

# The Apical Meristem

Spring/Summer 2013

## Meeting Program

### Highlights

Meetings begin at 7:00pm and are held at the Va Tech Greenhouse classroom located on Washington Street

- Feb 12: Jaime Jones, *Mt. Lake Biological Station*
- Mar 12: Dr. Gary Cote, *Appalachian Lichens*
- Apr 9: Dr. Duncan Porter, *The Botanist on the Beagle*
- May 14: Thomas Wiebolt, Workshop: *Identifying Sedges*

Check out the Calendar on Page 3 for more!

## Plant Walk Highlights

- Feb 16: "Nude" plant walk at Pandapas Pond
- Mar 9: Lichen walk at Wildwood Park
- Apr 6: Bottom Creek Gorge
- Apr 13: 5th Annual Wildwood Park Plant Walk
- May 4: Poor Mt. Preserve

Check out the Calendar on Page 3 for more!



## The Spring Ephemeral Show Begins

By David Jones

Snow falls, temperatures waver between cold and very cold and winds seem to blow directly from the Arctic. But the skunk cabbage has flowered and the other spring beauties will soon emerge. Make your plans to get a front row seat at the "Spring Ephemerals Show."

We are fortunate to live where we can just about walk out our back doors and find some lovely wildflower. However, there are also opportunities to travel a bit further to discover new habitats or visit old familiar places to reacquaint yourself with its particular plants species.

Three levels of wild flower opportunities exist within a close proximity of our chapter: New River Chapter activities, VNPS state wide activities and national activities.

Locally, the New River Chapter is hosting a winter tree identification walk, we will make an annual visit to Wildwood Park in Radford to see the many wildflowers there, and in early summer we will visit one of Virginia's Natural Heritage Sites located on Poor Mountain. For meetings we will learn about our partners in natural study at the Mountain Lake Biological Station, get a better idea of lichens and sedges that live in our area and review a bit of history with a discussion of Charles Darwin's role on his famous trip on the ship the Beagle.

At the state level the VNPS is offering a couple of interesting activities. On March 16 is the annual spring workshop

held on the campus of University of Richmond. This year the presenters explore *Piedmont Places and Plants*. April 7-13 the VNPS takes a guided field trip to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Information about these activities and the activities of other chapters can be found at the VNPS website: <http://vnps.org/wp/>.

On the national level...at least at a national park the 63rd annual Native Plant Pilgrimage will be held April 23-27. This gathering offers many, many hikes and presentations about native plants and other naturalist topics. (<http://www.springwildflowerpilgrimage.org/>).

**Throw off your winter stupor; get off of that couch; go out doors; take your friends and celebrate SPRING!**



**Check This Out!!!** The *Flora of Virginia* is out and many of you are enjoying perusing this long-awaited volume. If you did not pre-order a copy, you may order one directly from the publisher, BRIT (Botanical Research Institute of Texas) Press for \$79.99 + \$6.50 shipping. Print out the order form available on the Flora website ([floraofvirginia.org](http://floraofvirginia.org)) and mail or call (817) 332-4441.

## *President's Message*

Wildflower. The word conjures up rhapsodic images of spring woodlands carpeted with Virginia Beauty and Trilliums, or of an autumn field ablaze with goldenrods and asters. However, there are many plants that, while lacking “showy” flowers and thus mostly overlooked, are nevertheless important components of our native flora. Difficult for the layman to identify and rarely appearing in popular field guides, grasses, sedges, rushes and lichens are often beautiful in their intricacy upon closer examination. This season, our chapter is sponsoring talks or workshops featuring several of these “neglected flora”—lichens (March), and sedges (May), and Virginia grasslands (September). While the technical jargon can be daunting, learning to recognize these groups that often comprise a large part of our flora opens a new window, expanding our appreciation of the very diverse natural world we live in.

## **SUPPORT OUR CHAPTER WITH NATIVES NOTECARDS**

Our Chapter has obtained at cost from the VNPS Potomack Chapter sets of 4 beautiful 5x7 art print notecards each featuring a different native bird and plant.

These cards, designed by Potomack Chapter member and artist B. J. Opfer pair an American Goldfinch with Lyreleaf Sage, Northern Cardinal with Flowering Dogwood, Carolina Wren with Partridgeberry, and Red-bellied Woodpecker with Northern Red Oak.

Suitable for any occasion or to give as gifts, these cards will be available at our meetings for \$12.00/set for members and \$15.00/set for non-members. All proceeds go to support the activities of the New River Chapter.

## **2013 Officers & Board Members**

President: David M. Darnell  
 Vice-President: Beth Lancaster  
 Treasurer: Carl Hansen  
 Vicky Bardon—Board member  
 John Ford—Board member  
 Mary Rhoades—Board member  
 David Jenkins—Board member/Newsletter editor  
 David Jones—Newsletter editor

## **REDBUD IS THE VNPS PLANT OF THE YEAR 2013**

One of our region's great show stoppers, Redbud, is highlighted as the VNPS Wildflower of the year. Before this shrub flowers visit the VNPS WOY web page (<http://vnps.org/wp/2013-wildflower-of-the-year/>) to learn about its natural history, and then be sure to get out and visit our “famous” native when it flowers.



Redbud

*By Gary Cote'*

## **Ventures Out and About**

February 18 Mountain Lake Biological Station

On a crisp, clear President's Day, six chapter members gathered for a trip to Mountain Lake Biological Station. Station manager Jaime Jones led us on a thorough tour of the facilities and explained projects that VNPS can participate in. One of those is reviving the Burns wildflower garden, planted by a UVA researcher in the 1940's, but neglected for many years and now overgrown. Another is helping lead wildflower walks on the station's many trails during the growing season. Both are great opportunities for our chapter.

After the tour, we took a “nude tree walk” on one of the snow-covered trails, identifying trees and shrubs in their winter condition. We found many species easily recognizable, such as Red Oak, with its barn-red furrows in the bark, and Witch-hazel, with the remains of its late-blooming flowers and fruits still attached.

## *Apical Meristem?*

What is the name of our newsletter? *Apical meristem: a meristem (embryonic tissue) at the tip of a shoot or root that is responsible for increasing the plant's length.* This is the site of our chapter's growth! To submit any comments or contributions call or email David Jones: 552-3058 or [djhones@together.net](mailto:djhones@together.net).

# SPRING 2013 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

## Feb 12

### General Meeting: 7:00pm

*What is the Mountain Lake Biological Station?*

Jaime Jones, Station manager at Mountain Lake biological station will give a brief overview of the station's history, its ecology, activities, future plans, and hopes for outreach activities—with emphasis on 1) the Burns Wildflower Garden, and 2) the starting of a spring wildflower monitoring program at the station.

## Feb 16

### Field Trip:

*"Nude" tree walk at Pandapas Pond.*

**Leader:** David Darnell, gary\_david@verizon.net or (540) 731-4341(h), (540)449-8038(cell)

**Time:** 9:00 am

**Meeting Location:** Wong Park, 303 Wilson Ave, Blacksburg, VA

**Description:** Learn to identify woody plants in their "nude" winter condition. Dress appropriately for the weather and bring a hand lens or magnifier for looking at buds and other winter characters.

## Mar 9

### Field Trip:

*Lichen walk at Wildwood Park*

(Group Limit 15 participants)

**Leader:** Gary Coté (gcote@radford.edu) or (540)731-4341(h), (540) or 449-8038 (David's cell)

**Time:** 9:00 am

**Meeting Location:** Wildwood Park entrance near the National Bank, Main St, Radford, VA

**Description:** Gary Coté will precede his talk with a walk to see the numerous lichen species in Radford's Wildwood Park. Bring a hand lens or magnifier. (*Group Limit 15 participants*)

## Mar 12

### General Meeting: 7:00pm

*Appalachian Lichens*

Lichens are odd things. They're fungi, yet ecologically they're plants; mutual partnerships of two (or more!) kingdoms. Often overlooked, yet forming strange shapes, and sometimes gaudy colors. Radford University biologist Gary Coté will tell us about these strange organisms, and describe some of the most common ones we can meet in our area.

## Apr 6

### Field Trip:

*Bottom Creek Gorge*

**Leader:** David Darnell, through the Blacksburg Parks & Rec Department, Register (540)951-1135 or [www.blacksburg.gov](http://www.blacksburg.gov)

**Time:** 9:00

**Meeting Location:** Blacksburg Recreation Center, Patrick Henry Drive, Blacksburg, VA

**Description:** See early spring wildflowers in this spectacular preserve near Bent Mountain containing Virginia's second-highest waterfall. \*\*\*Registration fee required to cover transportation\*\*\* Bring water and lunch.

## Apr 9

### General Meeting: 7:00 pm

*The Botanist on the Beagle*

Dr. Duncan Porter, retired Virginia Tech biology professor and former curator of the herbarium will speak on the numerous botanical contributions of Charles Darwin stemming from his voyage on the Beagle. Dr. Porter co-authored *The Flora of the Galapagos*, and has been studying the unique flora of that archipelago for over 50 years.

## Apr 13

**Wildflower Event:** *5th Annual Wildwood Park spring Wildflower walk*

**Time:** 9:00 am

**Meeting Location:** Main St, entrance to Wildwood Park, Radford, VA

**Description:** led by Radford University biology professor and Wildwood webmaster Gary Coté. Wildwood Park in Radford is noted for its profuse spring wildflowers. Unless blooms are unusually early or late, expect dwarf larkspur, trout lily, rue anemone, redbud, hoary puccoon and more.

**May 14** (Rain date May 21)

**Workshop:** *"Sedges have edges," but how do we identify them?* (Group Limit 15 participants, registration required, fee \$5.00/free for VNPS members)

**Leader:** Tom Wieboldt, curator, Massey Herbarium Virginia Tech

**Time:** 6:00 pm informal potluck dinner, 6:30-8:00 pm workshop

**Meeting Location:** Smithfield Plantation Shelter, 1000 Smithfield Plantation Rd, Blacksburg, VA

**Description:** Workshop on identification of sedges this spring (Group limit 15 participants, \$5.00 fee/VNPS members free, VNPS members can register before May 1, after May 1 registration is open to the general public)

## May 4

**Field Trip:** *Poor Mountain Natural Heritage Preserve*

**Leader:** Mary Rhoades

**Time:** 10:00

**Meeting Location:** Food Lion parking lot, 1530 Roanoke St, Christiansburg, VA

**Description:** The Poor Mountain VA Natural Heritage Preserve was established to protect the habitat of the rare piratebush. See this plant in flower and learn about this preserve with VA Natural Heritage Regional Steward Ryan Klopff.

*For information about our chapter meetings or activities, please contact David Darnell at (540) 731-4341 or gary\_david@verizon.net. For more information about the Virginia Native Plant Society in general, see [www.vnps.org](http://www.vnps.org).*

**NEW RIVER CHAPTER  
VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY**

1607 Grove Avenue  
Radford, VA 24141



## *Wanderings:* **Winter Greens**

*By David Jones*

*All the leaves are brown  
and the sky is gray.  
I've been for a walk  
on a winter's day...*

In December I was not “California Dreaming,” but the sky was gray, and it was or almost was a winter’s day. I was out on the Appalachian Trail along Stony Creek in Giles County.

I do enjoy the Appalachian winter reveal. With the leaves gone I take in the mountain’s soul, each tree trunk, branch and twig readily gives its story, every rock, boulder and outcrop offers the history of the land, creeks run cold, clear and thick, hidden ravines offer themselves for exploration.

In winter, I can see, but there are no bright colors to surprise. The land is starkly revealed under the brown blanket of fallen leaves, columns of dark gray-brown tree trunks terminate as a web of black twigs against the sky. Boulders offer a light contrast poking weathered boney protrusions up through the leaves.

A quick scan of a winter woods shows that not all is muted earth tones. Patches of green accent the landscape. Pine and Hemlock trees can be seen across the mountain side, nearer the rhododendron and mountain laurel offer isolated leafy hideouts, along the ground Christmas fern, though looking dejected and a bit weathered, still holds

onto its green chlorophyll, and moving my eyes straight down the partridge berry and teaberry’s dark green leathery leaves persist against the broken brown leaf litter of last summer.

And so, I walked along the Appalachian Trail enjoying this typical scene, hoping for the winter landscape to reveal one of it’s secrets. Then I saw it, an evergreen, a bit of color during this season of the earthtones. But this tree did not readily fit this scene. Instead, I associate this species with the winter woods near Williamsburg, Virginia. Today, I am not in eastern Virginia; I am in the mountains of the western part of the state, and here along Stony Creek I am looking at American Holly.

Though not out of its growth range, it is unusual to see Holly growing in our local woods. This find makes my day. I happily return to my walk, noticing several more hollies. Then to my delight, just in time to put me in a holiday mood, there was a female tree, bursting forth with bright red berries.

*Ho, Ho, Ho! And to all a good night.*

*“Wanderings” are personal observations or descriptions of plants and/or the places they live. Please contribute.*