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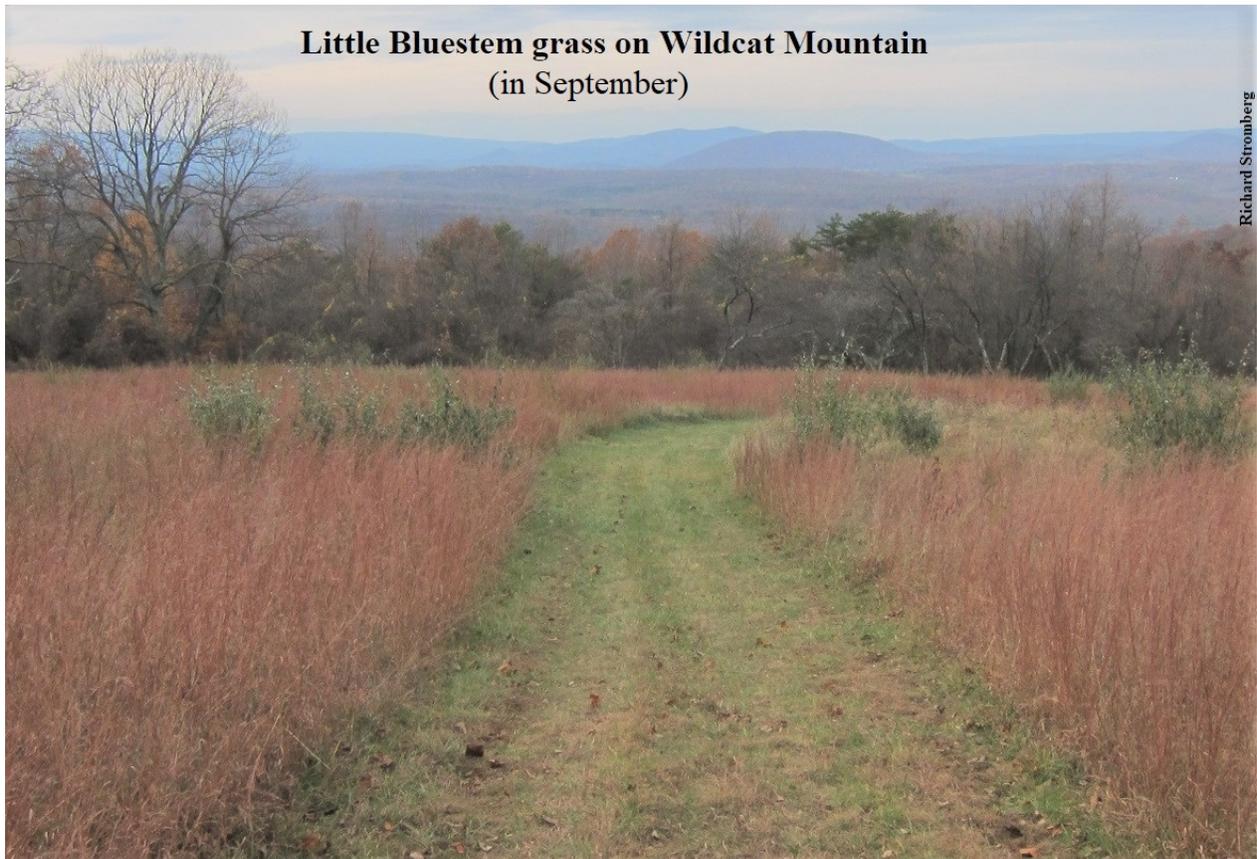
Leaflet

A Walk on Wildcat Mountain by Jocelyn Sladen

AUTUMN 2021

Piedmont Chapter chose Wildcat Mountain in Fauquier County for a pre-summer field and woodland walk. Our small group met on Saturday June 12 at 10am, ready to search the local plant community despite the recent heat wave, but we were greeted instead by an inviting overcast and a pleasant temperature.

Our plan included a circuit through an old field followed by a woodland walk on Wildcat's steep slope with its outcroppings of greenstone rock. We took the field walk first. Sited on a north facing slope at about a 1200 foot altitude, this privately owned field had somehow survived little altered since the early 1900's except for periodic mowing to keep down the woody plants and, more recently, the unfortunate if predictable invasion of non-native Autumn Olive (*Eleagnus umbellata*) and Sericea Lespedeza (*Lespedeza cuneata*). However, the field's dominating cover of native late season grasses, Little Bluestem (*Schizacrium scoparium*) and Indian Grass (*Sorghastrum nutans*) were emerging vigorously.



Little Bluestem grass on Wildcat Mountain
(in September)

(continued on page 2)



The Virginia Native Plant Society (VNPS), founded as the Virginia Wildflower Society in 1982, is a non-profit organization of people who share an interest in Virginia's wild plants and habitats and a concern for their protection.

The Piedmont Chapter is a sub-group of VNPS in the northern point of Virginia east of the Blue Ridge Mountains. It includes Loudoun, Fauquier, Culpeper, Rappahannock, Warren, Clarke, and Frederick counties.

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The Leaflet can be seen online in color at www.vnps.org/piedmont

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A Walk on Wildcat Mountain (continued)

As anticipated, plants from the field's early seed bank presented an interesting native flora. We were lucky enough to spot a pretty little Ragged Fringed Orchid (*Platanthera lacera*) in full, white bud. In parts of the field, the fat budding heads of Common Milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*) seemed ready for arriving butterflies, as were the flowers of Butterfly-weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*), scattered throughout and just beginning to show those brilliant orange flowers.



Of special interest in this field, several species of native lespedezas drew our attention, including Slender Bush-clover (*Lespedeza virginica*) and Violet Bush-clover (*L. violacea*).



The field is notorious for confusing Desmodiums, and we did our best with several, including Dillen's Tick-trefoil (*Desmodium glabellum*). Since there must always be debates over IDs, we paused to discuss what used to be species in the *Cassia* genus and later the nomenclature of some Fleabanes.

All of the *Cassia* species in our area have been moved to two other genera: *Chamaecrista* and *Senna*. The leaves of all of them have multiple, entire leaflets arranged pinnately and their fruits are many-seeded pods. The flowers are bright yellow and grow from axils, but the petals are all separate, unlike typical papilionaceous pea flowers that have two petals joined to form a keel. The Flora of Virginia differentiates the genera by the pedicels (flower stalks): *Chamaecrista* species have two small bracts near the middle of the pedicels, while *Senna* species do not. Common Partridge Pea (*Chamaecrista fasciculata*) is less than 30 inches tall with flowers over an inch wide. Wild Sensitive Plant (*C. nictans*) is smaller with flowers about a quarter inch wide. Wild Senna (*Senna hebecarpa*) is much larger, up to five feet tall. The flowers are about three-quarters of an inch wide and have large, chocolate colored stamens. Maryland Wild Senna (*Senna marilandica*) is similar. They are differentiated by the pods: Wild Senna with pods less than a half inch wide and square segments, while Maryland Wild Senna pods are over a half inch wide with segments that are shorter than broad.

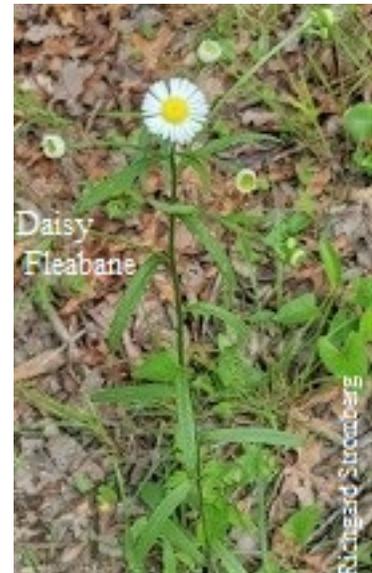
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A Walk on Wildcat Mountain (continued)



Fleabanes are in the *Erigeron* genus. Robin's Plantain (*Erigeron pulchellus*) and Philadelphia Fleabane (*E. philadelphicus*) leaves clasp the stem. Robin's Plantain has the biggest flowers, over one inch wide but has less than 100 rays while Philadelphia Fleabane flowers are less than an inch but have 150 to 400 rays. Daisy Fleabane (*E. strigosus*) and Annual Fleabane (*E. annuus*) leaves do not clasp the stem. Daisy Fleabane leaves are mostly entire while Annual Fleabane leaves are toothed.



Discussions aside, we were on mission to find a plant classified as globally rare. And we found it. However, just being globally rare does not necessarily translate into eye-appeal. One does not necessarily gasp in awe. We respectfully parted weeds and briars to peer through the tangle at young stems of Torrey's Mountain Mint (*Pycnanthemum torrei*), a rare member of the mint family. It had persisted in this field for decades, first noted by botanist Gary Fleming.

From the old field, we walked downhill along a paved road to observe flora on Wildcat Mountain's wooded hillside. With a canopy of a mature oak-hickory above us and serenaded by a wood thrush, we spotted flower buds beginning to open on the emerging tall stems of Black Cohosh (*Actaea racemosa*). Emerging from Greenstone rock outcropping on the banks, tall patches of Goatsbeard (*Aruncus dioicus*) displayed flowering stems, striking although past peak. Wild Hydrangea (*Hydrangea arborescens*) in full bloom covered portions of the banks. We noted the newly emerging stems of that (continued on page 4)



A Walk on Wildcat Mountain (continued)

lovely, graceful plant given the unkind name of Naked-flowered Tick Trefoil (*Hylodesmum nudiflorum*). Sweet-scented Joe-pye-weed (*Eutrochium purpurea*), with its interesting whorled leaves, grew tall and abundant on the banks. We spotted a few patches of False Solomon's Seal (*Maianthemum racemosum*) and, in clusters nestled close to the ground, the pale lavender blossoms of Large Leaf Houstonia (*Houstonia purpurea*). Ferns were fairly abundant, including Northern Maidenhair (*Adiantum pedatum*) and Hay-Scented (*Dennstaedtia punctilobula*), along with occasional Ebony Spleenwort (*Asplenium platyneuron*).

Other finds included Wild Yamroot (*Dioscorea villosa*), Sicklepod (*Boechera canadensis*), Rough Bedstraw (*Galium asprellum*), Aniseroor (*Ozmorhiza claytonia*), Bluestem Goldenrod (*Solidago caesia*), Maple-leaved Viburnum (*Viburnum acerifolium*), Honewort (*Cryptotaenia canadensis*), and Summer grape (*Vitis aestivalis*).



Summer Wildflowers at Bear Wallow by Karen Hendershot

West of Front Royal lie the Massanutten Mountains in the George Washington and Jefferson National Forest. There, on July 10, Richard Stromberg led us on an exploration of a loop around the Bear Wallow trailhead. The broad pathway offered not only a wide variety of plants fond of sunshine, but also access to woodland species, and a peat bog that harbors Yellow Fringed Orchids (*Plantanthera ciliaris*) and Pink Lady's-slippers (*Cypripedium acaule*).

We were greeted by the bright faces of Daisy Fleabane (*Erigeron strigosus*), identified by its small white flowers and toothless leaves. American Yarrow (*Achillea borealis*) was also in bloom above feathery foliage. Snowy umbels of Hairy Angelica (*Angelica venenosa*) further brightened the path. But most notable was a significant amount of Hoary Mountain-mint (*Pycnanthemum incanum*) with leaves seemingly coated in white. Occasionally we noticed the pale pink flowers forming a tiered tower, with a flower stem growing out of the middle of ring of flowers, a characteristic of some members of the mint family. Thimbleweed (*Anemone virginiana*) was starting to go to seed, allowing us to see that the fruit resembled its common name. White Avens (*Geum canadense*), too, was waning. Its small button-like flowers were turning to hairy balls, ideal for disbursing its seed by hitch-hiking on clothing or fur.



Richard showed us several examples of different species within the same genus. White Sweet-clover (*Melilotis albus*) was followed by Yellow Sweet-clover (*M.* (continued on page 5)





Summer Wildflowers at Bear Wallow (continued)



St. Andrew's Cross
Hypericum hypericoides

officinale). We saw both Pale-spike Lobelia (*Lobelia spicata*) and Indian Tobacco (*L. inflata*), with its bulging fruit. Dwarf St. John's Wort (*Hypericum mutilum*) was on display, along with St. Andrew's Cross (*H. hypericoides*) whose X-shaped flowers resemble the cross symbol of Scotland.

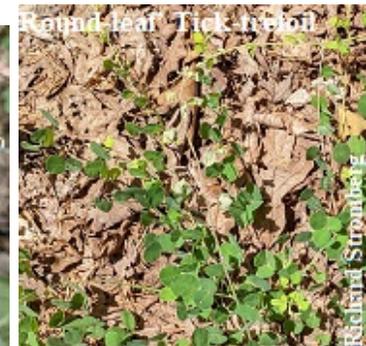
Three species of Tick-trefoil appeared along the trail: Narrow-leaf (*Desmodium paniculatum*), Dillenius' (*D. glabellum*) and Round-leaf or Prostrate (*D. rotundifolium*). But then, in the woodland, a long, graceful spire with small,



Narrow-leaf Tick-trefoil



Dillenius' Tick-trefoil



Round-leaf Tick-trefoil



Naked-Flowered
Tick-trefoil

pea-like flowers signaled a fourth example, this from a different genus. It was Naked-Flowered Tick-trefoil (*Hylodesmum nudiflorum*), which blooms on a leafless stalk a short distance from leaves near the ground.

Dots of yellow punctuated the many white and pink flowers, exemplified by Yellow Wild Indigo (*Baptisia tinctoria*), Eastern Yellow Stargrass (*Hypoxis hirsuta*), and Green and Gold (*Chrysogonum virginianum*).

At the base of a White Oak (*Quercus alba*) was a Downy Yellow False Foxglove or Oak-leach (*Aureolaria virginica*), a hemiparasitic plant which derives some nutrition from oak trees but also produces some of its own nutrition through photosynthesis.



Downy Yellow
False Foxglove



Yellow
Wild
Indigo



Eastern Yellow
Stargrass



Green
and Gold

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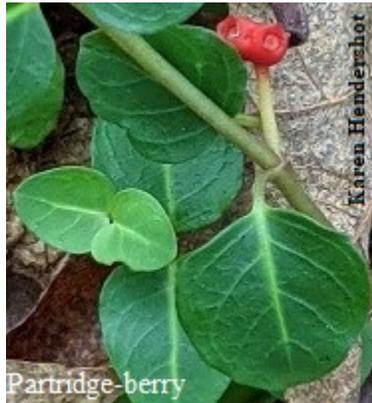


The events below are subject to cancellation or may be restricted to ten people because of Covid-19.

Saturday	Sep 11	10am	Jones Nature Preserve Walk
Rappahannock County. Join owner Bruce Jones in a walk through the preserve. Limit 15 people. Contact piedmontvnps@gmail.com to register.			
Saturday	Oct 9	Noon	Chapter Annual Meeting
Fauquier County. The Clifton Institute. See page 7 for details. Register at piedmontvnps@gmail.com .			
Saturday	Nov 13	1pm	Walk at Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship
Fauquier County. Identifying plants in winter. For more information and to register, contact piedmontvnps@gmail.com			
Saturday	Dec 11	1pm	Appalachian Trail Walk
Loudoun County. Walk on the AT at Ashby Hollow. Register at piedmontvnps@gmail.com .			

Summer Wildflowers at Bear Wallow (continued)

We crossed a narrow rivulet to the peat bog, watching our step to avoid the abundant orchid leaves. Mother Nature had defied Richard's attempt to show us Yellow Fringed Orchids in bloom as he has found in other years at this time, but perhaps the cool spring or dry weather had delayed their appearance. Only buds were visible. Pink Lady's-slippers were past their bloom but some spent flowers still hung from their ribbed seed capsules like a dark beard. Indian Cucumber-root (*Mediola virginiana*) and Partridge-berry (*Mitchella repens*) were also in fruit. Sally Anderson pointed out the two dots on the red fruit of the Partridge-berry, as the ovaries from the double blossoms fuse together to produce one berry.



Looking for tiny plants was well-rewarded on this trip. Delicate stems of Common Partridge-pea (*Chamaecrista fasciculata*) were just emerging. In the woodlands we found the beautiful leaves of another member of the Orchid Family, Downy Rattlesnake Plantain (*Goodyera pubescens*). We also saw the sage-colored leaves of Plantain-leaved Pussytoes (*Antennaria plantaginifolia*) and Striped Wintergreen (*Chimaphila maculata*), which was in bloom.

Shady areas offered us a variety of ferns, including Christmas Fern (*Polystichum acrostichoides*), whose boot-shaped leaflets are a good identifier. Marginal Wood Fern (*Dryopteris marginalis*) holds its sori (reproductive structures) on the edges of the leaflets, giving it its name. Particularly striking were the large Cinnamon Ferns (*Osmundastrum cinnamomeum*) in the peat bog. The name derives from the color of its stems and fertile fronds. Its blades can reach up to 5 feet.

The disturbed soil of the wide trail was an invitation to some alien species, among them Queen-Anne's Lace (*Daucus carota*), Spotted Knapweed (*Centaurea stoebe*), Chinese Bush Clover (*Lespedeza cuneata*), Spreading Hedge Parsley (*Torilis arvensis*), and Bladder Campion (*Silene vulgaris*). Some may be invasive, but the good news is that they had not taken over this particularly rich area of native plants.





VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY
 PIEDMONT CHAPTER ANNUAL MEETING

Saturday, October 9, 2021 12 p.m.
 The Clifton Institute, 6712 Blantyre Road, Warrenton, VA 20187

NOTICE: Due to the resurgence of the Covid-19 pandemic, we will require that all attendees wear masks.

Picnic Luncheon: Please bring your own food, beverages and utensils.

Business Meeting: **Election of Officers and Board of Directors , November 1, 2021 through October 31,2022, and approval of FY 2022 Budget**

Second Saturday Walk

Register at piedmontvnps@gmail.com

The Board of the Piedmont Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society presents the following candidates for election to serve 2021-2022. Board members and Officers may be elected to two consecutive two year terms, but are then ineligible for reelection for one full year to assure opportunity for others to participate and contribute new ideas. Nominations are welcome from the floor.

Officers:

President: Emily Southgate 2020-22, 2nd term
 Vice President
 Secretary: Sally Anderson 2020-22, 2nd term
 Treasurer: Karen Hendershot 2020-22, 1st term

Continuing

Directors:

Brenda Crawford 2020-21, 1st term
 Phoebe Muenger 2021-23, 2nd term
 Bryan Payne 2020-22, 2nd term
 Mary Keith Ruffner 2020-22, 2nd term
 Jocelyn Sladen 2021-23, 2nd term
 Richard Stromberg 2021-23, 2nd term
 Robin Williams 2020-22, 2nd term

Joining

Phil Daley 2021-23, 1st term
 Mitzi Fox 2021-23, 1st term
 Ashley Landes 2021-23, 1st term
 Mara Seaforest 2021-23, 1st term
 Kim Strader 2021-23, 1st term

Leaving

Ellie Daley, Dianne Krumme,
 Blanca Vandervoort, Kristin Zimet

IMPORTANT, TO ALL MEMBERS:

WE MUST HAVE A QUORUM TO ELECT YOUR OFFICERS AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS

PLEASE TAKE JUST A FEW MINUTES NOW TO EMAIL YOUR BALLOT TO piedmontvnps@gmail.com:

For the proposed Officers and Directors

I am in favor _____ not in favor _____

Signature _____

For the proposed Officers and Directors

I am in favor _____ not in favor _____

Signature _____

(second person or family membership)

Or mail your vote to Piedmont Chapter Virginia Native Plant Society, P.O. Box 336, The Plains, VA 20198

Thank You!

**PIEDMONT CHAPTER
VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY
P.O. BOX 336
THE PLAINS, VA 20198**



Curlyheads (Clematis ochroleuca)

