

# Blue Ridge Wildflower Society

A CHAPTER OF THE  
VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

Vol. 24, No. 4

October, 2006

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- October 23** *Native Plants and Wildlife: A guide to the Food Habits of Local Birds and Mammals*  
by Bill Hunley  
This program will focus on the ways in which wild animals utilize, and interact with, native species. Topics will include seasonal food habits of common and/or conspicuous species, ecology of fruiting and masting plant species, the influences of wildlife on plant communities, and a brief discussion of plantings to attract wildlife.
- November 27** *An Evening of Memories:* Members are encouraged to bring five to ten of their favorite photographs or slides from this year to share with the group. Perhaps you have seen a plant you cannot identify and other members could help you. Refreshments will follow. Feel free to bring finger foods. Bring a friend and come join us.
- January 2007** *Board Meeting: To Be Announced*

## Slate of Nominees for 2007 - 2009

President	Jim Bush
Vice President	Rudy Albert
Treasurer	Rosemary Ellis
Secretary	Marcia Albert
Historian	Betty Kelly

## SPECIAL NOTICE

The editor of PRIME LIVING has said that if people are willing to do a short write-up of their visits to special places and give her a picture to run with it, she could make a special wildflower package to run in the February or March issue of PRIME LIVING.

For more information please contact Doris Flandorffer at (540) 982-5692.

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**ATTENTION:** Check the lower left side of your envelope for a red dot. If your envelope has a red dot it is a reminder that it is time to renew your membership. If this is an error please contact Butch Kelly at 8564 Gravel Hill Road Catawba, VA 24070; (540) 384-7429 or email: butch2410@msn.com



### President's Letter

One Saturday morning recently, I awoke early to an unusual sound outside my bedroom window. My dog and I went outside to see what was making the noise. When we stepped out, the volume was unbelievable. There was a tremendous rustling sound coming from the tall trees at the edge of my yard. Interspersed with the rustling was chirping. The rustling and chirping intensified. I wondered just how many birds could be in the trees. Waiting a few minutes, watching and listening, my question was answered. A huge flock of birds rose from the trees, immediately followed by another large flock of birds from my neighbor's trees. They ascended, grouped together and flew – hundreds, maybe thousands, of birds presumably flying south. I didn't have binoculars with me so I didn't get a good look at individual birds, but they appeared to be the size of robins. The sounds and sight were spectacular! While I've previously seen large flocks of birds alighting in trees and flying, never before had I been so close. The sound is still vivid. What a fabulous way to start a day!

I couldn't help thinking of the "flying south" aspect. I felt that I'd flown south (home) for the weekend from my job assignment in Pittsburgh. How I wanted to stay for the winter! Unfortunately, for now, that is not to be. I anticipate working in Pittsburgh at least through November, possibly until next summer, with some weekend trips home. I regret that I will not be able to participate in BRWS activities this autumn. Rich Crites and Butch Kelly have offered to cover my absence. I am so appreciative of these two wonderful people. They have given so much of their time and knowledge to our organization – year after year after year. I wonder what would happen to our group without them. I suspect we would cease to exist. I sincerely hope that more of you will step forward, offer your help, and keep the Blue Ridge Wildflower Society active. It will be a very sad day when it's gone.

#### Annual Picnic: Thanks to the Cowins

I would like to express a huge THANK YOU to Lucille and Paul Cowins for hosting our annual picnic. Their mountain home near Big Island is a testament to their love of native plants. Their cardinal flower garden was a red blaze with dozens of butterflies adding to the beauty. It was good to see so many members and I enjoyed spending time with you all.

Cindy Burks



## ANNUAL PICNIC

This year, Paul and Lucille Cowins extended an invitation to the BRWS to have the annual picnic at BEAR Camp garden, which is their farm near Big Island. They have turned an old farm house into a nice summer retreat. The garden is not only a work of art, but a true labor of love. Everywhere, there are flower beds with the very earliest wildflowers and those that come into bloom throughout the season. Also included are cultivated plants that blend together for a most delightful garden.

The group met at 10:30 A.M. for a tour. The Cowins have made a nice trail that extends into a wooded area. This walk was enjoyed by everyone. I must admit some of the "seniors" sat on the porch and chatted. The real entertainment consisted of the hummingbirds and butterflies which were everywhere. The hummers were especially attracted to the feeders beside the porch, while the butterflies feasted on hundreds of Cardinal flowers.

About 12:00 p.m. the group gathered for a picnic and pot luck lunch. Paul and Lucille provided the meat, drinks, plates and cups. Everyone brought a dish or two for the rest of the meal. Everything was delicious, lots of good cooks in the group. There were 24 folks in attendance. After lunch, there was a short board meeting to plan future meetings and field trips.

Our thanks to the Cowins for a lovely and relaxing day and of course for their warm hospitality.

## FADING DAYS OF SUMMER

By Esther Atkinson

Camping on a very primitive site some years ago, the Craig Creek land owner had a sign posted on a paper plate secured to the trunk of a tree that read "Spring up the Hollow". It was late August and summer was almost gone. Being the rascals we were, we found something in our camping gear to attach another paper plate to the tree. Placing it below the original sign we had printed on it "fall just around the corner".

Today, August 24, I couldn't help but think of that summer ending as my sister-in-law, Kay, stood under some tall walnut trees. While taking snapshots of an old country church, the walnut leaves were drifting down to the ground all around her. The sky was that blue color one relates to on a fall day. Making the most of that beautiful day we watched the different species of butterflies gathering nectar from the butterfly bushes along Jennings Creek. Apparently these bushes were planted all along the creek, due to flood waters they are growing in unusual places, often not where a human being could select as a planting spot. Sometimes the plants appeared to be growing out of the creek itself. The creek was very low due to the dry summer. There were large clusters of Joe Pye weed growing on a little island that had formed in the middle of the creek. We noted the damage caused by the gypsy moth. Where it was once shaded by the hemlock trees one can now see the sky.

We continued to see the monarchs, swallowtails and fritillaries as we traveled the full length of Jennings Creek Road. There were healthy looking cattails, some jewel weed, scant amounts of coreopsis and huge areas of black eyed-Susan's. Some of the black eyed-Susan's were wilted due to the lack of moisture. Iron weed was seen in the distance. Leaving Jennings Creek and traveling on the graveled McFalls Creek Road to the Parkway we observed a nice stand of Maiden Hair Fern.

We visited the Peaks of Otter area. This area is like a medicinal tonic soothing and pleasant. Eating lunch there offers a bonus when one can view Abbott Lake while enjoying good food. You might just catch a glimpse of a fish jumping out of the water.

What comes next will be falling leaves and flying snow flakes.

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