



Claytonia

Newsletter of the John Clayton Chapter, Virginia Native Plant Society

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www.claytonvnps.org

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At our January 16th meeting, Helen Hamilton will talk about “The Senses of Plants”



We know plants move their leaves toward light, bananas can ripen apples, and beans will climb up garden supports. How do plants see light? Why do bananas affect apples? What makes vines curl around a post? Recent researches have begun to elucidate how plants can apparently sense and respond to their environments. How closely do the

actions of plants match ours in sensing sources of water, light, and food? Are plants intelligent? Can they remember?

The meeting begins at **7:00 pm** in **Room A** of the **James City County Recreation Center**, 5301 Longhill Road, Williamsburg, VA 23188-2700.

See you there!



From the President

I wish all of you a Happy New Year for 2020. May it bring you happiness, good gardening and good health! Our chapter is strong and healthy with many active members, as was evident at our sale last year and the meetings. However, we still desperately need several Board members to make our chapter function at its most efficient level. We need a Vice President to organize our chapter meetings. This person will find speakers for our meetings, send the information about the speaker, find a meeting location, and introduce the speaker at our meetings. We are now without a Vice President and I am doing that job in the interim. We need to find someone to take it on, even if the person does not wish to become President in the future. We also still need a Hospitality Chair. This person brings snacks to our chapter meetings every other month. The social part of the meetings is an integral part of the meetings.

In other native plant news, I will be retiring as Plant Sale Executive Committee member after our sale in 2020. Unfortunately, my right hand and wrist have sustained damage from all the lifting of pots, and I hope someone who enjoys working with plants will be joining the plant sale effort. I loved doing this and it has been fun—I shall miss it all. Remember our plant sales finance our chapter. Can you join this important effort? Your chapter needs the sale to survive.

This year climate change has been in the news non-stop. It is a mixed bag, as some news are very depressing and others show some slight hope. Climate change has a great poster child—polar bears. Picture one clinging on a tiny piece of melting ice cap. Instantly one pictures why a warming planet is a disastrous thing. Nevertheless, there are other tiny and struggling creatures which we do not even know about. One, for example, is ice crawlers, a family of tiny wingless insects that live on top of mountains and on edges of glaciers. They are one of the many insects that are decreasing in huge numbers. Jim Perrin wrote in the *Guardian* about a hike he took in Wales recently in Talsarnau, Gwyned. He was walking in an area which a long while ago was once song-filled and full of curlews. This day, one curlew sang and was answered with silence.



Just a short while ago there was news on television about wild koala bears being on the brink of extinction because of wild fires and the destruction of eucalyptus trees for development. They are hoping to pass laws protecting their environments. I am hoping they will. Patrick Barkham wrote in the *Guardian* that turtledoves fly into extinction, as there has been a 51% decline in their numbers in the last five years. Other birds have shown signs of recovery. The reed bunting, the corn bunting, the goldfinch, and stock dove showed significant short term increases. This good news is attributed to the agricultural environment practices which have been implemented and funded by the British government. Of significance is the practice of not ploughing some stubble fields over winter to provide food for the birds, a simple and yet easy thing to do. I wonder what other easy small things we could do to help the birds. For the turtledove, that solution is not applicable because it flies to Africa. On the way, hunters kill many and its winter haven is being affected by what happens to its habitats in Africa.

In South America, writes Kimberly Brown in the *Guardian*, the jaguar has long been revered by the native population. There, they traditionally kept the ecological balance in the coastal jungle areas and the Amazon border region of Ecuador, Colombia and Peru. In the coastal areas, plantations of bananas and other lucrative crops have destroyed much of their habitat. A recent study by the WWF estimates that 2,000 jaguars live in the Amazon border region of Ecuador, Colombia and Peru, in what is known as the Napo-Putumayo corridor, including 21 identified in Ecuador's



Cuyabeno Wildlife Reserve. The president of Ecuador would like to develop oil fields in the Amazon rainforest as well as open pit mining in the gold and copper-rich southern Amazon. The moment roads are opened, the door to a market of wildlife trade is opened. When their food sources are hunted and stolen, they will eat chickens and dogs, causing problems for the humans near them. In the wildlife trade, jaguars are bought for use in Chinese medicines.

In a good news story, another article in the *Guardian* written by Ian Sample announced that the mouse deer of Vietnam, thought to be extinct, has been spotted alive. Following reports of sightings, scientists set up camera traps and saw many sightings. The silver-backed chevrotain is a half-painted beast. Behind the russet head, neck and front legs lies a silver-grey body and hind legs rounded off by a white, grizzled bottom. Though they are probably preyed on by leopards, wild dogs, and pythons, scientists fear that snares laid by hunters have pushed the species to the brink of extinction. Despite the name, they are neither mice nor deer, but the world's smallest ungulate, or hoofed animal. Now, there is a big effort there by wildlife specialists to stop the use of snares to capture wildlife for trade, and scientists are optimistic that they will find other wildlife thought to be extinct.

Important information about growing milkweeds

Did you run out of milkweeds in late summer just as more monarch butterflies were arriving? Then read on for a solution to this problem. Even if you did not run out of milkweeds, this research will be of interest to you.

Monarch butterfly populations have been decreasing for decades, largely caused by decreasing populations of milkweed (*Asclepias* spp.) that they require during their larval stage. These iconic insects are making a bit of a comeback now that “gardeners, farmers, and other land managers” have begun planting more milkweed. Researchers at Michigan State University (MSU) are now advising people to start mowing back that milkweed to increase its benefit to monarchs.

According to a study published in the May issue of *Biological Conservation*, monarchs prefer to lay their eggs on young milkweed. How did they discover this? When the MSU researchers mowed back a third of a patch of milkweed, then allowed it to regrow, they found three to 10 times the amount of eggs per stem on the new growth than on the undisturbed milkweed in their experiment. It seems like a strange idea to cut them when they are blooming in June. Even though cutting back milkweed to help the butterflies may seem counterintuitive, this forces the plants to produce new growth and this experiment showed that it is exactly what monarchs prefer!



The key is to wait until the plants are beginning to flower around mid-June. Take your clippers and with courage cut back about a third of the milkweed patch. When the previously cut stems start to produce flowers again, around mid-July, trim or mow another third of the patch.

Just as I was reading this article, I got an email from Sue Voigt about the monarchs at Stonehouse Elementary Habitat Garden this summer. She stated that at Stonehouse the school grounds team has moved the common milkweeds in the school and vegetable garden beds that used to have milkweed. Result, the milkweeds keep coming back fresh in mid-summer after being cut down. In 2018 the school wanted to clear-cut all native plants (that caused us to panic, but a newly designed garden was planted). That year, by August they had a great new patch of milkweed when other schoolyards were pleading for help to nourish their butterflies. This summer Sue cut back her milkweeds and again saw evidence of much new growth. She is convinced that this is the best way to grow them. Try it next summer. I know that I will do it also.

Lucile Kossodo

New Members

We welcome new members We welcome new members **Eric Beckhusen** of Williamsburg, **Alison DeWitt** of Newport News, **Barb Hall** of Gloucester, and **Janice Salake** and **Sara Simmons**, both of Hampton, to the John Clayton Chapter!

Upcoming Plant Walks

🌸 **10:00 am on Saturday, February 22:**
W&M Herbarium tour with Beth Chambers

Beth Chambers, Curator of the herbarium at the College of William and Mary, will lead a tour through the herbarium and also take the group through the new greenhouse at the Integrated Science Center. Meet in front of Phi Beta Kappa Hall, 601 Jamestown Road. Contact Beth at 757-221-2213 to register and for more information.

Recent Plant Walks and Other Events

Bryophytes Along the Dragon

After a couple of inquiries, Teta Kain seemed eager to search for bryophytes in Dragon Swamp, so in mid-September, Adrienne Frank, Gary Driscole, and Helen Hamilton parked at the Revere Tract in King and Queen County and started down the trail. With the dry conditions, water had disappeared in the swamp and we were able to walk through muddy muck not usually available to botanists.

While Adrienne, Gary and Teta found vascular plants and critters, Helen filled bag after bag with mosses and liverworts. After identification of the 35 species, 13 (37%) are county records, meaning they have never been collected in this region. Some processing later, the specimens will



Virginia Dayflower

be deposited in the herbaria at Virginia Tech and a duplicate set at Duke University, as a record of “what’s here now.”

Gary found a stem of Virginia Dayflower, *Commelina virginica*, not seen often—the most common dayflower is the introduced Asiatic Dayflower, *C. communis*.

Helen Hamilton

Canoeing for Bryophytes

It was warm on October 31 when John Bunch put his two canoes into the Nottoway, along with Adrienne Frank, Gary Driscole, and Helen Hamilton, the purpose being to view the thal-loid liverwort *Dumortiera*. John had collected and identified it earlier, but Helen had to go see this unusual plant in its natural habitat.

That involved a paddle along the river bordered with baldcypress festooned with another liverwort, *Porella pinnata*. We parked (or is beached the



Gary, Adrienne, and John, ready to start



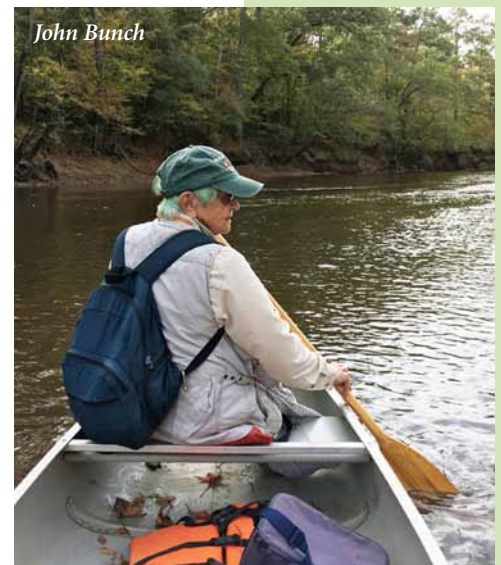
Adrienne and Gary set off in one of the canoes.

correct word?) the canoes at a seepy bank where *Dumortiera* was plentiful, along with *Fossombronia foveolata* (a state record that John had collected earlier). We found *Pallavicinica lyellii*, another thal-loid liverwort that is common in wet areas, and *Fissidens bryoides* that does not grow in our area.

Gary found a little flower on a curved stem that Donna Ware identified as Indian Heliotrope, *Heliotropium indicum*, an introduced weedy species. According to the *Flora of Virginia* it is “locally common along the Nottoway...”

Not all the collections have been processed, but so far it was a very exciting botanical day with good friends.

Helen Hamilton



Helen in the bow of the second



Indian Heliotrope in flower

Zuni Pine Barrens Plant Walk on November 8

In early November Natural Heritage Southeastern Land Steward **Darren Loomis**, Longleaf Pine Restoration Specialist **Rebecca Wilson**, and **Zach Bradford**, Chesapeake Bay Region Steward, led a group of VNPS members, friends, and other interested folks on a tour of a longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris*) restoration area at the Blackwater Ecological Preserve in Isle of Wight County. Before starting the walk, Rebecca cleared up any confusion about who owns and manages the preserve. The Blackwater Ecological Preserve is managed by ODU, whereas the Antioch Pines Natural Area is managed by Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (VDCR). Together, these areas form the Zuni Pine Barrens Natural Area Preserve, which covers more than 1,000 contiguous acres and is cooperatively managed by ODU, VDCR,

The Nature Conservancy, and the Virginia Department of Forestry. Although once widespread in southeastern Virginia, longleaf pine is now a critically imperiled species (S1) in Virginia and is being actively managed and restored (see *Claytonia* Volume 35, Number 6, November–December 2019, www.claytonvnps.org).

The November field trip complemented the September John Clayton chapter meeting at which Rebecca talked about the fire-adapted longleaf pine community and restoration efforts using prescribed fire. The group got to see firsthand the various adapta-



Grass stage seedling



Claudia Kirk

First year seedling

tions that allow this species to thrive under a frequent fire regime, including the grass stage with its robust bud protected by long waxy needles and the

bottlebrush stage, which occurs after the tree has a well developed root system and bolts. We had to look hard, but eventually found a number of first year seedlings as well.

During the walk Darren lead the group to an historic stump that is a relic of Virginia's naval stores industry. The stump has notches that were cut in its sides to extract resin used in the shipbuilding industry. The industry quit cutting trees in the area around 1850, so the tree was notched sometime prior to that. Around 300 rings have been counted, which dates the tree back to 1550!



Darren points out the historic stump.

Besides longleaf pine, a number of other rare plants can be found at the preserve because of the unique management regime. A few observed were Sheep laurel (*Kalmia angustifolia*), purple pitcher plant (*Sarracenia purpurea*), common pyxie moss (*Pyxidantha barbulata*), and Sandy-woods chaffhead (*Carphephorus bellidifolius*). Each of these species is a critically imperiled (S1) to imperiled (S2) species in Virginia and they are mostly restricted to these unique open sandhill habitats that occur in just a few counties in the state. Purple pitcher plant is more widespread and generally occurs in acidic seepage swamps and boggy depressions in pine flatwoods.

While the group surveyed the forest and learned about fire usage and longleaf pine, Helen Hamilton walked a short trail to a low, moist area where sphagnum grows in the path. She had collected ephemeral bryophytes in the same area early in the spring, and now found other spe-



Claudia Kirk

Bottlebrush stage seedling



Claudia Kirk

Sheep laurel in bloom



Meegan Wallace
A group photo

cies with sporophytes, making identification easier.

To see what other treasures can be found at the preserve, you can check out a regularly updated list of plants observed at the preserve that is maintained by Lytton Musselman on the ODU website <http://ww2.odu.edu/~lmusselm/blackwater/checklist.shtml>.

Meegan Wallace

A plant rescue at Helen's home

Helen Hamilton is moving to an apartment soon and offered to let the Native Plant Society have first pick of her many plantings that she expects may disappear when the realtor prepares her house and yard for sale.

The plant sale committee and volunteers had our second (and final) dig at Helen Hamilton's on Dec. 10. This time the participants included Adrienne Frank and Gary Driscole, Claudia Kirk, and Sue Voigt. We then delivered about 125 potted plants to the Etchberger's back yard to join LOTS of potted plants already sleeping through the winter on hold for the May 2 Native Plant Sale 2020.

Many thanks to Helen for her generosity. In early spring, the plant sale committee will be looking for donations of additional Virginia native plants from our chapter members.

Our plant sale is the primary fund raiser for our chapter, supporting program speakers & nature camp scholarships.

Sue Voigt



Helen Hamilton
The *first* dig's participants, from left: Travis Will, Sue Voigt, Adrienne Frank, Alan Turnbull, and Mary Turnbull



Helen Hamilton
Sue and Travis at work during the first dig

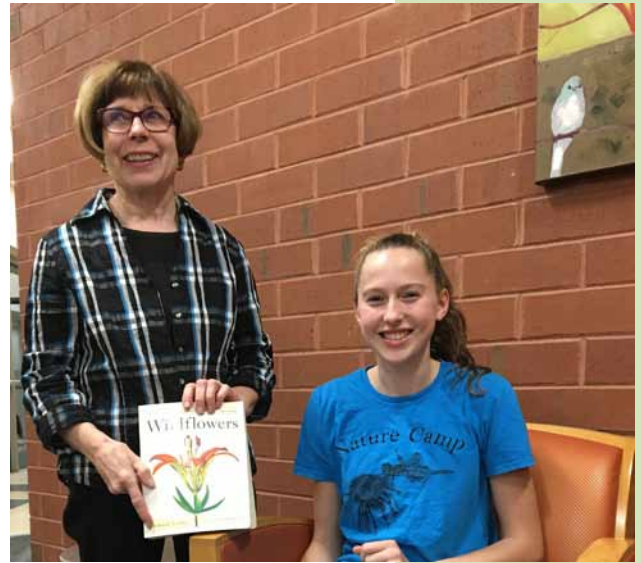
Nature Camp scholarship news

The John Clayton Chapter scholarships for Nature Camp 2020 have been awarded to **Caleigh McLaughlin**, 5th grader at Stonehouse Elementary, and **Naomi Gesler**, 9th grader at Bruton High School.

The 2020 scholarship in memory of Carolyn Will was awarded to **Maggie Dabney**, 6th grader at James Blair Middle School.

Ashley Kullberg, seated in the photo at right, was the 2019 recipient of the Nature Camp scholarship in memory of Carolyn Will. Libbey Oliver introduced her at the November meeting. Ashley thanked the John Clayton Chapter for the opportunity to attend and described her experience as a camper.

Libbey Oliver



John Clayton Chapter Calendar

**Thursday,
January 16**

7:00 pm: Our January Meeting—"The Senses of Plants"

Helen Hamilton will speak to us about research into how plants sense and respond to their environments.

The meeting begins at **7:00 pm** in **Room A** of the **James City County Recreation Center**, 5301 Longhill Road, Williamsburg, Virginia 23188-2700. (See Page 1)

**Saturday,
February 22**

10:00 am: W&M Herbarium tour with Beth Chambers

Join **Beth Chambers**, Curator of the herbarium at the College of William and Mary, for a tour through the herbarium and the new greenhouse at the Integrated Science Center.

Meet in front of Phi Beta Kappa Hall, 601 Jamestown Road. Contact Beth at 757-221-2213 to register and for more information. (See Page 4.)

Keep a lookout for announcements about additional walks and other events in the local newspapers and on our website at www.vnps.org/john-clayton.

Below is a membership renewal form. Please contact Membership Chair **Cathy Flanagan** at 757-879-1997 or at flanagan.catherine@gmail.com with questions about your membership.

Membership Form for John Clayton Chapter, Virginia Native Plant Society

(Place checks in the boxes below next to your selections.)

I am a **new member** of the John Clayton Chapter **renewing member** of the John Clayton Chapter

Name		
Address		
City	State	Zip
Email*	Phone*	

I would like to receive my newsletters electronically at the email address above.

Membership dues

Individual (\$30) Family (\$40) Patron (\$50) Sustaining (\$100) Life (\$500)

Student (\$15) Associate (\$40) —for groups who designate one person as delegate

I wish to make an additional contribution in the amount of \$ to John Clayton Chapter to VNPS

This is a gift membership; please include a card with my name as donor.

I have time a little time no time to help with activities.

I do not wish to be listed in a chapter directory.

**Please Note:* John Clayton Chapter does not distribute any of our membership information to other organizations. It is used only by the officers and chairpersons of our chapter.

Make your check payable to **VNPS** and mail to: VNPS Membership Chair
400 Blandy Farm Lane, Unit 2
Boyce, VA 22610