

Blue Ridge Wildflower Society

A CHAPTER OF THE
VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

Vol. 18, No. 3

August, 2001

Schedule of Events

- August 19** **Picnic with the Sheridans at Smith Mountain Lake.** Bring a covered dish. Al & Vi will provide the meat, lemonade and coffee. We will eat around 5:00 p.m. but come any time after 2:00 to enjoy the lake. **Please call the Sheridans at 540-721-8189 if you plan to attend.**
- There will be a board meeting at 2:00 p.m. at the Sheridans.
- August 25** **Fern Foray.** Meet at 2:00 p.m. at the parking lot on Route 501 by the James River Foot Bridge. We will walk south on the A.T. Picnic supper at the James River Visitor Center. You may want to bring a fern field guide and magnifying lens. Dot Bliss, leader, 434-845-5665.
- September 8** **Bent Mountain Field Trip.** Meet at 10:00 a.m. at the Bent Mountain School. Bring your lunch and we will eat at the Austins. Lots of birds and butterflies, so you may want to bring binoculars. Allen & Robin Austin, leaders, 540-929-9071.
- September 24** **General Membership Meeting,** 7:00 p.m., Center in the Square.
- September 29** **Fall Plant Sale** at the Randolph-Macon Botanic Gardens in Lynchburg from 10:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. See article in this Newsletter.
- October 20** **Fall Work Day at the Randolph-Macon Woman's College Botanic Garden.** Bring gardening tools and help prepare the garden for winter. We'll work from 2:00 - 4:30. See Lynchburg column for additional information. Dorothy Bliss, 434-845-5665.
- October 22** **General Membership Meeting.** 7:00 p.m., Center in the Square.
- November 26** **An Evening of Shared Memories.** Bring five to ten of your favorite photos or slides or a short video from the past year for us to share. A seed exchange will follow. Meet at 7:00 p.m., Center in the Square.
- December 8** **Lynchburg Evening of Memories.** This Saturday evening program in Lynchburg is similar to the November meeting in Roanoke. Bring a few of your favorite slides or photographs for the group to enjoy. Meet at 7:30 p.m. in Room 225, Martin Science Building on the Randolph-Macon Woman's College Campus.

The James River Foot Bridge Wild Flower Trip

Dorothy C. Bliss

The James River Foot Bridge, a 625 foot pedestrian bridge, spans the river just north of Snowden on Route 501. Built on piers of the old railroad track, it is the longest foot bridge in the National Park system. Last fall on October 14, the bridge was dedicated to the memory of Bill Foot who worked diligently for many years spearheading requests for the \$1.5 million grant that was needed for its completion.

On May 6 on a somewhat cloudy and cool afternoon, several of us walked across this span and then continued

south on the Appalachian Trail. We paused several times while on the bridge to watch more than 200 coal cars on their way to Norfolk on a new set of piers. As we left the bridge, we continued south on the A.T. which hugged the rocky cliffs above the river. We met many other walkers including several family groups with young children and one lone through-hiker headed for Mt. Katahdin, the northern terminus of the A.T.

The rock ledges that towered above us displayed many clumps of bleeding heart in full bloom. Interspersed on

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Old Carolina Road

Located west of Rocky Mount, off Six Mile Post Road (Route 640) near the Pleasant Hill community, lies an American legacy, part of the Old Carolina Road. This roadway is preserved within the Waid Recreation Area.

Around 1730 the Waid family settled in what would become Franklin County. By 1950 they had a well established home on the Pigg River. They owned a strip of land stretching to the foot of Briar Mountain near Sydnorsville. Nearby, on Stony Creek was the thriving community of Waidboro.

They operated the busy Waid Stagecoach Stop Inn, a two-story log building with two rooms on each floor. The kitchen, dining area and family rooms were detached but connected by an arcade. A large barn and a blacksmith shop were essential parts of the Inn. These buildings sat on a small hill about 200 feet from the Pigg River Ford of the Old Carolina Road.

Additionally, the family had a tobacco plantation which was destroyed during the Civil War. The family's slaves were freed and some of the younger men and women left the area. Others, along with most of the older men and women, stayed and farmed the land.

Family history notes that Lee Waid, a descendent of these slaves, became a prosperous merchant in Rocky Mount. The first high school for blacks in Rocky Mount was named for him and today the Lee M. Waid Elementary School bears his name.

Included in the Waid Recreational Area is a three-quarter mile section of one of America's historic roads, the Old Carolina Road, virtually unchanged since colonial times. Also known as the Great Wagon Road, it was originally an ancient trail used by Indian tribes and colonists called it the Appalachian Warrior Path and the Great Indian Path.

In the mid-1700's the road became part of the Great Philadelphia Wagon Road, linking that city with Augusta, Georgia. The section from the Roanoke area (then known as Big Lick) to North Carolina, was called the Old Carolina Road. It was the nation's major thoroughfare during the latter part of the Colonial era with wagons, pack trains, livestock drovers and German, Scotch-Irish, Welsh, English and Swiss settlers on horseback and on foot traveling south.

As the primary North-South connector, the road was heavily utilized during the Revolutionary, French and Indian and Civil wars.

The coming of the railroad and the opening of the West took away the road's wagon and stage-coach traffic and after the Civil War it broke down into segments that often became part of the local roads. The section in Waid has been kept intact in response to an appeal by Dr. J. Francis Amos, a Rocky Mount physician and local historian. It is believed to be the only part of the more than 700 miles of the road preserved in a public park.

Glen Maury Park

Dorothy C. Bliss

This field excursion on April 2nd was a repeat of one we had taken in April of 1996 but after five years the mountain (hill) we clambered down to the Maury River seemed steeper and no more than a deer trail that frequently disappeared into a gully or just came to a dead end. As we struggled to hold our footing, we saw *Trillium grandifolium*, the large-flowered Trillium, *Orchis spectabilis*, Showy Orchis, and a few clumps of *Camptosorus rhizophyllus*, the walking fern. Again we encountered *Trillium sessile*, sessile trillium or toadshade, which is unusual in our area.

Fortunately, we reached the flood plain of the Maury unscathed. First to catch our eyes were the many showy flowers of *Aquilegia canadensis*, columbine, nestled in the rock crevices of the ledges that towered above us. At our feet along the grassy river margins were hundred of specimen of *Equisetum hyemale*, scouring rush, intermixed with an occasional *E. arvense*, our more common horsetail.

As we looked downstream, we were amazed to see wave after wave of masses of *Mertensia virginica*, Virginia bluebells, in full bloom. I have never encountered so great an abundance of these beautiful blue flowers. Here and there were fruiting specimens of several other spring flowers, among them *Polemonium reptans*, Greek valerian, which occurs infrequently in our woods. Unfortunately, the invasive garlic mustard has made an appearance on this flood plain.

Our climb back up the hillside was via some old rotting timbers, remnants of a former path that extended partway up and a much more direct route to our cars.

We enjoyed a picnic supper in the large pavilion that overlooks the Town of Buena Vista nestled below the Blue Ridge Mountains that rise to form an impressive backdrop.

Special thanks to Vi Sheridan for providing information from several sources for this article along with permission to use that information as desired.

Seeds for a Song

Roanoke Valley Bird Club Fund Raiser In Cooperation with Northwest True Value Hardware

The Roanoke Valley Bird Club welcomes you to participate in their fall 2001 seed sale. By placing an order with us, you will get quality seed, harvested this year, at reasonable prices. Not only will our club receive a percentage of all seed orders placed, we will also get a portion of the profits from anything bird-related sold that day. Proceeds from the sale will be used for community projects such as bird feeders for local nursing homes, field guides for local schools, and sending a student to Virginia Nature Camp. The sale is open to the public, so feel free to copy this form and distribute it to friends and neighbors. There will be a small supply of extra seed available the day of the sale for those who are unable to pre-order. Refreshments will be served, and experienced bird watchers/feeders will be on hand the day of pick-up to answer any questions. *Orders must be placed by Saturday, September 15 and picked up on Saturday, October 6, between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m., at Northwest True Value Hardware, 2303 Williamson Road. If you are unable to pick up your seed on October 6, you may pick it up from club members before our meeting on October 8, between 6:30 and 7:00 p.m. in the parking lot at the Brambleton Center.*

It's easy to order:

1. Complete the order form on the back of this page, being sure to include your name, address and phone number along with your seed selections.
2. Call Alyce Quinn at 989-1763 after September 1 to find out current seed prices. A new seed crop will be harvested in August, and the prices may fluctuate up or down a bit from the estimates on the order form.
3. Calculate the total, using quoted prices which will include Virginia sales tax.
4. Mail your completed form and check, payable to Roanoke Valley Bird Club, *between September 1 and September 15*, to: Eunice Hudgins, 870 Stonegate Ct., Salem, VA 24153.

Seed Descriptions

Wild birdseed mixes attract ground-feeding birds such as mourning doves, juncos and sparrows:

- *Wild Bird Delight*: contains mostly sunflower and white millet, no milo.

Sunflower seed is the best all-around food, favored by a wide variety of birds:

- *Black Oil Sunflower*: smaller than the striped, with thinner shell, more kernel and higher oil content; preferred 2:1 over other seed by most feeder birds.
- *Sunflower Heart Bits*: the heart of the seed, virtually no hull, no mess, and more meat per pound.

Niger (Thistle):

- *Niger (Thistle)*: especially good for goldfinches and pine siskins, this seed is rich in nourishing oil.

Suet cakes attract woodpeckers, chickadees, titmouse, wrens and nuthatches:

- High-energy food, loaded with necessary fat, especially good in winter.

Ear Corn:

- Offering ear corn to squirrels helps keep them busy and less likely to raid bird feeders.

Over for Order Form →

Seeds for a Song Order Form

Roanoke Valley Bird Club
In Cooperation with Northwest True Value Hardware

Name: _____ **Phone:** _____

Address: _____

City: _____ **State:** _____ **Zip Code:** _____

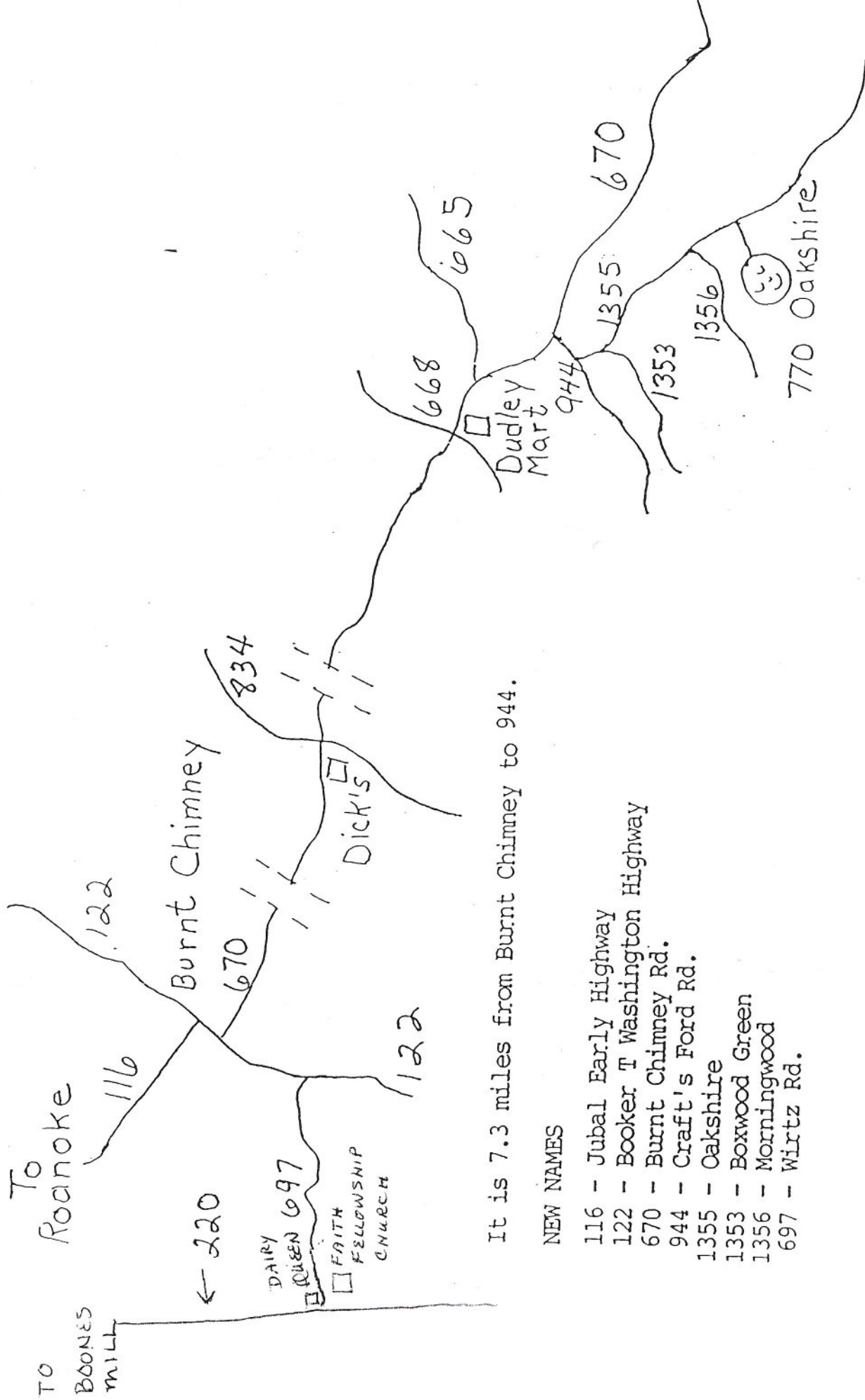
Description	Quantity	Size	*Price/Each (includes tax)	Total
Wild Bird Delight		50 lb.	* \$21.25	\$
		25 lb.	* 11.00	
Black Oil Sunflower		50 lb.	* 11.50	
		25 lb.	* 6.00	
Sunflower Chips		7 1/2 lb.	* 6.50	
Niger (Thistle)		50 lb.	* 41.80	
		25 lb.	* 21.95	
		10 lb.	* 8.65	
High Energy Suet		Cake	* .80	
Ear Corn		6 1/2 lb.	* 3.35	
		Total		\$

*These prices are estimates based on the summer 2001 crop. New prices will be set after the fall crop is harvested. We expect very little fluctuation. Please call Alyce Quinn at 989-1763 after September 1 for accurate prices before sending us your order.

_____ I will pick up my order on October 6.

_____ Please bring my order to the RVBC meeting October 8.

If you are not a club member, where did you learn about this sale? _____



MAP TO THE SHERIDANS

Rare Wetlands Discovered in Park

David Talbott

Existence of a vernal pool has been confirmed at Franklin County's Waid Recreation Area by a leading authority on what is an increasingly rare form of wetlands.

Michael S. Hayslett, a vernal pool ecologist, found evidence of the pool during a visit to the park last week at the invitation of the Franklin County Master Gardeners Association.

The pools are a form of temporary, freshwater wetland that typically fill with rainwater during the fall and winter and dry up in the summer. They support an array of wildlife and plants, many of which are rare in Virginia.

"We are very excited over being a part of this discovery," said Bill Papa, president of the Master Gardeners. "The spotted salamander and wood frog found there were the first of those species found in this part of Virginia."

Dr. Vi Sheridan, a member of the Gardeners, first identified the spotted salamander as a resident of the park and called it to Hayslett's attention when he lectured at the Science Museum of Western Virginia in Roanoke.

Hayslett and a group of Master Gardeners met at the Recreation Area following a talk on vernal pools at the association's regular monthly meeting. The group, accompanied by Donnie Underwood, director of Parks and Recreation, found the pool after searching a marshy

meadow between the picnic pavilions and remnants of buildings from a former plantation.

Underwood expressed enthusiasm at the find and said the department would plan to improve accessibility to the site by installing a walkway, which would permit park visitors to view the pool and its inhabitants during active periods.

Armed with two nets, Hayslett scooped up egg masses deposited by the spotted salamanders, along with tiny wood frogs, and deposited the evidence in plastic bags. The pools also are home to five other species of salamander and several species of Fairy Shrimp, small, short-lived crustaceans.

An ongoing investigation of similar sites in Virginia is designed to establish an inventory, a monitoring program, and preservation steps. The Vernal Pool Society of Virginia provides a network for people interested in the program and sponsors a

"Schools for Pools" program linking students with experts on the subject.

Hayslett, who is Natural Resource Education Coordinator at Holiday Lake 4-H Educational Center in Appomattox, may be contacted at the Vernal Pool Society of Virginia, P.O. Box 3232, Lynchburg, VA 24503, at vernalpools@juno.com or www.lyncburgbiz.com/nearbynature/vernalpools.



Michael S. Hayslett, an ecologist, discusses evidence of a vernal pool found at Waid Recreation Area with Dr. Vi Sheridan of the Franklin County Master Gardeners Association.

Photo by Dave Talbott

This article appeared in the Smith Mountain Eagle and the Franklin News Post. It is reprinted by permission.

Fall Plant Sale

Sandra Elder

The Lynchburg area fall wildflower plant sale will be held on Saturday, September 29, between 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. beside the Randolph-Macon Botanic Garden.

We need native wildflowers. If you have native plants to share, please get them potted by the end of August. This assures that the plants we sell have survived transplanting and therefore have a good chance of living in their new home.

There are many plants in the Botanic Garden that need dividing or thinning. On Saturday, August 18 at 9 a.m.

Dorothy Bliss and I will be in the Randolph-Macon Botanic Garden to pot up plants for the sale. Please come and help. If you can take a couple of trays home to care for until the sale it would really be appreciated.

Get your plants to the garden by **9:00 a.m.** on the day of the sale and please **have them labeled.**

If you need pots or labels call Paul Cowins in Lynchburg at 434-239-4884 or Rich Crites in Roanoke at 540-774-4518.

Help us make this year's sale a success.

Lynchburg Area Members

Dorothy C. Bliss

The Randolph-Macon Woman's College Botanic Garden was specially beautiful in April and May with more than thirty species in bloom at the same time. I hope you find an opportunity to visit the Garden frequently so that you can enjoy the everchanging panorama of flowers. Soon the Garden will be colorful with the mid-summer coneflowers, black-eyed Susans, mints and the Kankakee mallow and early asters. The Garden is doing very well - perhaps too well - and there is little room for the introduction of new plants since there are nearly 200 species of herbaceous plants, herbs, shrubs and trees at present. Several of the perennials survived for a few years then disappeared and we would like to grow them again. If anyone has any of these in the wildflower garden that they can share, we would appreciate one to three specimens. You can contact me at 434-845-5665 (note new area code).

R-MWC Botanic Garden Wish List

Aruncus dioicus - Goat's Beard
Asarum (Hexastylus) virginica - Heart leaf
Aster spectabilis - Showy Aster
Gillenia (Porteranthus) trifoliata - Bowman's Root
Hydrangea arborescens - Spreading hydrangea (not a cultivar)
Leiophyllum buxifolium - Sand myrtle
Silene virginica - Fire pink
Silene polypetala - Many petalled pink
Woodsia obtusa - Obtuse woodsia

A Note on Galax

The shiny dark evergreen leaves of *Galax aphylla*, bittleweed, are frequently encountered in our open woods - sometimes in large colonies - and it has been recorded in all Virginia counties except the northern mountains and piedmont. The only other member of the family Diapensiaceae in Virginia is *Pyxidanthera barbulata*, occurring in the three extreme southeastern counties. Shortia or Oconee Bells, *S. galacifolia*, is in the same family but is native to the Carolinas and Georgia. Ten other species of Shortia are found in Japan, China and Formosa. The small white flowers of Galax are borne in spike-like clusters on a leafless floral stalk and are in bloom now (June) in the Botanic Garden. The Town of Galax in southwestern Virginia where it grows (grew?) prolifically has long been a commercial source of these leaves for the Christmas and floral trade. In the Blue Ridge Parkway newsletter, "Parkway milepost for Spring 2001," it was stated that this plant is being threatened by overcollecting. For years the evergreen leaves have been harvested for the floral trade. So far this year, 60,000 leaves have been confiscated by the Blue Ridge Parkway rangers. This is another of our native wildflowers that is being threatened by man's activities.

Local Upcoming Activities

Fern Foray, August 25 at 2:00 p.m. Meet at the parking lot on Route 501 by the James River Foot Bridge. We will walk south on the A.T. This will be a good opportunity to add to our list of ferns and fall flowering plants. Perhaps we can find *Smilacina stellata* in fruit and confirm the identification I made earlier. Picnic supper at James River Visitor Center.

Don't forget the **Fall Plant Sale** at the R-MWC Botanic Garden from 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. on September 29. See article elsewhere in this newsletter.

Fall Work Day, October 20, 2:00 - 4:30 p.m. This is that all-important fall end-of-season work to prepare the R-MWC Botanic Garden for the coming winter. Bring gardening tools. If anyone has a source of loblolly pine needles, we can use any amount for spreading on the paths. Rain date is October 27, Questions? Call Dorothy Bliss, 434-845-5665.

Lynchburg Evening of Memories, December 8. This Saturday evening program will be similar to the November meeting in Roanoke. Bring a few of your favorite slides or photographs for the group to enjoy. Meet at 7:30 p.m. in room 225, Martin Science Building on R-MWC Campus.

James River . . . continued from page 1

the lower slopes were numerous specimens of marginal shield, ebony spleenwort and maidenhair ferns and several colonies of rock polypody. *Sedum ternatum*, stonecrop, with its dozens of tiny, misty white flowers contrasted with the dark green ground cover. On the summit of the cliffs were several Catawba rhododendrons in bloom and below these, clumps of wild hydrangea and two beautiful fringe trees were in full flower. The name of a shrub with trifoliate leaves eluded us but later upon checking, we recalled that it was bladderwort, *Staphylea trifolia*.

A small plant that I though might be a depauperate form of *Smilacina racemosa*, Solomon's Seal, was probably *S. stellata*, a much smaller species of this genus that has very few flowers in the terminal cluster. According to the *Virginia Atlas* it occurs in a dozen counties in Virginia and Bedford is listed as one of those counties. My introduction to this species was on the Bruce Peninsula where it was frequently encountered.

After retracing our steps over the foot bridge, most of us enjoyed an evening meal at the Otter Creek Restaurant on the Blue Ridge Parkway.

This is an interesting and rewarding trail from the standpoint of the flora and the glimpses of the river through the trees; the uniqueness of walking over the James River and the near view of the more than 200 coal cars lumbering their way to the coast were additional points of interest. Perhaps we can schedule a walk in the fall or early spring that would add to our list of plants along this segment of the James River.

Permission is hereby given to reprint original material. Please credit author, if named, and source.

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