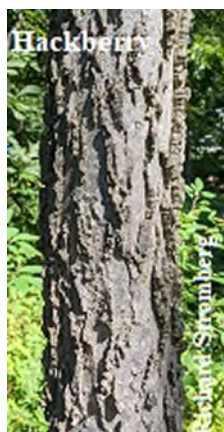


The Leaflet

Woodland Memories Walk at The State Arboretum by Kim Strader

SUMMER 2022

January 8 was a cold and blustery day, but 13 people joined Kim Strader on the woodland section of the Nancy Larrick Crosby Native Plant Trail at the State Arboretum of Virginia at Blandy Experimental Farm,. Kim is the former Assistant Curator of the Native Plant Trail and after having spent 20 years working on the Trail, she filled us in on the back-stories of some of her favorite trees.



The White Ash (*Fraxinus americana*) at the start of the woodland trail was planted in 1998. Kim detected Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) on this tree in 2016, one year after it was first recorded on the Arboretum grounds. She showed us the branch where this invasive insect was first sighted and told us they made the hard decision to treat this one tree rather than let it succumb to EAB. The tree is still thriving but, unfortunately, by treating it they risk harming any of the 150 native insects that feed there.

A large old Hackberry (*Celtis occidentalis*) that once stood near the beginning of the trail had to be cut down at approximately 180 years old in 2015 due to damage a decade earlier from a lightning strike. Many people, especially those in the mid-west tend to look upon this tree as a weed but Kim reminded us that it is a host plant for 47 butterfly/moth species and the small fruits feed a variety birds and mammals. Kim missed all the shade the canopy provided but took heart in knowing it opened the opportunity for other native herbaceous plants to grow.

A small grove of Pawpaw trees greeted us from the path. The trees were grown from seed collected in Fairfax County in 2002 by the United States Botanic Garden. Three trees were planted on the trail and eight years later, in 2010, they began to sucker from the roots to start forming a grove. Kim said they all rejoiced and enjoyed eating fruits from the trees 15 years later in 2017. The fruits are a favorite for opossums, raccoons and box turtles too. The leaves provide a source of food for 13 caterpillars species and are the only food source for the Zebra Swallowtail butterfly caterpillars.

Kim was full of stories of the trees on the trail:

- A Burr Oak (*Quercus macrocarpa*) planted in 2004 became misshaped due to a nearby Redbud (*Cercis canadensis*) growing too close, so they cut the Redbud down in 2012. In 2014 and 2015 they created a prop tool to try to straighten the tree, and it actually worked but the tree died in 2021.
- A non-characteristic double trunked Tulip Poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) was planted in 1999 and sap began seeping from the crotch of the two trunks. In 2014 they removed one of the trunks and everyone made Tulip Poplar bark baskets.
- A Shagbark Hickory (*Carya ovata*) was planted in 2000 and took 19 years for the bark to start shagging.
- The Virginia State Champion Hackberry (*Celtis occidentalis*) that was located at the end of the woodland section fell on a calm spring day in 2003. It was believed to have been standing when George Washington surveyed this area of Virginia.



(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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Woodland Memories Walk at The State Arboretum (continued)

Kim's favorite tree was the Bald Cypress (*Taxodium distichum*) planted after the champion Hackberry fell. It came to the Arboretum as a bare root seedling from the Virginia Department of Forestry in 1991 and was planted into a nursery area in 1994 as part of a research project. In 2003, the tree was rather brutally removed in a way that required chain-sawing the taproot and moved to its location of the Native Plant Trail in hopes that ponding water would make it grow its iconic knees. When water ponded in 2018, it grew knees, months after Kim retired from the Arboretum.

Kim ended the walk here at the intersection of the woodland and meadow sections of the Native Plant Trail by showing us a picture of herself with the Volunteers who helped her maintain the Trail.



Exploring Regional Grasslands by Jocelyn Sladen

A sweeping glance across our regional landscape would seem assurance enough that healthy green grass is in no danger of extinction. Early each spring, the winter earth turns green as lawns, pastures and roadsides come alive with grass. Almost without exception, these emerging grasses are not native, but have been imported or developed, mainly for agriculture.

In recent years, conservationists have become concerned by major loss of the ecologically diverse native grassland ecosystems that once existed here and supported plant and animal species, including grassland birds. As these grasslands have been ploughed under, native field

grasses like Little Bluestem (*Schizachrium scoparium*) and Indian Grass (*Sorghastrum nutans*), key parts of the surrounding biodiversity, lost ground. Populations of native songbirds like Grasshopper Sparrows, Bobolinks, and Dickcissels have diminished, along with countless plant and insect species once typical of these grassland habitats.

The February 27 Winter Speakers Series, "Historical Botany: Planning for the Future" speaker was Clifton Institute Executive Director, Bert Harris. He shared insights on research and recovery efforts for remnants of grasslands ecosystems in our region that are being lost to development or agriculture.

At Clifton Institute's 900-acre field station, pastures formerly used for cattle grazing are now part of a grasslands research program. With a grant from National Research Conservation Service, Clifton will divide the pasture area into separate paddocks to test the effects of different grassland establishment management techniques, including fire, herbicide spraying, seeding, and mowing, along with a control plot.

(continued on p.3)





Exploring Regional Grasslands (continued)

The grasslands research is tied to other aspects of Clifton's program. As Bert explained, a core of Clifton's mission is, "to open people's eyes to the incredible biodiversity around us," In pursuing its several intertwined goals, the Institute has launched a long-term BioBlitz, aiming to identify and inventory all the species that presently exist across the roughly 900 acres of the Institute's property: the birds, plants, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, insects and fungi and all the rest. Experts as well as citizen scientist volunteers using iNaturalist to store pictures and data are participating. Results will aid research and land management programs.

As well as highlighting biodiversity for its conservation and educational value, BioBlitzing will supply baseline data for potential restoration programs, although, as Bert emphasized, restoration needs to be planned in terms of meaningful goals. For instance, while restoration to offset declining bird life might seem well intended action, we must choose species and natural systems, "we can do something about." For instance, as rare and declining species like the Winter Bumblefly are documented in our region, Clifton's staff aims to find effective strategies to renew habitat for them through research and promising land management initiatives. On the ground research is key. Now, box turtles wear radio tags.

Bert expressed appreciation to our Piedmont chapter, whose band of volunteers turned up on work days this past spring and summer to inventory plant species in fields slated for experimental programs. While obviously not complete, the resulting list has given a "general idea of the rough abundance in those fields," sufficient to move forward with plans. 169 species were identified, 60 of them alien. Two native plants, White-haired Panic grass (*Dicanthelium villosissimum* var. *villosissimum*), and Rough Barnyard grass (*Echinochloa muricata* var. *microstachya*), had never before been collected in Fauquier County.

Bert mentioned hopes to enlist more volunteers, not only for BioBlitzing, but for many of its ongoing programs. The rewards of work include hours spent getting to know the beauty of Clifton's natural areas, with its plants and wildlife, native plant garden, two lakes, and waterfowl. Those interested in events or volunteering are encouraged to find Clifton Institute on its Facebook page or telephone the Institute at 540-341-3651.



The Clifton Institute

Phelps Wildlife Management Area Walk text and photos by Sarah Hutchinson

On Saturday, March 26, Ron Hughes of the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources led a group of 12 native plant enthusiasts to a unique site on the Hogue Tract of the C.F. Phelps Wildlife Management Area near Remington, Va. It was cloudy and chilly in the low 40s, with light rain becoming snow or sleet as we explored the destination—a Piedmont River-Scour Shrubland on the Rappahannock River.

To orient participants, Ron explained that the site is located in a Triassic basin, and most of the bedrock we saw is siltstone, with some diabase. This makes for dark-colored rock and basic soils. Before leaving the parking area, we observed a nice patch of Virginia Bluebells (*Mertensia virginiana*) beginning to bloom, alongside plenty of non-native invasive species (Winter Creeper, Forsythia, Japanese Honeysuckle, etc.). We crossed the bridge over the Rappahannock River and began walking the trail that led to our destination. As we walked, we noticed some early spring ephemerals. Cutleaf Toothwort (*Cardamine concatenata*), Early Saxifrage (*Micranthes virginianensis*), Star Chickweed (*Stellaria pubera*), and Bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*) were in bloom. We learned that Bloodroot seeds are dispersed by ants. They pick up them up for the edible, fatty elaiosome attached to the seed.

(continued on page 4)



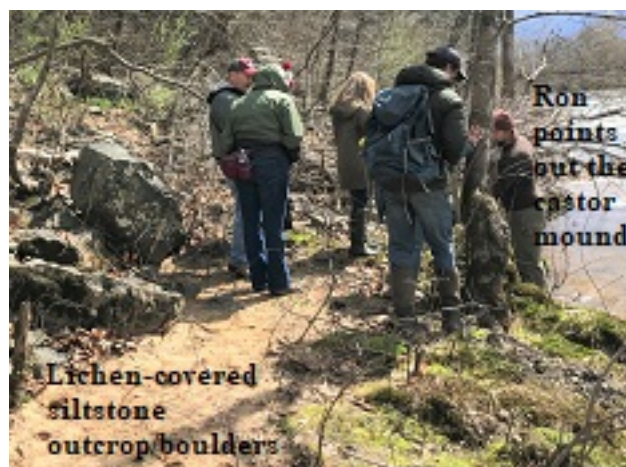
Phelps Wildlife Management Area Walk (continued)

After a steep descent, we arrived at the Scour Shrubland. This long, narrow strip of sandy, rocky soil was squeezed between a dark, jagged siltstone outcrop and the Rappahannock River. It is frequently “scoured” by floodwaters, allowing only well-adapted plants to survive. The outcrop partially overhung the area, that was dotted with moss and lichen-covered boulders as well. The plant community was dominated by Possumhaw (*Ilex decidua*) and American Hornbeam (*Carpinus caroliniana*). American Hornbeam is a small tree also called Musclewood because the trunk has ridges that look like muscles. Possum-haw is a large, deciduous holly with gray bark covered with lenticels, and spurs on its twigs. It is dioecious and usually holds onto its berries through the winter longer than Winterberry Holly (*Ilex verticillata*), that was also present on site.

Other woody species included Sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*) and Hop-hornbeam (*Ostrya virginiana*). Herbaceous species were still largely dormant, but we saw Shrubby St. John’s-wort (*Hypericum prolificum*), Greenbriars (*Smilax* spp.), River Oats (*Chasmanthium latifolium*), and Deer-Tongue grass (*Dichanthelium clandestinum*). A few invasive species, including Multiflora Rose (*Rosa multiflora*), were present. We also observed a Northern Hogsucker fish (*Hypentelium nigricans*) in the river, and a castor mound on the shore. Beavers (*Castor canadensis*) secrete a musky smell onto piles of dead leaves and other debris, to mark their territory.

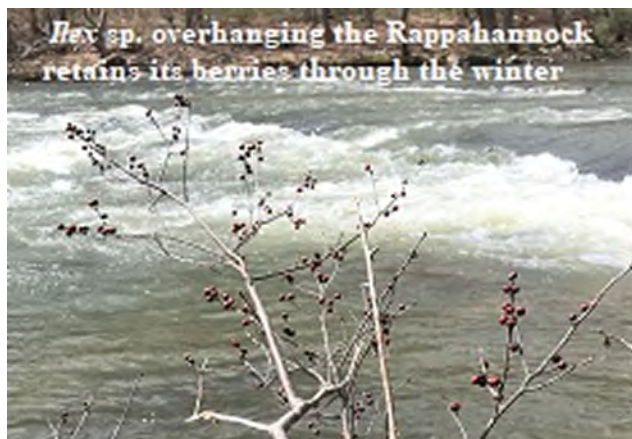


Deertongue
grass sprouts
among mosses
on the scour



Lichen-covered
siltstone
outcrop boulders

Ron
points
out the
castor
mound



Ilex sp. overhanging the Rappahannock
retains its berries through the winter



Holly, Redcedar, Sycamore
and Musclewood grow in
sandy scour soil, adjacent
to siltstone bedrock

As we journeyed back up the slope, we observed many mosses, *Heuchera* species growing out of gaps in the siltstone outcrop, and Eastern Redcedars (*Juniperus virginiana*) at the top. A short walk back to the parking area, enlivened by conversations about conservation and restoration, concluded the trip. Visiting this unique ecosystem and learning about the river Scour Shrubland plant community was a great experience enjoyed by all.



April 9 Shenandoah River State Park Walk by Richard Stromberg

Starting from the parking lot at the bottom of the hill, Master Naturalist Richard Stromberg led the group along the Bluebell Trail. The Park moved the trail up the hill from the South Fork of the Shenandoah River a few years ago to avoid flooding and mud, so the masses of Virginia Bluebells (*Mertensia virginica*) were somewhat distant from us towards the river on our right, but we saw plenty of them as we went along, some even growing up the hill well away from the water. Being further uphill brought us to more species than the old trail. Spring Beauties (*Claytonia virginica*) and Cutleaf Toothwort (*Cardamine concatenata*) showed up over and over on this part of the walk. Too much of the invasive Gill-over-the-



ground (*Glechoma hederacea*) covered the ground with non-native Purple Dead-nettle (*Lamium purpureum*) popping up in it. Small clumps of Yellow Fumewort (*Corydalis flavula*) and Star Chickweed (*Stellaria pubera*) showed up occasionally. So did Bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*) leaves and fruit. We also spotted some Pawpaw (*Asimina triloba*) buds starting to open. At the first rock outcrop, small sprays of Early Saxifrage (*Micranthes virginicensis*) appeared



with white flowers atop straight stems sprouting from tight clusters of basal leaves. At the second outcrop we had to look twice to see we were looking at a different plant with white flowers atop a straight stalk. These flowers had four petals while Saxifrage has five, and the basal leaves were quite different. It was



Rocktwist (*Draba ramosissima*). Just beyond was a large population of Twinleaf (*Jefersonia diphylla*) with the unique divided leaf and single white flower. Unfortunately, they weren't open. Then the violets appeared, and hand lenses came out to examine the hairs in the center. The final decision (or best guess) was that they were Common Blue Violet (*Viola sororia*). Then we came to violets with white petals splotted with blue, a variety of the Common Blue called Confederate Violet. Then we found all white violets with violet stripes on the lower petal leading to the nectar source, Striped Violet (*Viola striata*). (continued on page 6)





Register for these events at piedmontvnps@gmail.com.

Saturday	Jun 11	10am	Jones Nature Preserve Pollinator Meadow Walk Rappahannock County. Bruce Jones will lead us to see open areas on his nature preserve.
Saturday	Jul 9	10am	Shenandoah National Park Drive Warren & Page County. Join us in a car caravan along Skyline Drive in the North Section of Shenandoah National Park stopping to see flowers, geological formations and views, led by Master Naturalist Richard Stromberg.
Saturday	Aug 13	10am	Butterfly and Host Plant Walk Clarke County. Master Naturalists Robin Williams and Mary Keith Ruffner will lead a walk at the State Arboretum of Virginia at Blandy Experimental Farm to see butterflies and the plants that support them.

Shenandoah River State Park Walk (continued)

At the end of the flat, one-mile Bluebell Trail, a few people turned back as we were about to climb up hill for another two miles. Emily Southgate knew the little white butterfly we saw with orange wing tips was a Falcate Orangetip (*Anthocharis midea*). We entered the campground, which gave us a chance for a bathroom break. We climbed up through the campground to get to the Campground Trail and continue our 300 feet climb. Now on drier ground the flora was not as profuse as the Bluebell Trail. We found some Trailing Arbutus (*Epigaea repens*) still blooming, many clumps of Bluets (*Houstonia caerulea*) and



Wild Pinks (*Silene caroliniana*). We identified two sedges: Broad-leaved (*Carex platyphylla*) and Pennsylvania (*C. pennsylvanica*). When we got to the Culler's Overlook, I saw some small white flowers in the grass. Emily said, "*Draba verna*, four cleft petals." I found it in the Flora of Virginia app: Whitlow-grass.



After gazing at the spectacular view over a bend of the river to the Massanutten Mountains spreading in both directions, we started downhill on the Overlook Trail. Just starting to open was a yellow composite, which this time of year must be a Ragwort. The basal leaves told us it was Round-leaved Ragwort



(*Packera obovata*). Also just starting to open was Yellow Pimpernel (*Taenidia integerrima*). We found several dried up Barometer Earthstar fungi (*Astraeus hygrometricus*). At the Visitor Center, we took Hemlock Hollow Trail past a large Eastern Hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*) and down the steep hill cars with not much else new to see.





April 12 Balls Bluff Walk by Steve Bodolay photos by Jannet Brown

Emily Southgate can be very convincing, though her judgment sometimes might be lacking and she is prone to risky behavior (note lying face down to smell the rotting meat scent of a particular plant; to her credit, however, she did eschew the opportunity to do the same with the fox carcass so exquisitely displayed in the woods at Ball's Bluff). She asked me to undertake writing this article about our walk at Ball's Bluff. I accepted the assignment, with all proper disclosures, caveats and warnings that I am most assuredly not technically competent to identify with any authority any of the plants we so carefully observed, by either their formal or popular names, or even more customized terms (as in "Dutch Pants"). Apparently desperate for someone, anyone, to step up and write, she dispensed with even the most basic requirements for knowledge of the subject matter and said just to write anything. Hah. Poor Emily.

The walk was wonderful in a beautiful, natural setting, with many exquisite and diverse native plants (and a few invasives) showing their awakening in this annual time of rebirth, aptly coinciding with the promise of Easter. The variety was amazing; everything from Virginia Bluebells to Sessile Trillium to Rue Anemone and White and Yellow Trout Lilies intermingled in a striking display of camaraderie, Shooting Stars, Bear Corn and Squirrel Corn, and much more. We also were treated to migrating Rat Snakes, that,



Shooting Star (*Primula meadia*)

having spent the winter in the rocks at the river's edge (thank you for this insight, Emily), were now heading out to their hunting grounds for the upcoming warmer weather. More, we saw an unidentified, slimmer snake that seemed to be trying to set a new altitude record by climbing high up into a tree at water's edge. Despite much speculation, no one could identify with certitude just what the snake's intentions might have been. Perhaps it was just struck by a strong sense of curiosity, or was an overachiever, or a social climber, or simply hoped to find a meal in the



Squirrel Corn (*Dicentra cucullaria*)

rarified atmosphere and branches above. Then, to cap it all off, there was a magnificent Barred Owl, who kept an occasional eye upon us all to be sure that we were up to no mischief. (Fortunately, the climbing snake and the owl seemed not to cross paths, or, once again, curiosity might have resulted in a demise.)



White & Yellow Trout Lilies (*Erythronium albidum & americanum*)

As always, the leaders (Phil Daley, Sally Anderson, Kristin Zimet, and Emily) and other attendees showed their kindness and patience with those of us, like myself, whose knowledge of plants is marginal at best, and whose questions must seem not only simple but awfully repetitive. Watching their close, dedicated attention to detail on this walk and previous ones as they examined the settings of the plants, their most intimate details, and their stage of growth, and correlating those and other characteristics with their deep knowledge derived from long-term study of the plants, evoked in me a strong sense of something akin to prayer. These lovely people set a fine

example as they revel in the beauty of our magnificent reality, reflecting the miracle of all that is around us. What better way to express gratitude to the Creator (or, if one must, to Nature), who built this world, than to love it, to respect it, to try to protect it, and to share it with others?



Spring Ephemerals at Jones Nature Preserve text and photos by Karen Hendershot

Tiny bees hummed around blooming Pussytoes (*Antennaria* spp.), young Tiger Swallowtails (*Papilio glaucus*) hovered over the pond, and a variety of bird species fluttered around a feeder as a small group of us gathered on April 11 to see spring ephemerals at the Jones Nature Preserve. Narrow paths and delicate flowers limited participation in this event to a few members. What we saw was the result of decades of work to transform a cow pasture into a tribute to botanical diversity.



Under a shady woodland adjacent to their home, Bruce and Susan Jones have created a space for spring ephemerals. Common Blue Violets (*Viola sororia*), host to the caterpillars of many Fritillary Butterflies (*Speyeria* and *Boloria* spp.), were blooming, as were scattered Bluebells (*Mertensia virginiana*). Wood or Celandine Poppy (*Stylophorum diphyllum*), Large-flowered Bellwort (*Uvularia grandiflora*), Green-and-gold (*Chrysogonum virginianum*), and Ragwort (*Packera*

spp.) were just starting to bloom and would soon cover the earth with bright yellow. The first two are native to southern parts of Virginia. The others grow in our chapter's area.

Eastern Shooting Star (*Primula meadia*) was in its early stages but presented us with one lovely floral umbel and we could see that it was spreading happily. Yellow Trout Lily (*Erythronium americanum*) was in bloom and nearby was the rarer White Trout Lily (*E. albidum*), its blossom flared dramatically like a nun's starched cornette. A dense mat of Partridgeberry (*Mitchella repens*), with some red berries still intact, protected a steep slope.



Punctuating the space were round clumps of Little Sweet Betsy Trillium (*Trillium cuneatum*), a species native to more southern States. It is similar to our area's Toadshade (*T. sessile*) but is larger, more distinctly patterned, and with a more pleasant spicey scent. Bruce has a variety of Trilliums, including Large-flowered (*T. grandiflorum*) and the very delicate Virginia Least Trillium (*T. pusillum*), which grows naturally mostly

in the southeast of the state but has also been found in the western mountains.

Bruce's aim is to collect species supportive of wildlife, if not all strictly native to his home in Rappahannock County. In addition to ephemerals' beauty, some are more exotic. Most memorable for me was Southern Prickly-ash (*Zanthoxylum clava-herculis*), native to the far southern coastal regions of Virginia and not really an Ash. Ash Trees are in the Olive Family (*Oleaceae*) but this is a member of the Citrus Family (*Rutaceae*). As a result, it is a host of the largest butterfly in North America, the Giant Swallowtail (*Papilio cresphontes*), whose caterpillars feed on citrus leaves. It is also known as Toothache Tree (for the numbing qualities of its bark) but another common name is Hercules's-club. Take a look at the trunk and you will see why. Tree-huggers beware!!! [See the Calendar for our June tour of the Jones Preserve]





May 14 Piedmont VNPS walk at the Clifton Institute, Warrenton by Emily Southgate

Clifton Institute habitat specialist Andrew Eberly started our walk with an introduction to the geology of this area of the Virginia Piedmont. He first made clear that though we think of this area as piedmont, as it is not as mountainous as the Blue Ridge, the geology puts it in the Blue Ridge province. He took us back hundreds of millions of years, to a time before plants (or animals that depend on them) moved from the ocean to land. A huge landmass included not only what is North America but also Europe and Africa. This landmass split, forming an ocean to the east of North America, where the Atlantic is now. This splitting involved vast flows of lava, which solidified to form basalt.

Fast forward a few hundred million years and continental drift brought them back together, closing the sea. This resulted in tremendous pressure and heat, which changed the structure of the basalt, into rock with flattened structures. Think of squeezing a ball between your hands – it flattens, though there is not much heat. This process, called metamorphism, made the greenstone which is the bedrock for the hills of both the Catocin Mountains and the Blue Ridge. It is very resistant to erosion, so as softer rocks eroded away, the harder greenstone was left at higher elevations. He showed us some jumbled rock from outcrops, which show the flat surfaces caused by the internal structure of the rock.

This geologic history has many consequences for the plant communities. First, the soil is a strange combination of being rich in nutrients (base-rich) but at the same time somewhat acid. Second, there are lots of outcrops, so it was often not plowed, so underground structures of spring ephemerals are undisturbed. Much of it, especially flatter areas, was used for orchards until the middle of the 19th century, and the rest was logged for various reasons, so the trees are mostly not very old or large, though they are quite tall.

So, what did we seven enthusiasts see? We started in a forest where Tulip trees (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) dominated, with beautiful tall, straight trunks. Herbaceous layer plants were dense, including abundant White Ash (*Fraxinus americana*) seedlings, Wild Comfrey (*Andersonglossum virginianum*) (not named after Sally, I'm sorry to say), Carrion Flower (*Smilax herbacea*), Rue Anemone (*Thalictrum thalictroides*), Yellow Stargrass (*Hypoxis hirsuta*) and Canada Horsebalm (*Collinsonia canadensis*). We had missed the flowers of Perfoliate Bellflower (*Uvularia perfoliata*), but the Solomon's Plume (*Maianthemum racemosum*) was just beginning to send out flower stalks. The trail was covered with leaves of the native Violet Wood-sorrel (*Oxalis violacea*) with their distinctive purple markings, and we found one remaining flower.

I was especially excited to see a favorite small woodland tree in bloom, Fringetree (*Chionanthus virginicus*). This member of the same family as ash, the Olive family, is also attacked by the Emerald Ash Borer, but seems to survive, while all of the ash trees in the vicinity have died. The other special treat was Pennywort (*Obolaria virginica*). Though not rare, this diminutive plant is often overlooked. Once we started seeing it, we found a lot of plants in bloom. It is a hemiparasite; that is, it makes some of its own food but relies in part on food it obtains from the roots of other plants.

(continued on page 10)





As we got closer to the top of the hill, the vegetation changed, from abundant Tulip trees to no Tulips but abundant Oaks – Red, White, and Chestnut (*Quercus rubra*, *Q. alba* and *Q. montana*). Probably Black Oak (*Q. velutina*) as well, and some Hickories (*Carya* spp.). The herbaceous layer was sparser and included plants that usually prefer more acid conditions, such as Blueberry (*Vaccinium* sp.) or of shale barrens, such as Dittany (*Cunila origanoides*). Andrew suggested that perhaps here the conditions are dryer, since it is near the top of the hill so gets no drainage water, and perhaps windier.

On our way back down the hill, I subconsciously avoided stepping on what to my subconscious mind was an upright twig. When I glance over to see it, I realized that it was the inflorescence of Puttyroot (*Aplectrum hyemale*), a rather unattractive name for a lovely orchid. The leaf which had been present flat on the ground for the winter had turned brown and the flower stalk rose about a foot and a half with abundant small, reddish/white, orchid flowers. A fitting finale to a fascinating and delightful walk.

PIEDMONT CHAPTER

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