautiful clump of Bottle Gentian and also some beautiful Autumn Sneezeweed. All-in-all, a very interesting and informative day. We had a perfect day for it...Let's do it again, and if you haven't been coming to the outings, please come. We'd love to have you and you'll have a ball.

Flower Beds for V.A. Medical Center Salem, Virginia

by Sam and Dora Lee Ellington

In June, we received a call from Mr. Frank Miles, Acting Chief of Voluntary Services, V.A. Medical Center, Salem, Va. He asked if we could help plant flower beds in front of Building 8.

A visit was made to determine what needed to be done. Since it was rather late in the season and the area was sunny most of the day, we felt it best to use flowers that would grow well in the sun.

The engineering personnel spaded the area and placed plastic edging around the border. We planted 12 Black-eyed Susans, 12 Purple Coneflowers, 6 large clumps of wild Bleeding Hearts, 24 white Petunias, 24 pink Petunias, and 12 Dusty Miller plants in beds on both sides of steps leading into Building 8.

The patients and personnel in Building 8 have taken good care of the flower beds and added other flower plants. On several return visits, the flowers were all blooming and looked nice.

Mr. Miles told us that the patients have enjoyed working with the project and that it improved the looks of the building.

The edging and flowers were donated in the BRWS's name.

V.N.P.S. 1989 Annual Meeting Weekend

By Judy Boteler

Wetlands and Wetland Conservation was the theme for the annual state meeting; that

title held more than one meaning for a lot of us. Bruce and I had planned to go to Reston on Friday but was the land ever wet, and you know that Hugo came through on the 22nd and changed quite a few plans for quite a lot of folks. I would not even come close to registering a complaint about that day because I am very thankful that Hugo was only an inconvenience for us in this part of the state; however, others were not nearly so fortunate. But wind, rain, no electricity, and family in need of transport caused us to delay our trip till Saturday. By the time we finally arrived, the D.C. area was having its share of rain and bad weather and many afternoon walks were cancelled. The evening's events were about all that we were able to attend. Dorothy Bliss and Carolyn Bates were there to help represent the Blue Ridge Chapter.

Upon arrival, we set up a lovely exhibit on orchids provided by Bob and Frieda Toler. We also brought along the chapter scrap book that is kept by Frieda. **The TOLERS contribute so very much to our chapter and we owe them so many THANKS for all these things.** The exhibit and the scrap book will be at our next meeting. Be sure and thank both the Tolers for their tireless efforts in supporting our chapter. They certainly deserve the Extra Mile award.

The silent auction was the first event of the evening. This is enjoyed by everyone. It is fun to check out all the things that people have donated and put in your bids. I was not very successful and did not get any of the items I bid on, but it was fun. Malcolm Black, Paul Cowans, Sam and Dora Lee Ellington and Bob Toler sent in donations from our chapter. About twelve hundred dollars was raised at the auction.

The Blue Ridge group joined some of the Potomac people for dinner and enjoyed good conversation and good food. After dinner, Barbara Stewart presented a slide show titled "EConnections". This was fun and informative. We had to identify flowers in the slides and also make habitat connections. The speaker for the evening was Dr. Stanwyn Shetler, a botanist with the Smithsonian. Dr. Shetler spoke on "Wetland Habitats: Their Plants and Preservation." Dr. Shetler gave me a new perspective on wetlands and caused my level of awareness to be heightened. Many things that I had never considered to be "wetlands" will have new meaning for me. Sunday morning was spent at the board meeting, so the walks were not an option for us.

I might add that the drive back to Roanoke was spectacular. It is not so often that the weather is so clear and crystal that the drive down Interstate 81 is as beautiful as it was that Sunday afternoon. Every fold in the mountains and every ridge was a joy to look at.

Lynchburg Area Members

by Dorothy Bliss

Fern Identification Trip. In spite of threatening weather—that never materialized—the fern trip was enjoyed by several members and guests with over eighteen ferns and fern relatives identified. We walked around Otter Creek Lake, and after lunch on the banks of the James River, explored along the Trail of Trees. In addition to the common Ebony Spleenwort, *Asplenium platyneuron*, three other *Aspleniums* were found growing on the rocky ledges, Mountain Spleenwort, *A. montanum*, Lobed Spleenwort, *A. pinnatifidum*, and Maidenhair Spleenwort, *A. trichomanes*. Among the attractive autumn flowers blooming along the margins of the lake were the Cardinal Flower, *Lobelia cardinalis*, and many unidentified composites. Also observed were three noteworthy woody plants, Shrub Yellowroot, *Xanthorhiza simplicissima*, along the banks of Otter Creek, Pawpaw, *Asimina triloba*, with its interesting banana-like green fruits and Bladdernut, *Staphylea trifolia*, with opposite compound leaves (usually three leaflets) and inflated papery fruits.

Autumn Walk. An autumn walk to enjoy the fall fruits and flowers is planned for Sunday afternoon, October 15 at 2:00 from Randolph-Macon Woman's College Campus to the James River. We will meet at the PER (Gym) Building Parking Lot on Norfolk Avenue in Lynchburg. Let's enjoy the fall colors as we stroll along back campus trails to the James River. If there is time, we may wish to walk along the Alpine Trail in nearby Riverside Park that overlooks the James River.

Evening Program. An evening program is scheduled for Wednesday, December 6, at 7:30 in Martin Science Building, Room 215 on Randolph-Macon Woman's College Campus in Lynchburg. One of the highlights of the evening will be the VNPS collection of habitat slides. These were on display at the annual meeting in Reston and are superb slides of Virginia wildflowers and their habitats which has been the emphasis of the VNPS for 1989. Come out and enjoy a pleasant and informative program.

For further details on any of the above, please contact Dorothy Bliss at (804) 845-5665.

Our Native Serviceberries

by Greg Lipscomb

Everybody loves a Serviceberry, a tree known for its profusion of lovely white flowers in spring and the sweet berries of early summer. The Serviceberry has many common names such as Shadblow, Shadbush, Sarvis or Juneberry. Are you aware

that there are many species? The number of species depends upon the botanist consulted. Peterson recognizes nineteen species while Britton and Brown only seven. The Serviceberry belongs to the genus *Amelanchier*. This genus may hybridize thereby causing confusion. I have identified four separate species in our local area.

The most common species is the Downy Serviceberry, *Amelanchier arborea*. This tree has elongated, sharply toothed leaves with pointed tips and a toothed cordate base. The leaves are hairy below or at least on the midrib or petioles. This tree grows as a clumped tree or, commonly, has only one trunk. *A. arborea* can grow to heights of fifty feet or more, thus making this tree our largest Serviceberry. The fruits are small, seedy and tasteless. *A. arborea* grows commonly in dry oak and conifer forests.

Another Serviceberry that closely resembles the Downy is the Smooth Serviceberry, *A. laevis*. The Smooth Serviceberry has leaves which are more oval and usually hairless throughout. The base of the leaves are rounded or acute, rarely cordate; they are not toothed at the base. Smooth Serviceberry has a similar growth habit to *A. arborea* but generally does not grow as tall. *A. laevis* is most often found at higher elevations or in cooler areas. The fruits are large, dark purple or red and juicy-sweet.

Another species is the Oblong Serviceberry, *A. oblongifolia*. This tree is sometimes called Canadian Serviceberry, *A. canadensis*. The leaves are cordate at their base with blunt tips and are toothed at the base. This tree grows in dense clumps or thickets with many trunks. *A. oblongifolia* does not grow as tall as the above two species, but may reach 25 feet. The fruits are dark purple and sweet. *A. oblongifolia* seems to like a more uplands habitat. There are some good examples of Oblong Serviceberry at the Cahas Mountain Overlook on the Blue Ridge Parkway South.

Our other Serviceberry is the Roundleaf, *A. sanguinea*. The leaves are oval or round and are commonly not toothed at the base. They have a somewhat leathery, evergreen-like feel. This tree grows as a clumped shrub and may grow to a height of 20 feet or more. The fruits are dark red or purple, large and sweet. *A. sanguinea* grows in dry or wet locations but prefers high, rocky locations or exposed bluffs. Some nice specimen are at the summit of McAfees Knob.

Rakes Mill Pond Field Trip

Sam and Dora Lee Ellington

Saturday, July 22, we met our Lynchburg area members at Smart View on the Blue Ridge Parkway. We then drove to Rakes Mill Pond and found many, many summer wildflowers in bloom. The butterflies were an added bonus. Some of the Joe-Pye Weeds and Iron Weeds had as many as

seven or eight butterflies on them. Have you ever seen as many butterflies as there have been this year? The Bunchflower, *Melanthium virginicum*, blooms were especially showy, having changed from cream to maroon color as they aged.

Beavers have moved into the meadow, and along the small stream some of the smaller shrubs have been killed. We are concerned that the one patch of Grass Pink Orchids, *Calapogon barbatus*, in this area may be killed due to the flooding from the beavers' dam. Where we find the Indian Paintbrush, *Castilleja coccinea*, growing may also be in danger. Which will win—wildflowers or beavers? This information has been passed on to a Park Ranger in the Rocky Knob Area. Let's hope the beavers will move to another location or be moved and leave our wonderful meadow to the wildflowers.

We ended our trip by going South on the Parkway to milepost 174.1 to see the Yellow Fringed, Woodland, Green Adder's Mouth and Downy Rattlesnake Plantain orchids in bloom. There were 19 blooms on the Yellow Fringed Orchids. A wonderful sight!

Thank you, Dorothy Bliss, for leading such a great walk.

Mt. Rogers Field Trip

(continued from page 2)

The second group met the Jefferson Chapter at Grindstone Campground. Ginny Small from the Jefferson Chapter was the leader. She took the wildflower group and a troop of girl scouts along Whispering Waters Trail. The scouts were to learn tree identification to earn a badge. Birch, beech, maple, hemlock, ash and others were identified. An interesting comparison between the Fraser Magnolia and Cucumber Magnolia was made since both grow along the trail.

Skulls Gap Trail was next and then on to White Top. Michaux Saxifrage, Three-leaf Cinquefoil, Smooth Hawkweed, Thornless Blackberries and Common Wood Sorrel were some of the plants that were identified.

Sunday, Ginny took the group to Saltville to the salt flats. Here are found both salt water and fresh water springs, so there are plants of both habitats in the same area. Salt water plants were Foxtail Barley, Black Rush, Marsh Thistle and *Scorpus americanus* and fresh water plants were Cattail and Teasel.

Many birds call the flats home. Observed were a Blue Heron, Canada Geese and Mallard Ducks.

Ginny is a native of Saltville so it was easy for her to relate some history of the area. Production of salt was a major industry in the 1800's and during the Civil War, General George Stoneman sought to destroy the mine but failed. Within several weeks after the raid, salt was again being manufactured.