

Blue Ridge Wildflower Society

A CHAPTER OF THE
VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

Vol. 21, No. 1

February, 2004

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

- February 23** **General Membership Meeting.** 7:00 p.m., Center in the Square. "Desert Plants and More" will be presented by Hugh Smith.
- March 6** **VNPS Annual Winter Workshop.** *Biodiversity: How Do We Save What Remains?*, continues the theme begun last year. This year's session will be held at Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden in Richmond, from 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. A detailed brochure was included in the January, 2004, *Bulletin*.
- March 13** **Randolph-Macon Woman's College Botanic Garden Spring Work Day.** Come help prepare the Garden for the upcoming seasons. Please bring hand tools. We will work from 2:00 - 4:30 p.m. Rain date is March 20. Dot Bliss, 434-845-5665.
- March 22** **General Membership Meeting,** 7:00 pm., Center in the Square, "Alaska-Wildflowers, Birds and Wildlife" will be presented by Butch Kelly.
- March 27** **Catawba Field Trip.** Meet at the Homeplace (Restaurant) on Route 311 at 12:30 p.m. We will go to Dry Run and other areas then return to have a meal at the Homeplace around 4:00 p.m. Butch Kelly, 540-384-7429, leader.
- April 3** **Arcadia Field Trip.** Meet at the new bridge on Route 614 at Jennings Creek at 10:00 a.m. You can take the Arcadia exit from I81. Bring your lunch. Rich Crites, 540-774-4518, leader.
- April 10** **Falls Ridge and Den Creek Field Trip.** Meet at the Park and Ride off I81 Exit 140 at 10:00 a.m. Bring your lunch. Butch Kelly, leader.
- April 24** **Randolph-Macon Woman's College Botanic Garden and Buffalo Creek Field Trip.** We will begin with a guided tour of the Garden; you can either bring your lunch or have lunch at a nearby restaurant. (Magnolia Foods is very close and has good food). After lunch, we plan to continue our search for spring flowers at Buffalo Creek. Sandra Elder, 434-525-8433, and Dot Bliss, 434-845-5665, leaders. In the Roanoke area, contact Butch Kelly, 540-384-7429.
- May 8** **Twentieth Annual Spring Plant Sale.** Community Arboretum at Virginia Western Community College, 9:00 a.m. - Noon. No plants may be selected or sold prior to 9:00. If you need pots to prepare for your donations to the sale, contact Paul Cowins, 434-239-4884, or Cindy Burks, 540-977-0868.
- May 15** **Parkway South for Flame Azaleas.** Meet at Buck Mountain Overlook, milepost 126, on the Blue Ridge Parkway, at 9:00 a.m. Bring your lunch; we may decide to go to Tuggles Gap Restaurant for dessert.
- June 5** **Rhododendron Walk.** Meet at 2:30 p.m. at the Peaks of Otter Visitor Center. Rich Crites, 540-774-4518, leader.

President's Letter

Butch Kelly

What do you do in the dreary days of winter? Most wildflower enthusiasts anxiously await the coming of spring ephemerals and nature's painting of the forest floor. January and February is a busy time when it comes to the fate of Virginia's natural resources. The Virginia General Assembly works feverishly on bills of all sorts. This year our state faces dwindling open space and a very low budget pertaining to natural resources and conservation. In fact, our state ranks dead last among the 50 states in funding conservation. We have some of the weakest laws protecting our forests. Most citizens sit at home watching TV and making sure the fridge is full and are oblivious to what is going on in Richmond.

Please don't ignore the comings and goings in our state capitol. It is the responsibility of our legislators to pass laws to protect the forests and habitats of our favorite flowers and other plants. It is our duty to hold them responsible to perform those duties in a sound manner.

Without habitat the very nature we enjoy and have taken for granted all of these years will vanish before our eyes. Then it will be too late to complain and question those who passed laws letting our natural resources pass into oblivion. Watch the news carefully and check the VNPS web site (www.vnps.org) as the weeks pass. When something crucial pertaining to our natural world is being discussed, contact your delegate or senator and let him know what you want him to do. Let them know that failure to protect our natural resources is not an option. Please don't be a wall flower. Join in on the dance. Hold the legislators' feet to the fire.

Protect our natural resources.

The Asian Longhorned Beetle A Challenge

Dorothy C. Bliss

Our American forests are being threatened by another introduced pest that may result in damage to our deciduous forest ecosystem that is more devastating than the effects of Dutch elm disease, the American chestnut blight, gypsy moths and hemlock and fir adelgids combined. The Asian beetle attacks not one species but several of our hardwood trees including maples (red, sugar, silver, Norway, etc.) willows, elms, horse chestnut, black locust, ash, mulberry and birch.

How is this beetle recognized? The Asian longhorned beetle, a native of China and Korea is large, .75 to 1.50 inches long, the body is glossy black with conspicuous irregular white spots and has very long black and white banded antennae. Evidence of its activity may be the accumulation of sawdust at the base of the tree or in branch crotches and round holes, .35 inches or larger, in the bark made by the exiting adult beetles. The leaves may exhibit unseasonable yellowing and death of infected branches.

Where was it first discovered in America? This insect was first found in 1996 in New York City (Amityville) and in 1998 in Chicago. In 2003 it appeared in Woodbridge, Ontario, and in Jersey City, New Jersey. These infested areas have been quarantined against the removal of wood products to prevent the spread of the disease. Currently the only way to eradicate the beetle is to cut, chip and burn infected trees.

How did the beetle gain entrance to the United States and Canada? This exotic pest has been found in wood from China used to make solid wood packing materials such as pallets and crates. All

such materials from China must now be fumigated or treated with wood preservatives. Baggage may also be subject to inspection upon entry into the United States.

How can you help? As yet this insect has not been found in Virginia but it is extremely important that if an infestation should occur it is identified early and reported to the USDA. As hikers in our mountains and wooded areas you have an excellent opportunity to locate a problem before the damage is severe. If suspicious signs are noted do not remove wood but notify the nearest USDA office or county extension agent. The continued beauty and diversity of our forested mountains depend upon your vigilance.

The above information was gleaned from the Internet and the brochure, *USDA-APHIS Program Aid No. 1655*.

Websites To Visit

NativePlantseast@yahoo.com is intended for chat among those interested in the native flora of the Maryland, DC and Virginia area. It is set up in conjunction with our VNPS and is open to non-members as well as members. Discussions cover many interesting questions and issues concerning native plants. You can join the list via the web by linking to <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/NativePlantseast>. You can also post messages or stop a subscription from the list at this same location. Once you are a member, messages can be posted directly to the list.

Thanks to Jim MacDonald, the Maryland Native Plant Society has a wonderful website just chock full of information. Most of the questions the MNPS receives by phone or mail are already addressed on their web page. If you have not done so, visit www.mdflora.org to see the range of topics.

Alaska

By Butch Kelly

One year ago Betty and I were feverishly planning and preparing for the greatest adventure of our lives. We were busy purchasing books, guidebooks, clothing and gear for a 22 day trip to Alaska. Looking back the planning and preparation were almost as much fun as the trip itself.

We participated in a Sierra Club sponsored trip entitled "Birds and Wildlife of Alaska, and Wildflowers too: Exploring the Last Frontier". No matter how much we planned we could never be prepared for the splendor we encountered. Our group identified 111 bird species, 171 plant species and untold numbers of mammals. Bald eagles were as common as red tail hawks here in the Roanoke Valley. In Anchorage, moose were causing the same problems on the highways as whitetail deer here in Virginia. We saw musk ox and Arctic fox. Our biggest thrill came the day we witnessed a grizzly bear attack, kill, and eat a moose calf. The whole entourage felt like we were witnessing a filming of a Discovery Channel special.

Alaska is like a mini continent. The contrast between natural habitats and the living conditions of its human inhabitants couldn't have been greater. Anchorage looked like any other city in the lower 48, with lots of bustle and commerce. Nome was like going back to the Great Depression. Birding is one of Nome's biggest money makers. Native people have a very hard life with few ways to make a living.

The trip took us to Anchorage with lots of birds and a few wildflowers. We walked the Tony Knowles Trail which is a greenway along the shores of Norton Sound which is part of the Bering Sea. There we saw Beluga whales. The terrain around Anchorage was hilly and steep much like Roanoke Valley. The forests were mostly

spruce and fir. The day also yielded red fox, bald eagles and many nesting birds at Potters Marsh. This marsh was full of nesting waterfowl right next to a busy state highway. In Chugach State Park we saw golden eagles and Dall sheep. The highlight of the Anchorage trip was a three-toed woodpecker which was nesting.

We spent 5 days in Nome. The conditions were very primitive. The living conditions were abysmal. The Nome area has 3 roads, all dirt. The land near the coast is flat and permafrost. No agriculture is found in this part of Alaska. The inland part of the area is hilly, but not extremely high in elevation. The land is rich in birds and wildflowers. We were too early for the flowers. Musk oxen are found there. The area is rich in mining history.

Most of our trip was in 15 passenger vans. With gear and 19 people it made for cozy conditions. We birded on the road, from the road, and along the road. Our trip took us to Sheep Mountain. This area is spectacular. Dall sheep were on the cliffs. On the way to Sheep Mountain we passed over Thompson Pass, home to 1000 inches of snow in one winter, yet only 2678 ft. in elevation. We saw glaciers along the way.

After spending several days on the Denali Highway we finally entered Denali National Park. Our group was very fortunate, we saw Mount McKinley several times. A trip into the Park's interior was very fruitful. The wildflowers and mountains were absolutely incredible. The road through the park is hair raising. It is only traveled by tour buses. The road is all gravel and the cliffs are without guard rails and the drop offs seem bottomless. Moose, grizzly bears, caribou, eagles and gyrfalcons were seen by all. The bus driver filled our minds with tails of history and nature. This was a day to remember for a lifetime.

Every day brought new wonders. The trip to Seward was very scenic. Much of it was right on the coast. The coast on one side of the van and the mountains on the other kept everyone rubbernecking all the way. On the first day in Seward we hiked through a rainforest in Kenai Fjords National Park. We saw a grizzly sow and her cub. Mountain goats were high above us on the treeless mountains. The Exit glacier was awesome. It is not uncommon to see hikers with 10-12 gauge shotguns for protection even in the park. Dinner with the park superintendent was very informative.

The last adventure was much different than anything else we had done. We took a boat from Seward into the Gulf of Alaska, through Resurrection Bay. The distance was 14 miles. Our destination was Fox Island where we stayed. Some folks enjoyed sea kayaking, while others hiked or read. The next morning we headed out to the Chiswell Islands. The day was rainy and cold, but the rewards were worth every moment of each wave. This area was home to Steller sea lions, black bear, sea otters, whales, Pelagic cormorants and Black-legged Kittiwakes. Many of the bird species numbered in the thousands. The most breath-taking part of the trip was sitting on the boat and watching, listening and just plain experiencing the huge glaciers. They moaned, screeched, boomed and splashed as they moved and parts broke off. It was almost like a spiritual experience.

After one more evening meal at the Brewery restaurant in Anchorage our trip was over. Both Betty and I agreed we want to go back. Alaska is a world unto itself. If you get a chance to go, don't pass it up. Hopefully we can bring Alaska more to life with slides at our March meeting.

Lynchburg Area Members

Dorothy C. Bliss

The R-MWC Botanic Garden in Winter

In late December, I enjoyed a pleasant stroll in the Garden. The evergreen rhododendron, mountain laurels, hollies and similar shrubs presented a contrasting background for the red berries still clinging to the branches of the deciduous shrubs. The China fir, as expected, had dropped many of its branches since our fall work day but we can look forward to our spring work session for a cleanup. Noticing the leaf litter that covered the basal rosettes of the cardinal flowers, I carefully brushed away the leaves. These basal rosettes carry on photosynthesis during the winter months and, therefore, must be exposed to light.

Among the conspicuous green fronds of the ferns were those of the appropriately named Christmas fern, the marginal shield fern and the ebony spleenwort. Surprisingly, some of the leaves of the Southern maidenhair, *Adiantum capillus-veneris*, were still a bright green while those of the more northern maidenhair, *A. pedatum*, were completely killed by the frost. This is the reverse of what I would expect but I read recently that the southern species is sub-evergreen. The ostrich fern, which is one of our most elegant in summer, is now evident only by its conspicuous brown sporophytes.

Among several of the ground covers that gave proof of their hardiness were the green mats of green and gold, creeping phlox and the vigorous growth of creeping juniper which forms a continuous carpet that edges one of the hillside paths. The most beautiful of these

ground covers were the glossy green leaves intermingled with the bright red berries of wintergreen or teaberry, *Gaultheria procumbens*, under the Franklinia. On the hillside, clusters of brilliant red berries still cling to the deciduous holly, winterberry and red chokeberry. Later in the season these fruits will disappear as hungry birds search out available food sources.

Have you thought the Garden in winter dull or drab? No! The Garden has much of interest and beauty throughout the winter season. Why not stop by for a pleasant surprise?

Spring Program

R-MWC Botanic Garden. A spring work session will be held on Saturday, March 13 from 2:00 - 4:30 p.m. in the Randolph-Macon Woman's College Botanic Garden. Please bring tools if possible. We need your help to prepare the Garden for spring. Rain date is March 20.

Botanic Garden and Buffalo Creek. This field trip will involve the above two areas which will present an opportunity to observe a wealth of early spring flowers.

Meet at the R-MWC Botanic Garden at 11:00 a.m. on Saturday, April 24, for a guided trip through the Garden. Following this, enjoy a picnic lunch in the Garden or eat at nearby Magnolia Foods or elsewhere. Then we plan to meet at Buffalo Creek Parking lot to continue our search for spring flowers.

For further information on the above programs, contact Dot Bliss, 434-845-5665, or Sandra Elder, 434-525-8433.

Maymont Flower and Garden Show

February 19th, 20th, 21st, and 22nd, 2004, 9 am - 8 pm, Greater Richmond Convention Center, 5th and Broad Streets. *Festivals in Flower.* Wrap yourself in Mardi Gras beads, shake your maracas and tango through the tulips - it's a party in the garden! This light-hearted blend of two global pastimes - gardening and celebrating - will offer playful ideas for seasoned gardeners and beginners alike to use in outdoor living spaces, containers and arrangements. Adding even more merriment to the event, a bouquet of new activities and displays will include a Victorian fashion show and exhibits by the Richmond Audubon Society and the Mid-Atlantic Bamboo Society. For more information visit www.maymont.org or call 804-358-7166.

*When the forest murmurs
there is music; ancient,
everlasting.*

Fiona MacLeod

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