



# Blue Ridge Wildflower Society

*A chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society*

Fall 2023 VOL 44, No. 3

## Goldenrods, wetlands and grasslands

### **Field Trip Saturday, Sept. 2 10:00 am**

Join us for a Fall Wildflower walk at beautiful Pandapas Pond Day Use Area in Montgomery County. The eight-acre pond sits on the Eastern Continental Divide and is surrounded by forest and wetland. The area features a nice accessible boardwalk and a new pollinator garden.

Meet at the pond at 10 a.m. **OR** meet at 9 a.m. to carpool from the Park and Ride adjacent to I-81 at Exit 140. Our leader is Bruce Grimes, who led our fabulous butterfly walk in the liatris field, and who spoke at our March meeting. Bruce has been a New River Master Naturalist since 2015 and he has studied and photographed insects since 2018. See the flowers and their insect partners before they disappear in the fall!

Wear sturdy walking shoes and bring binoculars (close-focusing if you have them), water, lunch or snacks, sunscreen, a hat, a walking stick, bug spray, and a field guide if you want one. There is a lot to explore at Pandapas, and you will be tempted to stay for a while. Look up trails and more information at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/recarea/gwi/recarea/?recid=73877>. Call



Rebecca Ross

**At our September meeting, Dr. Michael Wise will be speaking about his research on goldenrods**

Ellen Holtman with questions at 540-797-2350.

### **Field Trip Saturday, Sept. 16 10:00 a.m.**

Autumn is a great time to visit the grounds of the South Roanoke County Library! Many colorful wetland wildflowers are in bloom. Plus, the sedges and rushes characteristic of wetlands have their fruits, making identification easier. We will be walking about 0.75 miles on sidewalk and a gravel trail as well as on an elevated boardwalk crossing the wetlands. Meet at the library parking lot (6303 Merriman Road). Wear comfortable walking shoes, a hat, and sunscreen. Please bring plenty of water to stay hydrated.

Our leader for this walk is Dr. Antoinette "Toni" Pepin, Professor of Biology at Virginia Western Community College. She is a wetland ecologist and all-around naturalist who enjoys gardening for birds and butterflies. She is a member of BRWS, an ac-

tive birder with the Roanoke Valley Bird Club, and a popular instructor of the local Master Naturalists training classes. Please call Ellen Holtman if you have questions, 540-797-2350.

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**Field Trip  
Saturday, Sept. 23  
9:00 a.m.**

We will meet at 9 a.m. on Rt. 311 at the Catawba Grocery on the left just past Rt. 624 (Newport Road). It's about eight miles past the roundabout at 419/311. Wear sturdy shoes, and bring a walking stick, clothing layers, rain gear, two quarts of water and a lunch. If you are a birder, bring binoculars. It is hard to estimate the time it will take since there is so much to observe. The trip will not be strenuous.

Led by longtime member and wildflower leader Butch Kelly, the field trip starts on the top of Brush Mountain in Roanoke County and ends on Virginia 621 in Craig County. The distance is around four miles, beginning at 3,100 feet elevation and ending at an elevation of 1,547 feet. The trail is all downhill with lots of switchbacks and vistas. We will look at rock out-



**Pirate bush**

crops, soils and see how communities change as we descend. There will be handouts about the communities we observe.

Contact Butch by September 8 at 540-384-7429 or [butch2410@msn.com](mailto:butch2410@msn.com) if you plan to participate. This trip is limited to 15 people.

**Membership Meeting  
Monday, Sept. 25  
6:45 p.m.**

The September business meeting will start at 6:45, and our speaker will begin at 7:00. Dr. Michael Wise will be speaking about one of our favorite late-season pollinator plants. His topic is "Field Research on Goldenrods -- Their Surprising Adaptations."

Dr. Wise currently teaches at Longwood College, and in recent years has

taught classes at Roanoke College including Biology, Ecology, Environmental Science, Birds of Virginia, and Invasive Plants. He holds a Bachelor's degree from the University of Virginia and a PhD from Duke University. He has done research for UVa's Blandy Experimental Farm, Bucknell University, the EPA, The Arboretum of Virginia, and the Smithsonian Institution.

**Field Trip  
Saturday, October 14  
9:00 a.m.**

Heather Butler, Assistant Professor of Biology at Virginia Western Community College (and our club Treasurer) will be leading this visit to an acidic cove forest.

We will see its unique plants including two unusual parasitic species, buffalo nut and pirate-bush. There will be many Ericaceous species, among them Catawba Rhododendron, minnie-bush, mountain laurel, and blueberry, as well as other associated species like partridgeberry, sweet birch, and eastern hemlock. Unfortunately, we won't see the beautiful flowers

in this community at this time of year, but it is a beautiful walk at any season.

We will walk about 0.5 to 0.75 miles along the trail at the base of Dragon's Tooth. This part of the trail is fairly level -- easy walking with some exposed roots and rocks to watch out for. Please make sure to wear comfortable walking shoes and bring water. Call Ellen Holtman with questions, 540-797-2350.

*Directions from Roanoke: From I-81 take Exit 140 and follow Route 311 to the roundabout at Orange Market. Meet here at 9:00 am for carpooling. The Orange Market is a great place for people to gather and carpool, and carpooling is recommended because the Dragon's Tooth parking lot fills up pretty quickly on the weekends. From Orange Market, continue on 311 north over the mountain, passing McAfee's Knob parking lot and continuing down the mountain to Ca-*

*tawba Valley. Continue on 311 a couple of more miles and as soon as you pass the Catawba Grocery and gas station on the left, look for the Dragon's Tooth parking lot on your left. There are public restrooms (vault toilets) at the parking lot and they are usually well-maintained.*

**Fall Tree Walk  
Sunday, October 22  
2:00 p.m.**

Meet us at Fishburn Park (2304 Brambleton Ave., SW) in the pavilion at the parking lot for an autumn wander enjoying the trees and learning more about them. Bring water and a snack and dress for walking. Check the weather and be prepared.

Our leader is Chris Bryant from the Roanoke Tree Stewards. Chris is a Roanoke College graduate and worked as a forensic chemist for 40 years. He became a Tree Steward in 2017, and served as a board member of Roanoke City Parks and Recreation for 10 years. He has taken several plant classes at Virginia Western and volunteers there at the Community Arboretum. He has served as president of Tree Stewards and as Vice President of Trees Roanoke, and is currently

coordinating Roanoke's "Year of the Tree 2024: Breathe Easier, Plant a Tree."



**Jordan Coscia**

**Membership Meeting  
Monday, Oct. 23  
6:45 p.m.**

True or False?

1. Fewer than 40 percent of North America's 550 million acres of historical grasslands remain intact today.
2. Piedmont grasslands are the most diverse plant communities in the state of Virginia.

3. More than 50 species of birds rely on grassland habitats here in Virginia.

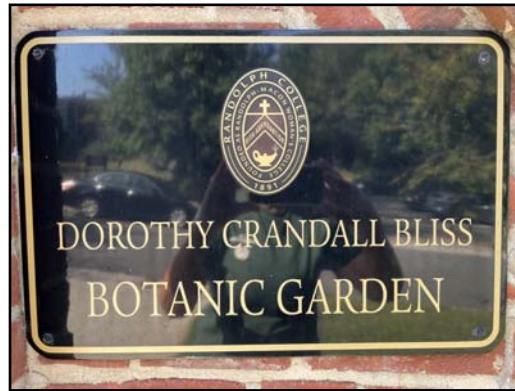
Our speaker for the October meeting is Jordan Coscia, a PhD student in Virginia Tech's School of Plant and Environmental Sciences and a research fellow at the Smithsonian's Virginia Working Landscapes Program. Jordan's dissertation focuses on the native warm-season grasslands of the Virginia Piedmont. She is

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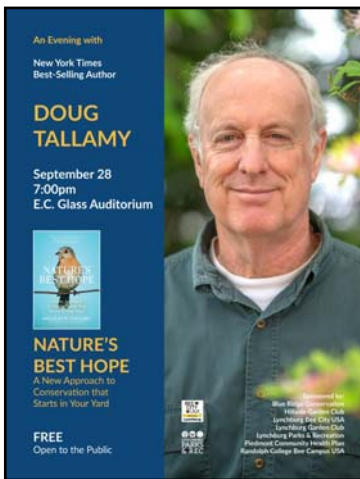


**FREE! FREE! FREE!**

Located on the campus of Randolph College in Lynchburg, Va., the Dorothy Crandall Bliss Botanic Garden contains nearly 200 species of plants native to the southeastern United States. The garden includes several endangered and rare plants as well as species of special botanical interest. It's free and open to the public daily, year-round. Entrance is located



on Norfolk Avenue, off Rivermont Avenue in Lynchburg.



Renowned conservation author Doug Tallamy will be speaking in Lynchburg on Thursday, September 28, 2023 at 7:00 p.m. in the E. C. Glass High School Auditorium. (2111 Memorial Avenue, Lynchburg. Auditorium entrance is on Langhorne Road.) The event is free and open to the public!

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collecting data from the natural, working, and restored grasslands across the northern Virginia Piedmont to describe the floristics of native grasslands and assess the habitat quality of human-managed grasslands. She is also conducting a collaborative grassland restoration experiment to assess the effects of commonly recommended establishment and management strategies in restored grassland plant communities.

You will be fascinated to learn about the progress being made in discovering and restoring these lost grass-

lands around the state and the potential for saving endemic species that rely on them.

### Membership Meeting Monday, November 20 6:45 p.m.

Happy November! We are privileged this month to hear from a lifelong student of wild turkeys, Dr. James Parkhurst. Jim is Associate Professor of Wildlife Science in the Department of Fish and Wildlife Conservation at Virginia Tech. He also serves as Extension Wildlife Specialist for Virginia Cooperative Extension. He has held both positions since 1993. His research and extension

activities are focused primarily in human-wildlife conflict resolutions, transmissible wildlife diseases, and enhancement and management of wildlife populations and habitats.

In 2013 Dr. Parkhurst facilitated a public involvement process that led to the development of the DWR's first 10-year statewide management plan for the wild turkey in Virginia. He is happy to meet with our group and offer his thoughts on the wild turkey and he "hopes to encourage folks to get out and engage more with our local year-round resident bird."

## President's message

In-person programs, walks, field trips, plant sales, picnics and chapter meetings are in full swing! We are excited that our membership has continued to grow.

However, our volunteer base has not grown.



Do you have an idea for a program, speaker, or an outreach activity? Can you lead a walk or field trip? Do you enjoy writing short articles about native plants or related issues? Would you like to help maintain our native plant garden at RCGC two or three times a year? Are you interested in staffing our information table for two or three hours at local events, such as Earth Day or Spring Fling? If so, please consider sharing your time and talent with Blue Ridge Wildflower Society.

We invite you to participate with one of our committees, as little or as often as you are able. Please contact us at [brws.membership@gmail.com](mailto:brws.membership@gmail.com) to get involved or to learn more!

On another note, be sure to "Save The Date" for the Virginia Native Plant Society Annual Meeting Oct. 6-8, 2023, at Virginia Institute for Marine Science in Gloucester, Va. All members are welcome to participate and enjoy a full weekend of guest speakers, walks, field trips, and social time to meet other members! Details will be available at <http://www.vnps.org>.

— Jennifer

# 'Mystery' wildflower a butterfly specialist

## "Yellow Fringed Orchid" *Patanthera ciliaris*

Recently, an area hiker reached out to VNPS/BRWS for assistance with the identification of a lovely orchid and shared concerns about its safety, due to its location. Her email generated a lot of interest from board members and they quickly went to work researching this

### President's Pick

beautiful find. The information in this article is a result of their efforts.

The yellow fringed orchid, also referred to as orange fringed orchid, was spotted at Carvins Cove. It's a perennial herb that has bright, showy flowers with distinctive fringed lips that are clustered in racemes. It blooms from June into September, depending on its geographic region. It is typically found in sunny to lightly wooded moist habitats with acid to sub-acid soils. The yellow fringed orchid grows upright with stems reaching one to three feet tall.

It is believed that the Cherokee used the flowers as bait on their hooks while fishing and other tribes used the roots to make a tea to treat headaches



Elizabeth Harris

**Yellow Fringed Orchid, also known as orange fringed orchid, is found in sunny to lightly wooded moist habitats and diarrhea.**

According to "Wildflowers of Tennessee, the Ohio Valley and the Southern Appalachians" field guide, the orchid is native to this part of the country. It's con-

sidered a "butterfly specialist," attracting swallowtails and other butterflies in July and August. Pollinator access is considered to be crucial in sustaining healthy populations of this orchid.

According to the website, Native Plant Trust, ([www.nativeplanttrust.org](http://www.nativeplanttrust.org))

*Platanthera ciliaris* is regarded as Globally Secure (G5) and has a national rank of N5 (Nationally Secure) in the United States.

The U.S. Forest Service notes that this orchid is becoming rare at the northern edges of its range. Threats posed by shading, habitat change, loss of habitat and late spring frost create challenges for the orchids' survival. Additional concerns from trampling, collection and mowing create other risks for this lovely orchid. Although it is extirpated in Canada and protected in New Eng-

land, it is considered abundant and safe in this part of Appalachia.

Thank you to members Rebecca Ross, Ellen Holtman, Heather

Butler, Michael Belcher and Butch Kelly for their part in investigating and researching *Patanthera ciliaris*!

— Jennifer

Each newsletter highlights one of the planet-friendly organizations that share our goal of protecting healthy ecosystems. Any member who has a favorite group is encouraged to send in a blurb.

Roanoke is home to more than 158 species of trees, and lots of acreage that requires care. Since the financial crisis of 2008, budgets have not provided for enough tree care to keep up the recommended tree canopy coverage. Roanoke's coverage, at 48 percent in 2010, fell to 26 percent in 2019. Roanoke City Parks and Recreation started the Tree Steward



## Spotlight: Roanoke Tree Stewards

program in 2009 to help the city meet its goal of the recommended 40 percent coverage.

Tree Steward volunteers care for young trees on city-owned property and occasionally give presentations to city children. They are trained to speak for the trees as well as to care for them. They are happy to have volunteers to help plant their trees, and they offer to collaborate on projects of other groups.

Members learn how to plant and prune trees, to identify trees, and to

educate the public on proper care. The Tree Stewards training is free and includes both classroom and field work totaling 26 hours. Trained volunteers commit to working 30 hours in their first year and 20 hours per year after that. Training begins in January every year. For more information please contact Bill West, Roanoke Parks and Recreation's Urban Forester, at [wiliam.west@roanokeva.gov](mailto:wiliam.west@roanokeva.gov) or 540-853-1994.



# Joint picnic with the Roanoke Valley Bird Club best attended yet



Roger Holtman

**BRWS/RVBC Picnic Chair Carol Whiteside reports there were more attendees at this year's event, held July 15, than ever before: a total of 62! There were 33 RVBC members, 19 BRWS members and 8 who are members of both. We also had two guests. (Last year's attendance was 42.)**

**As part of the welcoming remarks, BRWS Vice President Marilyn Lerch read the poem below to the gathering. We thought those who were unable to attend would enjoy it too. The accompanying flower photos were taken by Membership Chair Rodelin Palmer in the club's Native Plant Garden at RCGC.**



Bumblebee on New England Aster



Black-eyed Susans, New England Asters



Elderberry fruit

## Messenger

My work is loving the world.  
Here the sunflowers, there the hummingbird—  
equal seekers of sweetness.  
Here the quickening yeast; there the blue plums.  
Here the clam deep in the speckled sand.

Are my boots old? Is my coat torn?  
Am I no longer young, and still half-perfect? Let me  
keep my mind on what matters,  
which is my work,

which is mostly standing still and learning to be  
astonished.  
The phoebe, the delphinium.  
The sheep in the pasture, and the pasture.  
Which is mostly rejoicing, since all the ingredients are here,

which is gratitude, to be given a mind and a heart  
and these body-clothes,  
a mouth with which to give shouts of joy  
to the moth and the wren, to the sleepy dug-up clam,  
telling them all, over and over, how it is  
that we live forever.

-- Mary Oliver



Turtlehead



Baptisia seedpods



Common milkweed  
seedpods

## Meet a member

### Donna Haley

Donna Haley began her volunteer service to Virginia Cooperative Extension in 1996 as a Master Gardener. In 2012, she took on the title of Master Naturalist as well. She has served as president of both groups and manages a speakers bureau for each. She is passionate about outreach and education.

As an ethno-botanist, Donna taught horticulture at Virginia Western Community College at Greenfield. She was a "Tank Team" member at the Ocean in the Mountains Aquarium at Center in the Square in Roanoke. She enjoys volunteering for the Blue Ridge Mountains Council Boy Scouts of America and serves on its Council Conservation Committee.

Donna is an inaugural member of the Blue Ridge Environmental Educators. She is a long time geocacher and a recent presenter at the Virginia Environmental Educators Conference. She is a 2015 Citizens for Clean and Green, City of Roanoke Green Academy graduate. She also is a member of the Roanoke Foodshed Network, and a supporter of local farmers markets.



Donna and her husband, Dan, reside in Botetourt County where she monitors bluebird box trails. She gardens with native plants, specifically to support wildlife. The garden is her retreat and therapy from a busy life. In it she observes reptiles, birds and small mammals, and the hummingbirds, butterflies and bees that keep her fascinated.



Welcome new members!

Helen Fooks, North Garden  
Gary Hubbard, Goodview  
Chris Moore, Roanoke  
Amanda Smithson, Lynchburg  
Dana Jones, Woolwine  
Jenny Schwanke, Catawba

Please keep your contact information up-to-date!

Blue Ridge Wildflower Society relies on email to share information about upcoming events and to distribute our newsletter. Please update any changes to your contact information with the Virginia Native Plant Society at [vnps.org@gmail.com](mailto:vnps.org@gmail.com) and BRWS at [brws.membership@gmail.com](mailto:brws.membership@gmail.com)

You can also find Blue Ridge Wildflower Society information on the Virginia Native Plant Society website home page under Chapters and on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/blueridgewildflowersociety>

### Find us online!



[fb.com/blueridgewildflowersociety](https://www.facebook.com/blueridgewildflowersociety)



[@blueridgewildflower](https://www.instagram.com/blueridgewildflower)



[Blue Ridge Wildflower Society](https://www.youtube.com/BlueRidgeWildflowerSociety)

Follow along for chapter news, educational plant posts, botany news, virtual plant walks and more!

## Become a member!

Are you seeing our newsletter for the first time and would like to join the Blue Ridge Wildflower Society? Are you already a member and it's time to renew?

The quickest way to do either of those things is to go to [www.vnps.org](http://www.vnps.org), the Virginia Native Plant Society website. Find the Membership drop-down menu, select the appropriate choice (Join or Renew) and take it from there!

And while you're on the VNPS site, be sure to check out all the great resources that are available: information about native plants and invasives, past newsletters and much more.



# BRWS MEETINGS

**Roanoke Council of Garden Clubs headquarters**  
**3640 Colonial Avenue, Roanoke, VA**

Meetings are held the fourth Monday of the month in September, October, November, (no February meeting), March, April and May, unless changed or canceled due to inclement weather and/or Roanoke County School closures. Club business is presented in-person at membership meetings, from 6:45 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., prior to our program. Currently, members must be present (in-person attendance) to vote. We also will share club news and updates on our webpage at [www.vnps.org/chapters](http://www.vnps.org/chapters) and via email.

In-person presentations and programs begin at 7:00 p.m. Live-stream (Zoom) options and/or recordings (with links provided by email) are available when permitted by the presenter. We encourage you to attend in-person when you are able.

## Virginia Native Plant Society

**Website: [www.vnps.org](http://www.vnps.org)**

The Virginia Native Plant Society (VNPS), founded in 1982 as the Virginia Wildflower Preservation Society, is a nonprofit organization of individuals who share an interest in Virginia's native plants and habitats. The Society and its chapters seek to further the appreciation and conservation of this priceless heritage.

**Our Mission:** The Virginia Native Plant Society is dedicated to the protection and preservation of the native plants of Virginia and their habitats, to sustain for generations to come the integrity of the Commonwealth's rich natural heritage of eco-systems and biodiversity for purposes of enjoyment, enlightenment, sustainable use, and our own very survival. To this end, we advocate and follow practices that will conserve our natural endowment, and we discourage and combat practices that will endanger or destroy it. We are committed to do all we can to slow the accelerating conversion of natural landscape to built and planted landscape and to reduce its damage to natural ecosystems.

### OUR PURPOSE AND SERVICES

#### State Level:

- Working for measures to protect endangered plant species, and preserve habitats and plant communities of special interest
- Learning and teaching about native plants and their special needs
- Encouraging the appropriate use of nursery or home propagated native plants in public landscapes and private gardens
- Assisting in writing and updating [Flora of Virginia](#)
- Providing money for graduate botanical research
- Working with nurseries to protect native species
- Offering a spring workshop on timely botanical subjects
- Offering field trips state wide and some in surrounding states
- Conducting the annual meeting with speakers and field trips provided

#### Local level, Blue Ridge Chapter:

**Counties of:** Appomattox, Bedford, Botetourt, Campbell, Craig, Franklin, Henry, Patrick, and Roanoke **Cities of:** Roanoke, Salem and Lynchburg

- To present meetings in spring and fall that offer informative programs concerning a variety of areas and plants they support
- To lead free field trips to a wide variety of local habitats spring through fall
- To conduct an annual native plant sale in May
- To provide outreach to public groups in the way of speakers and guided walks
- To donate money to local conservation efforts

## Blue Ridge Wildflower Society

*Roanoke Council of Garden Clubs*  
*3460 Colonial Ave. SW,*  
*Roanoke, VA 24018*

**General inquiries,  
newsletter submissions**  
[info.blueridgewildflower@gmail.com](mailto:info.blueridgewildflower@gmail.com)

**Membership inquiries**  
[brws.membership@gmail.com](mailto:brws.membership@gmail.com)

### Officers

*President*  
**Jennifer McCarthy**

*Vice President*  
**Marilyn Lerch**

*Treasurer*  
**Heather Butler**

*Secretary*  
**Kaye Brandt**

*Past President*  
**Jessica Fleming**

### Committee chairs

*Field Trips, Programs*  
**Ellen Holtman**  
**Rebecca Ross**

*Garden Coordinator*  
**Linda Harrison**

*Membership*  
**Rodelin Palmer**

*Plant Sale*  
**Michael Belcher**

*Newsletter Editor*  
**Roger Holtman**

The BRWS newsletter is published three times annually: spring, summer and fall. Photos and articles for publication are welcome and encouraged. Please send them via email to the address above.

Thank you!



**Blue Ridge Wildflower Society**  
Roanoke Council of Garden Clubs  
3460 Colonial Ave. SW,  
Roanoke, VA 24018

## Calendar of Fall 2023 Events

Details begin on Page 1

**Sept. 2** Field Trip: Pandapas Pond, Montgomery County

**Sept. 16** Field Trip: South County Library, Roanoke

**Sept. 23** Field Trip: Brush Mountain, Roanoke County

**Sept. 25** Membership Meeting and Program

**Sept. 28** Doug Tallamy event, Lynchburg

**Oct. 6-8** VNPS Annual Meeting and Program, Gloucester  
([www.VNPS.org/events](http://www.VNPS.org/events))

**Oct. 14** Field Trip: Dragon's Tooth, Catawba

**Oct. 22** Tree Walk: Fishburn Park, Roanoke

**Oct. 23** Membership Meeting and Program

**Nov. 20** Membership Meeting and Program