

Blue Ridge Wildflower Society

A CHAPTER OF THE
VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

Blue Ridge Wildflower Society; A chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

September 2012, Vol. 33, No. 3



Welcome New Members

Mike Bentley of Roanoke

Teresa Baga of Roanoke

Eva Jo Wu of Roanoke

Candy Andrezejewski of Roanoke

Diana Christoplos of Roanoke

Letter from the President

By Rich Crites

The feel of fall is in the air. I guess usually around Labor Day weekend we begin to get this feeling.

Schools are back in session, and as an old teacher, I sometimes get that feeling of needing to get ready for classes.

However, it doesn't last very long! I suppose after going to school for 18 years and teaching for 40, I am programmed to get going in the fall.

This has been an unusual year for plants with the warm early spring and then hot and dry this summer.

Many species of plants were blooming earlier than normal. Then on our trip to Fenwick Mines in mid-August, we found about 70 different plants in bloom. I have noticed that the wing stem along the roads is really abundant this fall.

My cardinal flowers have been very showy.

Other kinds of plants have dried up or

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President's Letter:

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deer used them for a snack.

The dogwood berries have turned red, and I have noticed the robins are being attracted to them. They must be starting to feel the urge to migrate. They are beginning to “bunch” up and acting somewhat goofy.

I wonder what the fall leaf colors will be like after our earlier and warmer than usual spring followed by the hot dry summer. Usually the second and third weeks of October are good for leaf peepers. Maybe there will be some brilliant colors.

This has been a good year for the BRWFS. We have had good field trips, and the lectures have been excellent with great attendance. Also, our plant sale was very successful. We also have added some new members to our chapter, so we now have about 115. All the above activities would not be possible without your help and participation. Thank you.

And just a reminder: if you are an old member intending to be part of the chapter and have not renewed your membership, you need to ante up! We are going to start purging the mailing list.

This brings me to my next point. I will be stepping down as president this fall and we will be electing some new officers. Our bylaws say an officer cannot serve more than two successive terms. Out of

the 115, we need people to step up to the plate and serve.

You do not have to know all the plants and lead walks! Butch Kelly is heading up a committee to find some officers. Call him and serve! We'll be there to help you.

I can't finish this letter without thanking the board members, the other officers, the newsletter and public relations workers and the wildflower sale committee for their work. With this group, these two terms have been very rewarding.

Also, thanks to my wife Connie for helping to get things together, set up and clean up, including me! Thanks to Butch Kelly for finding many of the speakers and attending the state board meetings in my stead. (I hate board and planning meetings).

Finally, I would call your attention to the agenda for our fall activities. Ryan Huish is going to be talking about how plants are used in the Appalachians at our meeting on Sept. 24. This is some material he uses in his class that he teaches at Hollins.

There are no field trip scheduled for the fall because we have found that with so many other autumn activities going on, they don't do well.

Have a good fall, and I'll see you at the meetings.

Field Trips

By Butch Kelly
Membership Coordinator

Blooms and Butterflies on Bent Mountain

Have you ever wondered what you are missing when you don't make it to a BRWS field trip?

This summer we had two great trips.

Saturday, July 14, thirty-five folks followed Bill Hunley up to Bent Mountain

The trip was to look at blooms and butterflies. We spotted 13 species of butterflies and moths. Included were pearl crescent, red admiral, summer azure, monarch and American copper.

There were several members of the Roanoke Valley Bird Club accompanying us and we saw a great blue heron, Carolina wren, and a beautiful yellow throat. This was a real treat to realize we could look up and see color.

With varied habitats which included uplands and wetlands, we identified 56 plants of which 34 were in bloom. A splendid Turk's cap lily was spotted in the edge of the woods. A rare find was fly poison. It was not in bloom, but was a treasure for all to see.

An unexpected treat was the offer from Jim Bush to use his place for lunch, and Robin and Allen Austin allowed members to enjoy their garden and hummingbird feeders.

Fenwick Mines

Rich Crites led 18 folks to Fenwick Mines on August 18 for a "WOW trip".

We saw 88 plants, of which about 70 were in bloom. We seem to get hung up on spring ephemerals, yet summer is rich in botanical beauty as well.

Fenwick Mines offers a pleasant walk through forest, field, and wetlands. There was even a waterfall along the trail.

If you want to take a quiet picnic lunch and a stroll, it is a great summer attraction.

The area offered us a great look at cardinal flower. Button bush aligned the ponds along with spirea. The American chestnut burs gave us hope. The elderberry bushes were in full fruit. I saw hog peanut in bloom for the first time. While not spectacular, it was good to see. I was beginning to believe it did not have a flower.

In summary, our trips are always full of surprises. It may come from seeing a species for the first time or become reunited with an old friend.

Newcomers are always nice to meet, and it is gratifying to help them identify flora and fauna. The nice thing about our trips is sharing a love for nature.

As John Muir said "the mountains are calling and I must go". So get out and enjoy the offerings of our mountain splendor. Next time we have a field trip be sure to join us.

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Fall 2012

Calendar of Events

Vol. 33, No. 3

Monday, Sept. 24

Time: 7 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

Leader: Rich Crites

Contact: 774-4518

Meet: Roanoke Church
of Christ, 2606 Brandon Ave.

Club Meeting: Appalachian Plants and Their Uses

Ryan Huish is a professor of biology at Hollins University.

He will share with us the uses of our local flora.

Ryan is very knowledgeable in the field of ethno-botany. He is well traveled, and it will be a very informative evening.

Monday, Oct. 22

Time: 7 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

Leader: Rich Crites

Contact: 774-4518

Meet: Roanoke Church
of Christ, 2606 Brandon Ave.,
S.W.

Club Meeting: The state and fate of Stadium Woods



As most everyone knows the stadium woods at VA Tech has been in the news for most of the year. Come hear Jeff Kirwin's story of the fight to save these ancient giants. He will explain how and why the fight is not over.

As you may recall Jeff is one of the co-authors of the recent book "Remarkable Trees of Virginia." He has led us on a field trip and presented a program to us in the past.

Monday, Nov. 26

Time: 7 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

Leader: Rich Crites

Contact: 774-4518

Meet: Roanoke Church
of Christ, 2606 Brandon Ave.,
S.W.

Club Meeting: Tree Hazard Assessment in Your Yard

Arborist Carl Abscher will talk to us about this summer's derecho, the stadium woods and APCO's tree maintenance and storm cleanup. He will discuss what trees to plant, where to plant, and what and where not to plant. Carl will also give some ideas as to what conditions predispose trees to failure over the years and how those conditions can be recognized early. Carl has a forestry degree from Va. Tech and is a board certified arborist.



— Matt Gentry, The Roanoke Times

November

Time: TBA

Meet: TBA

Club Meeting in Lynchburg TBA

Some other events you may be interested in

Remarkable Trees of Virginia

Friday, Sept. 14 at 7 p.m. at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Roanoke. 343-5080. Free

Discover Mudlick Creek

Enjoy a day playing in the creek. Search for water critters, such as crayfish and mayfly larvae to help determine the health of the creek. The group also will conduct tests for nitrates, phosphates and other common water contaminants. Bring a lunch and be prepared to get wet.

Sunday, Sept. 16, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.
\$10 fee. Register online at www.roanoke-countyparks.com or by phone at 772-PLAY.

Explore Bottom Creek Gorge

A hidden gem of Southwest Virginia, Bottom Creek Gorge is home to many rare aquatic and terrestrial species as well as Virginia's second highest waterfall. Walk along the stream, visit old homesites and enjoy the

beauty of this old-growth forest while learning about the history of the area. The hike is approximately 5 miles of easy-to-moderate terrain.

Sunday, Oct. 14 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. for ages 10 and older. \$30 fee.
Register online at www.roanokecountyparks.com or by phone at 772-PLAY.

Digital Photography — Nature in the Fall

Every year mother nature reminds us to stop and notice her brilliant hues and colors. Roanoke County Parks and Rec is offering Nature in the Fall at Garst Mill Park. Attendees will take a walk around the park as they learn to take pictures. Be sure to wear comfortable shoes or boots and bring your camera and owners manual.

Saturday, Oct. 20, 10 a.m. to noon at Garst Mill Park. For ages 18 and up. \$18 fee.
Register online at www.roanokecountyparks.com or by phone at 772-PLAY.

Blue Ridge Wildflower Society Officers

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We say goodbye to a good naturalist and friend

By Rich Crites

Dr. Hugh Smith, a professional geologist and a good botanist, passed away on August 31.

Hugh had been in ill health for some time.

He taught many years with me at Virginia Western Community College, was a long time member of the BRWFS and served as president of the chapter.

He was always ready to go out on a field trip, especially after retirement.

On the field trips, he would explain the interesting geological features to me, and I would point out interesting plants.

I thoroughly enjoyed our trips!

I'll miss my colleague and good buddy.



Hugh P. Smith

November 28, 1920

August 31, 2012

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