

Blue Ridge Wildflower Society

A CHAPTER OF THE
VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

Vol. 17, No. 3

July, 2000

Schedule of Events

- Aug 20** **Picnic with the Sheridans at Smith Mountain Lake.** Bring a covered dish. Our hosts will provide the meat, lemonade and coffee. We will eat around 5:00 p.m. but feel free to come any time after 2:00 p.m. to play or sit by the lake. **Please call Vi at 540-721-8189 if you plan to attend.**
- There will be a board meeting at 2:00 p.m. at the Sheridans.
- Sept 9** **Fall Plant Sale at the Randolph-Macon Botanic Garden** in Lynchburg from 9:00 a.m. until noon. See article in this Newsletter. Rain or shine!
- Sept 25** **General Membership Meeting,** 7:00 p.m., Center in the Square.
- Oct 23** **General Membership Meeting,** 7:00 p.m., Center in the Square.
- Nov 27** **An Evening of Shared Memories.** This is our time for sharing photographs, slides or short videos from the past year. Bring five to ten of your favorites for us to enjoy. A seed exchange will follow. Meet at 7:00 p.m., Center in the Square.

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- Sept 15-17** **Virginia's Natural History Retreat Weekend.** Sponsored by The Wintergreen Nature Foundation and the Virginia Museum of Natural History. Whatever your particular areas of natural history, there will be speakers/programs focusing on those areas. Cost is \$95 for the general public, \$80 for members of either sponsoring group. Registrations postmarked by July 31 receive \$5 discount. Contact the Wintergreen Nature Foundation, P. O. Box 468, Wintergreen, VA 22958, 800-266-2444.

Fall Plant Sale

Sandra Elder

Be thinking about what you can contribute to the plant sale this year. Plants or time would be appreciated.

The sale will be Saturday, September 9th beside the Randolph Macon Botanic Garden between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.

If you are bringing plants get them there by 8:30 a.m. so we have time to price them. PLEASE HAVE ALL PLANTS LABELED.

We always have more requests for plants that will do well in shade than we can offer, so if you can provide some shade loving NATIVE plants it would be great: Ferns, wintergreen, galax, partridge berry, foamflower,

black cohosh, wild ginger, Solomon's seal and Solomon's plume.

Please bring only NATIVE plants since this is what we are promoting.

If you don't have a wildflower garden but would like to help we could use some people willing to pot up seedlings from the Botanic Garden and take care of them for 4 to 6 weeks prior to the sale. If you would be willing to do this please call me at (804) 525-8433 or Dorothy Bliss at (804) 845-5665.

If you need pots or labels call Paul Cowins at (804) 239-4884 or Rich Crites at (540) 774-4518.

President's Letter

Cindy Sandberg

The lazy, hazy days of summer are here. Our spring field trips are memories. The pilgrimage and plant sale and state meeting are past.

As I sat in air-conditioned comfort recently, gazing out a restaurant window, I couldn't help noticing a bank between the parking lot and the next business. It was filled with purple coneflowers, coreopsis, Queen Anne's lace, and butterflies that seemed to be chasing each other like children playing in the sunshine. Here in the city, in a busy business area, that bank made me think of the field trips I've enjoyed with members of the Blue Ridge Wildflower Society and the magnificent slides presented during programs at our general membership meetings.

In August our Board of Directors will meet to plan fall outings and programs. If you have special places (even spots in seemingly ordinary places – like the bank I saw) and you'd like to share them, or if there's a topic or a speaker you'd be interested in, please let us know. This is your organization. Active participation by members is the only way to keep the chapter lively. Give us ideas for next spring's field trips, too. Let us hear how you feel about our activities. Your suggestions are valuable. Do you know of ways we can interest young people? Many of our members have been faithful, active supporters for years, but they just can't continue to do it all. Your input is vital to keeping the Blue Ridge Wildflower Society going. Make it fun. Make it interesting. Participate!

Spring in the Great Smoky Mountains

Dorothy C. Bliss

In early April, Carolyn Bates, Sandra Elder and I spent a week in the Great Smoky Mountains area where we visited some new plant habitats and some old haunts. While exploring the Coal Mountain road near Oconaluftee, we encountered a roadside bank that was blanketed with a blue carpet of *Phlox divaricata*, probably thousands of blooms. Most of the deciduous trees were still bare of leaves giving the

mountain slopes a wintry appearance. Along the Kanati Trail, south of Newfound Gap, we found only a few of the painted Trilliums, *T. undulatum* in bloom by the end of the week and these individuals were very small. We did not encounter any bears and with the tragic episode in the Smokies a few weeks ago I have no desire to meet one. We saw numerous deer in Cades Cove and there was evidence of overbrowsing. With no predators, their numbers have increased beyond the capacity of the Cove.

The most rewarding area for spring wildflowers is undoubtedly the Cove Hardwoods Trail below Chimney Tops. This forest type is distinguished by its great diversity of canopy trees and spring forest floor species. On this 3/4 mile path we observed many ephemerals that frequently are out of bloom later in the month. These included Dutchman's breeches, *Dicentra cucularia*, spring beauty, *Claytonia virginica*, a few trout lilies, *Erythronium americanum*, masses of Trilliums, *T. luteum*, *T. grandiflorum* and *T. erectum* f. *albiflorum*. Several specimens of yellow mandarin or fairy bells, unusual in our area, greeted us on the lower slopes. The only form of Hepatica that we observed was *H. acutiloba*, no *H. americana*, the species common in our region. The small fringed Phacelia, *P. fimbriata* was everywhere covering the forest floor and edges of the highway with a white blanket of bloom. In a wet seepage area several clumps of the walking fern, *Camptosorus rhizo-phyllus* clung to the moss covered rocks and bases of trees.

We paused on the trail to aid a woman who appeared to be puzzled over the identity of *Trillium erectum*. She was using a relatively new illustrated book on the spring flora of the GSMNP and the picture of *T. erectum* was identified as *T. simile*. As yet I have been unable to find this specific name (*simile*) as a synonym for *erectum*. Fernald (Gray's Manual), the West Va. Flora, etc. do not include this term. If anyone has the answer to this puzzle I'd appreciate the information.

Many waterfalls are accessed by various trails in and around the Smoky Mountains, such as Laurel Falls, Abrams Falls and Ramsey Cascades. On this trip we visited three falls that were new to

us. These waterfalls are worthy of a visit and include two that are easily reached on U.S. Rt. 64 a few miles west of Cashiers, N.C. On the right of the highway at a parking area we observed Bridal Veil Falls as it cascaded down the mountainside, the spray extending out from the rocky overhang so that one can easily drive a car under the rushing water and remain relatively dry. We did! Just remember to close all car windows.

A little further west on U.S. 64, Dry Falls in the Callasaja gorge are reached by a series of steps that give several vistas. These powerful falls are not dry but here you may safely walk under the overhanging cliffs.

Do not be daunted by the sign at the foot of Mingo Falls along Cove Mountain road near Smokemont. This sign reads "1/4 mile ↑". Steps extended up the steep mountain side as far as we could see but the view at the top was worth the effort!

Thank You, ALL

This spring included three special events for our chapter, each of which was successful only because of YOU, our volunteers.

The spring plant sale, though less successful than usual, brought volunteers to help with labeling, pricing and arranging then with helping customers find what they needed.

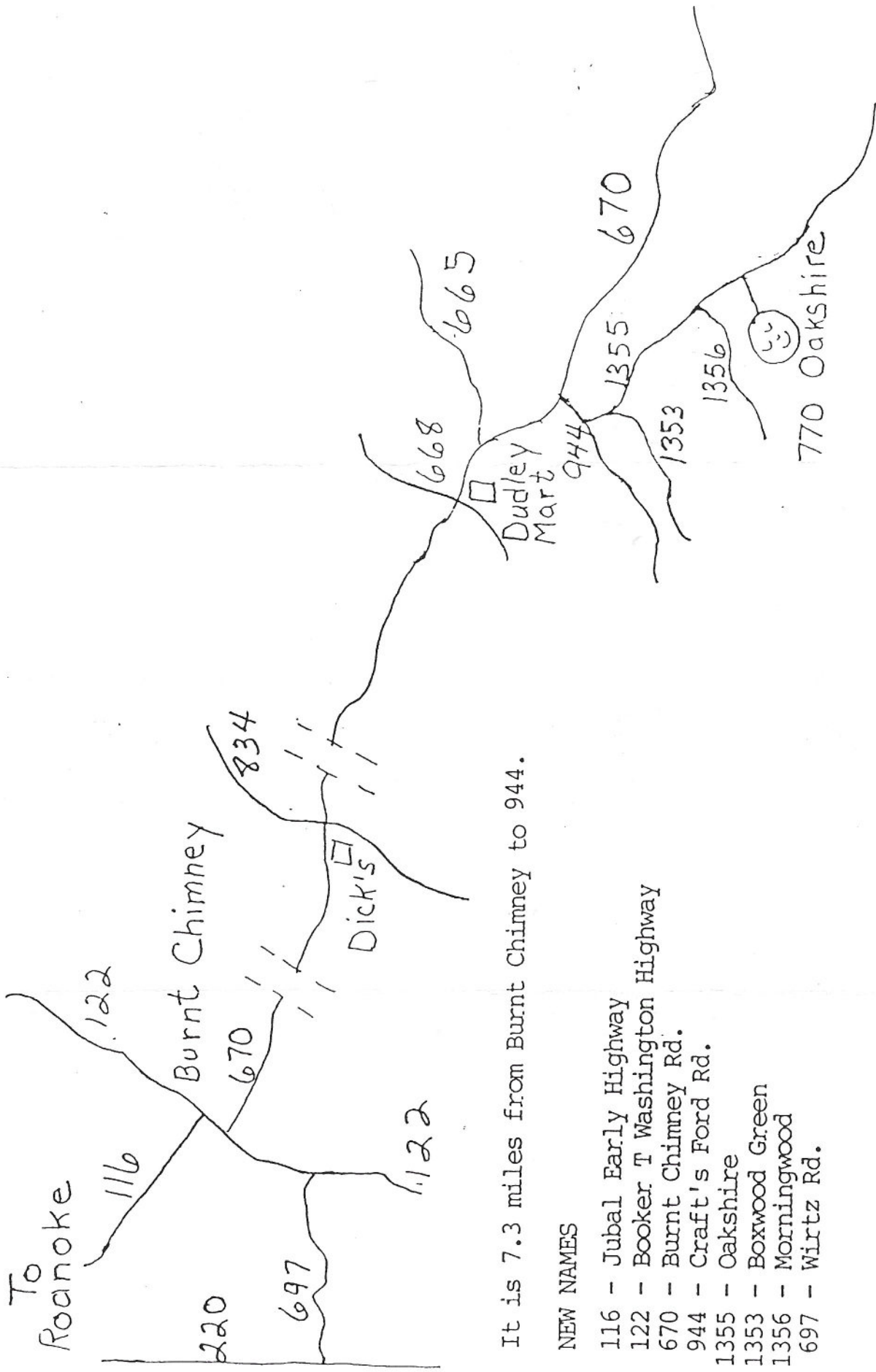
Next came the Spring Wildflower Pilgrimage. A special thank you to those members who served on the planning committee (especially Cindy Sandberg), to Butch Kelly and Hugh Smith for arranging leaders, and to those leaders. Mary Dalton coordinated the reception with help from Betty Kelly and Cindy Sandberg. The floral centerpiece was the creation of Elaine Williams. Dorothy Mays of the Roanoke Valley Bird Club provided the punch.

As host of this year's VNPS Annual Meeting, a third major event closed our spring season. Special thanks to Cindy, Butch, Hugh, Rich Crites, Al & Vi Sheridan, Evelyn Walke and Pam Wieringo. And to Malcolm Black for making and donating a bell featuring the Flame Azalea (our wildflower of the year, for the auction.

Plants, food, labor, time. All were needed. All were freely given. Thank you!

FERN FORAY

Sunday, August 27, 2000. Meet at 2:00 p.m. at the James River Visitor Center, Blue Ridge Parkway, milepost 63.8. A fern field guidebook, a Newcomb Field Guide and a hand lens will be helpful. We will have a (brown bag) picnic after the walk.



It is 7.3 miles from Burnt Chimney to 944.

NEW NAMES

- 116 - Jubal Early Highway
- 122 - Booker T Washington Highway
- 670 - Burnt Chimney Rd.
- 944 - Craft's Ford Rd.
- 1355 - Oakshire
- 1353 - Boxwood Green
- 1356 - Morningwood
- 697 - Wirtz Rd.

VNPS Visits Claytor Nature Study Center

Gwynn W. Ramsey

On May 21st members of the VNPS Blue Ridge Chapter from Lynchburg and Roanoke met at the Claytor Nature Study Center in Bedford County for a tour. The group was led by Aubrey Neas, naturalist at the Center, and Dr. Gwynn Ramsey, Professor of Biology Emeritus, at Lynchburg College. Approximately 20 persons participated.

The group was oriented to physical parameters and history of the center, which includes woodlands, fields, riverside cliffs, man-made lakes, and natural wetlands along a mile stretch of the Big Otter River. The participants then walked around a display garden area and the Claytor farmhouse, then through fields and along the wooded banks and cliffs of the river to a wetland site on the inner floodplain where skunk cabbage growing in profusion is mixed with arrow-leaf.

A. Boyd Claytor donated his 470-acre tract formerly known as CloverLea Farm (now a conservancy) to Lynchburg College in 1998. The area offers unexcelled views of the Peaks of Otter. It was Claytor and his late wife, Virginia, who desired to make this beautiful and habitat-rich parcel of land available to students and faculty from public schools and colleges and also the general public (by invitation) for study of nature. Lynchburg College has honored the wishes of the Claytors and now this acreage will be preserved in perpetuity and becomes part of its Center for Environmental Education. It is hoped that the CNSC will become a model for preservation and conservation of green areas along the rivers of the state.

Although only recently created, the CNSC has already been put to numerous teaching uses. Over the past academic year classes from Biology, Chemistry, Environmental Science, Political Science, and the School of Education have all visited the property. A Big Otter River Watershed and Environmental Education Initiative, funded by the Virginia Endowment, was initiated in the summer of 1999. Surveys of the flora and fauna and water analyses have been started. Aubrey and I have discovered

at least 7 plants new for Bedford County. An essential part of the CNSC is the establishment of the Virginia Claytor Memorial Gardens in the environs of the old historic farmhouse of which a portion dates to circa 1700's. The college has plans to build a 3000 sq. ft. educational facility.

During our walk, many plants, birds, and insects were identified often with comments on usefulness and lore. Some of the biota observed were: Mountain Laurel, Yellow Poplar, Paw Paw, Cucumber Magnolia, Ironwood, Orchard Grass, Rye Grass, Poverty Grass, Fire Pink, Cinquefoil, Woodland Bluets, Venus's Looking-Glass, Boulder Fern, Ebony Spleenwort, Spittle Bug, Cabbage Butterfly, Great Spangled Fritillary, Indigo Bunting, American Goldfinch, Scarlet Tanager, Eastern Wood Peewee, yellow-billed Cuckoo, and Pine Warbler.

The diversity of taxa already found in the following groups are: 19 ferns and fern allies; 24 bryophytes; 50 trees, 20 fungi, 6 arachnids, 20 arthropods, 25 invasive plants, 10 reptiles, 13 amphibians, 28 fishes, 100 birds, 15 mammals, 215 vascular plants for a total of over 500 species of biota and the work continues.

Groups may visit the CNSC by appointment.

The Claytor Nature Study Center Website is:

<www.lynchburg.edu/claytor/index.htm>

Notes on the Willow Tree

Dorothy C. Bliss

While on our recent trip in the Southern Appalachians, we observed near MP409 on the Blue Ridge Parkway a beautiful specimen of a shrubby pussy willow at the peak of flowering. In checking this later from my photograph I believe this is *Salix humilis*, a small pussy willow known from the Smoky Mountains. The *Salix* genus is a difficult group because of much hybridization between species.

Probably when you think of the willow tree you call to mind the weeping willow or the pussy willow, two members of the genus that are frequently cultivated.

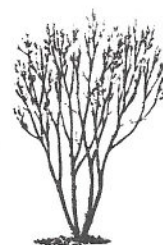
Eight native species are listed in the Virginia Atlas but 54 species are listed in Gray's Manual (Fernald) and more than 300 species occur worldwide.

The willow has played an important role in the history of medicine. As early as the first century A.D. the Greek physician, Dioscorides, described the use of this tree in the reduction of pain and fever. The bark and leaves contain the glucoside Salicin which is related to acetyl salicylic acid, the active ingredient in aspirin. Today aspirin contains no willow derivatives but is entirely synthetic.

Willow cuttings root readily in water on damp soil and frequently when I wish to stimulate root growth of cuttings in water, I include a branch of my pussy willow. Probably the greatest use of willows today is their contribution to our landscapes, especially the graceful weeping willow, *Salix babylonica*. This tree is one of the last of our deciduous trees to lose its leaves in the autumn and the first to leaf out in the spring. In the GSMNP the willow has been observed to leaf out in January. The wood is soft and light and not strong but is used for making high grade charcoal and in the manufacture of artificial limbs (prostheses). Willows are excellent to check soil erosion along stream banks and some varieties are used in basket weaving.



Salix humilis



Lynchburg Area Members

Dorothy C. Bliss

If you have been keeping a record of the blooming times of some of our native and introduced plants you are aware that many of these are blossoming appreciably earlier each year. I have been following this trend in the R-MWC Botanic Garden and this spring several of the species were in bloom one to two weeks early. Among these were redbud, dogwood, Rhododendrons, phloxes and many spring ephemerals. This trend was confirmed in the article in our recent State Bulletin which I hope you have read. A possible explanation that is given is that the cause may be the global warming effect that has been observed in recent years. Whether this is a long term phenomenon or a short term blitz remains to be seen.

I am glad we have had several new areas for our field trips this year. Have you any suggestions for excursions near Lynchburg?

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Rosebay Rhododendron Registry Site

Sandra Elder

On June 13th Dorothy Bliss and I visited the Registry Site at Altavista. We were greeted by the song of a wood thrush and the wonderful sight of a thriving population of Rosebay Rhododendron. There were some beautiful pale pink blossoms and many more buds yet to open. Tapered ferns provided a ground cover over much of the area. There were a few nice groups of spotted wintergreen in bloom. The presence of deer was evident with many paths and the gnawed foliage of the one and only featherbell plant.

After returning our badges to Ross Laboratories we went to see Ruth Knight, former owner of the Registry Site. Ruth's husband Frank died on May 22nd at the age of 91. Frank was a veteran of World War II. He worked as a government surveyor on the section of Blue Ridge Parkway from Waynesboro to the James River. He later owned and operated the Community Store in Altavista for thirty six years. Frank was a wonderful person and will be greatly missed by family and friends. Ruth is doing well, helped along by her many interests and the support of family and friends.

Hope for the Flowering Dogwood

Dorothy C. Bliss

We are all aware of the devastating toll of anthracnose and other diseases on the native dogwood, *Cornus florida*. The flowering dogwood is more than a beautiful tree in our woods and home landscapes. It plays an important role in the ecology of our forests and the wild turkey and many migratory songbirds are dependent upon its berries. In addition the foliage is a source of calcium for the soil as well as pregnant deer.

Research to discover or develop resistant or immune varieties has been a priority at many institutions and research stations. Experimenters at the University of Tennessee Agricultural Experiment Station found resistant trees in the wild and thousands of others that had been killed by the anthracnose disease. After thorough tests that confirmed the trees' resistance to the organism, grafted specimens named *Appalachian Spring* will soon be on the market.

In a similar manner dogwood trees resistant to powdery mildew have been discovered in nurseries and offspring of these will be sold in the market. Eventually these research scientists hope to develop a hybrid of these two resistant forms that will be immune to both anthracnose and powdery mildew. Hope is on the horizon.

(some information from the *Tennessee Alumnus 2000*)

BRWS FIELD TRIP/PROGRAM QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What site would you be interested in visiting as a BRWS field trip?

 2. What topics would you like to hear about at BRWS meetings?

 3. Which speakers would you enjoy hearing at BRWS meetings?

 4. Would you be interested in leading a field trip? _____
 5. Would you be interested in being a guest speaker at a BRWS meeting? _____
- (If your answers to questions 4 and/or 5 are yes, please provide your name and a telephone number.)

Mail this questionnaire to: Blue Ridge Wildflower Society
P. O. Box 20385
Roanoke, VA 24018-0039