

The Leaflet

Jones Nature Preserve Walk article and photos by Kelly Krechmer

WINTER 2021

Fifteen people enjoyed a mild sunny day wildflower walk at [Jones Nature Preserve](#) in Rappahannock county on September 11, 2021. The walk was hosted by Bruce and Susan Jones.

Bruce led the group at a leisurely pace allowing participants plenty of time to look for interesting flora and fauna. Bruce and Susan shared stories of how they have spent 20 years on the preserve turning it from a hayfield to a species rich treasure.

Jones Preserve has many native plants including grasses, trees, shrubs, vines and flowers including the native to Rappahannock County, Strawberry Bush (*Euonymus americanus*).

We discussed extensively what type of mountain mint had sprung up unexpectedly and flourished hosting many pollinator species.



Bruce Jones (at right) describes some plants



Strawberry Bush



Emily Southgate used a loupe to get a closer look at some of the plants to help identify them

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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

The Chapter's email address is piedmontvnps@gmail.com

Jones Nature Preserve Walk (continued)



Fields of Goldenrod seem to go on forever at the Jones Preserve

Piedmont Chapter Annual Meeting article and photos by Sally Anderson

I love our annual meetings! We can socialize, eat, and look at plants too. Our Chapter has a great relationship with the Clifton Institute. They provided a fine place to hold our meeting and a choice of walks. Clifton Institute provides environmental education, conducts ecological research, and restores habitats for native plants and animals. Its 900-acre field station, permanently protected under conservation easement, provides a beautiful backdrop for all of its programs.

We elected officers (see list at left) with several new board members and we are thrilled about that! New people bring new ideas and new ways to accomplish our goals. President Emily Southgate gave a good rundown of the activities of the past year. Besides our monthly walks, most of which went off well in spite of the pandemic, we went to visit several properties where owners or managers had asked for our input, and did our annual invasive plant removal at the Thompson Wildlife Management Area Trillium site. Lucky for us, Covid spread has not been much of an outdoor issue, but we limit our walk size and are aware of distance. At Sky Meadows State Park, we set up our second fall self-guided hike. While we didn't have perfect weather like the previous year, we felt like the number of people who took the walk made it very worthwhile.

We raised enough money to create a meadow in a formerly disturbed site at Clifton in honor of our former chapter treasurer Cathy Mayes. It will be planted in the spring. The seeds are of local provenance and were grown at Clifton. We donated to send kids to attend camps focused on nature. And we did several outreach events, disseminating information about plants and habitats.

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Piedmont Chapter Annual Meeting (continued)

Emily finished by describing our Winter Speaker Series that she had given. They are still available for you to view at <https://vimeo.com/507089150> and <https://vimeo.com/518378820> if you missed them. Our Wildflower of the Week is going strong, at 84 weeks as of this writing. They can also be found on the website at <https://vnps.org/piedmont/wildflowers-of-the-week/>.



President Emily Southgate describes the chapter activities of the past year

After the meeting, one walk went between two large ponds and concentrated on wetland plants along the edges, while another group took to the upland fields and woods.

We have plenty planned for the coming year, so if you have not been active, please take a look at the calendar and come out to see plants, watch for our Winter Speaker Series or help us at an event.



Clifton Executive Director Bert Harris showing us plants grown from locally collected seed



Walk at Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship by Hope Woodward

The site chosen for the November 13 plant walk is part of a managed landscape that is being considered for state park status. Eight participants started out in the early afternoon of a sunny and windy 10-15 mph day, with a windchill perhaps dropping the low 50s down to a low 40 degrees. After walking and examining plants for just over two hours, we had found, identified, and discussed all 24 plants on the list provided by our plant walk leader, Dr. Emily Southgate, plus another four plants, with at least two more species mentioned.



Emily Southgate talks to the group

Kristen Zimet

We started out with introductions and an opportunity to review and purchase two guidebooks: Guide to Wildflowers in the Winter by Carol Levine, with a key backed by illustrations of structures by Dick Rauh and Weeds in Winter by Lauren Brown, as well as the leader's updated People and the Land through Time. Then, right by the parking lot, we found our first five plants. As these were the first ones to be identified, Emily walked us through using a plant key, and discussed the differences in plant anatomy and characteristics between two different goldenrods: Tall Goldenrod (*Solidago altissima*) and Grass-leaved Goldenrod (*Euthamia graminifolia*). *Euthamia* has a flat-topped inflorescence while *Solidago* has a wand-like panicle. Although the flat top is not as obvious when the flowers have developed into fruits, it was still clearly not wand-like and still had the grass-like leaves. (continued on page 5)

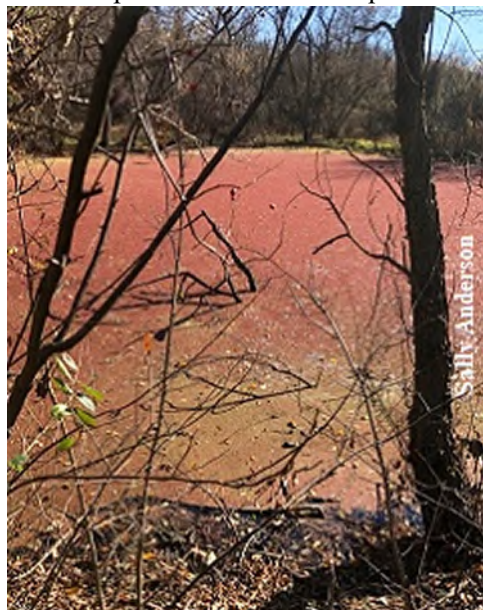


Walk at Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship (continued)

We discussed how plants survive the winter, needing to drop leaves to conserve water, those that stop photosynthesizing, and others, such as the Cup Plant (*Silphium perfoliatum*) with a curly receptacle (native to southwestern Virginia but not to Loudoun County) that have evergreen rosettes and photosynthesize all winter. Two other plants we identified in this first grouping of plants were Pokeweed (*Phytolacca americana*), the fruits of which are enjoyed by the White-throated Sparrows (*Zonotrichia albicollis*) present in the nearby brush, and Common Dock (*Rumex crispus*).

Starting down the trail past the entry sign at the edge of the field and bordered by woods, we discussed the plant-choking nature and wildlife food value of berries of the introduced Oriental Bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*). Emily pointed out how the expanded overwintering range of the Northern Cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) correlated with the introduction of Multiflora Rose (*Rosa multiflora*) in the northeastern United States. The Northern Cardinal was able to survive the colder winters by consuming this species' berries. We also explored how the prickles on the rose were actually an outgrowth of the epidermis of the stem and how to identify this rose from others by the hairy stipules at the base of new stems, as well as by its clustered berries.

We proceeded into the woods and on to the pond, which is often covered in Duckweed (*Lemna* spp.) in summer but which we found cloaked in red vegetation. Emily ventured to the pond edge and returned with samples of Carolina Mosquito Fern (*Azolla caroliniana*). We examined this unique fern before



moving on to seven other species on the pond edge of the tree-lined ascending path. For example, identifying characteristics of the Black Cherry (*Prunus serotina*) include the horizontal lenticels that aid in oxygen exchange and how as the bark ages it curls like potato chips, distinguishing it from other *Prunus* species. Poison Ivy

(*Toxicodendron radicans*) climbing up a tree can be avoided by recalling the saying, "if its hairy, be wary." The berries of the Common Greenbrier (*Smilax rotundifolia*) are loved by birds and the young tendrils can be eaten by humans. The presence of Japanese Honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*) in a currently wooded habitat may indicate that it was at one time an old field.

Paying more attention to plants growing more closely to the ground, we enjoyed the licorice scent of Sweet Cicely (*Osmorhiza claytonia*) and noticed the first-year rosette growth of the biennial Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*) and the remains of the second year of the biennial Queen Anne's Lace (*Daucus carota*), our familiar carrot grown and eaten in the first year of the cycle. In this same area, we sampled the sweet spicy aroma of the red berries (continued on page 6)





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

Saturday	Dec 11	1pm	Ashby Hollow Appalachian Trail Walk
Clarke County. Piedmont Chapter President Emily Southgate will lead a walk along the Appalachian Trail. Limit 15 people. Contact piedmontvnps@gmail.com to register.			
Saturday	Jan 8	1pm	Woodland Memories Walk at The State Arboretum at Blandy
Clarke County. Kim Strader, former assistant curator of the Blandy native plant trail, will lead a walk at the State Arboretum telling the background and natural history of trees on the trail. Register at piedmontvnps@gmail.com .			
Sunday	Jan 23	1pm	Winter Speaker Series: Blandy Native Plant Trail Management
Zoom. Jack Monsted will talk about management of the Native Plant Trail at the State Arboretum at Blandy. Register at piedmontvnps@gmail.com .			
Saturday	Feb 12	1pm	Sky Meadows State Park Walk
Fauquier County. 2020 Virginia Master Naturalist Shenandoah Chapter Naturalist of the Year Mary-Keith Ruffner and 2021 Virginia Master Naturalist Shenandoah Chapter Naturalist of the Year Sally Anderson will lead a walk to look for skunk cabbage and other early plants at Sky Meadows State Park. To register, contact piedmontvnps@gmail.com			
Sunday	Feb 27	2pm	Winter Speaker Series: Grassland at Clifton
Zoom. Executive Director of Clifton Institute Bert Harris will talk about grassland habitat management at Clifton. Register at piedmontvnps@gmail.com .			
Saturday	March 12	1pm	Phelps Wildlife Management Area Walk
Fauquier County. Ron Hughes, wildlife biologist of the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources, will lead a walk through rolling low hills near the Rappahannock River. Register at piedmontvnps@gmail.com .			

Walk at Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship (continued)

and foliage of Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*) and returned to discuss the goldenrods when we examined a fall (perhaps Calico) Aster (*Symphyotrichum* spp.), noting how DNA analysis has indicated that North American asters are more closely related to the *Solidago* genus than to European and Asian asters. Before leaving the covered woods, the topic of the palatability of invasive species to deer was considered and it was noted that they liked to browse on young Japanese Barberry (*Berberis thunbergia*) and perhaps Multiflora Rose.



We headed away from the pond and reached an open sunny area with overhead power lines where we found native Indian Grass (*Sorghastrum nutans*) identified by a leafy ligule, Blue Vervain (*Verbena hastata*) that blooms in white or blue, and poisonous, yellow-fruited Horse Nettle (*Solanum carolinense*) with stellate hairs on the leaf back and spines on the stem and back of the leaf main vein. Here too was the highly-invasive Mile-a-Minute (*Persicaria perfoliata*) with stems turning red in winter like many species in the Polygonaceae family. Its prickles are reflexed to facilitate attaching to and climbing over nearby vegetation as it grows, enabling it to grow upward more efficiently without needing to twine.



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Walk at Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship (continued)



As we left the open area of the powerlines, and turned to start down a wide-mowed path bordered by shrubs and trees, we came upon the invasive alien Chinese Bush-clover (*Lespedeza cuneata*) that flowers along its stalk, the native Boxelder or Ash-leaved Maple (*Acer negundo*), and Virgin's Bower (*Clematis virginiana*).

A unique aspect of this next to last environment was that near its terminus the path was bordered by young moisture-loving Sycamore trees (*Platanus occidentalis*). One of its identifying characteristics is a seed ball in which all the seeds are attached

to a central core, similar to the non-native invasive Teasel (*Dipsacus fullonum*) which was introduced for its seed head's usefulness in cleaning wool. This sunny path also favored Indian Grass and Purpletop Grass (*Tridens flavus*) also called "grease grass", with diagnostic hairy ligules; brambles (*Rubus* spp.; "Blackberry"); and ripe edible Wild Grape (*Vitis* spp.). Emily explained that the age of the Wild Grape can be determined by the fact that it is only capable of climbing small trees. If a grape vine is found in the top of a large tree, its age is the same age as that tree. Finally, before entering the Sycamore "tunnel", we identified the invasive shrub Amur Honeysuckle (*Lonicera maackii*) with its diagnostic opposite branches and paired fruits.



As we headed back to our starting point, walking with a wide-open field on our right and the treed area we just exited on our left, we examined the huge set of seed pods of Common Milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*), discussed theories on why a plant might have a small seed set, and felt the silkiness of the seed. We ended our plant list with Japanese Stilt Grass (*Microstegium vimineum*), an invasive plant high in silica that is palatable only when very young, and otherwise avoided by herbivores.

By the time we reached our cars, the wind had died down, the sun was still shining, and we shared a round of chocolate before heading on our separate ways.





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Curlyheads (*Clematis ochroleuca*)



Amur Honeysuckle



late blooming biennial evening primrose along the pond edge at Clifton