

The Leaflet

Piedmont Chapter Annual Meeting by Sally Anderson

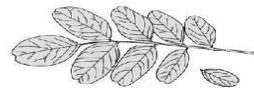
WINTER 2022

The 2022 Chapter annual meeting took place on October 8 at the Cool Spring Campus of Shenandoah University on the east side of the Shenandoah just north of Rt. 7 in Clarke County. The former golf course still has very accessible cart paths as well as some unpaved trails. The property became part of the University in 2013 and work to restore habitats is ongoing. Piedmont Chapter members met at the campus and had a BYO lunch with delicious desserts provided by the board. The weather was chilly, and drove us indoors from the picnic pavilion, but was beautiful for the walk that followed. Our thanks go out to manager Gene Lewis, who had a warm space ready for us to use, and who has done much of the restoration work on the campus.



The meeting was called to order at 1:05 by President Emily Southgate, who then presented the treasurer's report followed by the slate of board members and officers, who were elected unanimously (see page 2).

After everyone introduced themselves, Emily reported the activities and accomplishments of the preceding year: monthly walks; quarterly newsletters; the winter speaker series with Bert Harris from Clifton Institute and Jack Monstead from Blandy on grassland management; Wildflower of the Week, which was posted to our Facebook and Instagram pages; support of scholarship programs at the Bull Run Conservancy, Clifton Institute, and Blandy summer camps; exhibits, advice, and book sales at native plant sales sponsored by Blandy, Clifton Institute, and the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy; and the Habitat Game at the Clarke County Conservation Fair held at Powhatan School. The game offers interactive exhibits on environmental and conservation topics to 4th graders. She noted that we received a generous donation that will allow us to publish a new pamphlet on Woodland maintenance to complement our Grassland and Hedgerow pamphlets. We are also looking ahead to likely expenses to protect and enhance populations of the beautiful and rare Queen-of-the-Prairie (*Filipendula rubra*) found last summer, embarking on this project in conjunction with the Clifton Institute. (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

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

OFFICERS

Mitzi Fox *President*
fox57va@gmail.com
Vice President vacant
Mara Seaforest, *Treasurer*
maraseaforest@gmail.com
Kristin Zimet, *Secretary*
kristinzimet@yahoo.com

DIRECTORS

Phil Daley pedaley@verizon.net
Ashley Landes
alandes12@su.edu
Ed LeGrand
edmundlegrand@gmail.com
Charlotte Lorick
charlotte.lorick@osgf.org
Laurie Denker MacNaughton
Laurie@middleburgreverse.com
Phoebe Muenger
PJM Wenger@gmail.com
Jocelyn Sladen
jsladen616@gmail.com
Kim Strader
kimstrader50@gmail.com
Richard Stromberg
richsybi@gmail.com

Piedmont Chapter Annual Meeting (continued)

Following the meeting we had a drawing for plants and books and a walk along the Shenandoah River. Though late in the season, we saw several special trees including both Shumard Oak (*Quercus shumardii*) and Bur Oak (*Q. macrocarpa*), both uncommon and found exclusively in river floodplains in our area. Some other plants of note were White-flowered Leafcup (*Polymnia canadensis*) with large lobed leaves and big seeds and Bur cucumber (*Sicyos angulatus*) with tightly wrapped tendrils like green springs and spiny seeds.



Butterfly & Host Plant Walk at Blandy text and photos by MK Ruffner

Fifteen people were treated to a sunny, mild August day perfect for a butterfly and butterfly habitat walk co-lead by Robin Williams and Sally Anderson in the lovely meadows at the State Arboretum at Blandy. Kristin Zimet and MK Ruffner also helped. Robin, who was the creator of the Washington Fourth of July Butterfly Count in Rappahannock County, shared her knowledge and love of butterflies while Sally provided plant ID and botanical help.

Robin started our walk off with an informative introduction, with handouts including an official butterfly count sheet and a one-sheet quick reference "Find the host, find the butterfly" that she created for our chapter as a handout for plant sales. And then we struck off to look for butterflies and plants.

Blandy has wonderful habitat for butterflies, and the sunny, open meadows are a great place to look for them with so many good nectar and host plants. The whole property is abundant with "butterfly plants." Heading to, and near, Rattlesnake Spring we saw big billowy stands of Hollow Joe-Pye Weed (*Eutrochium fistulosum*) in full bloom. This plant is favored by butterflies as is the Buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*) we saw, nearing the end of bloom.



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Butterfly & Host Plant Walk at Blandy (continued)

One Viceroy butterfly was spotted flying near its' host plant, Willow, reinforcing “find the host, find the butterfly.”

The summer of 2022 saw low numbers of butterflies on many of the Piedmont Chapter area butterfly counts, possibly a reflection of the many big rain storms this spring and summer. On our 1.5 hour walk we were able to see 18 species of butterflies, but with low numbers of each species.



Butterflies seen and some host plants (most of these host plants are found at Blandy)

Butterfly	Host Plants
Monarch	Milkweeds
Clouded Sulphur	various legumes, clovers trefoils
Wild Indigo Duskywing	Wild Indigos, Lupine, Crownvetch
Eastern Tiger Swallowtail	Yellow Poplar, Wild Cherry and many more
Question Mark	Hackberry, Elm, Nettle, False Nettle
Pipevine Swallowtail	Pipevine
Red Admiral	Nettle, False Nettle, Wood Nettle
Sleepy Orange	Wild Senna
Common Checkered Skipper	Mallows, Hollyhock
American Lady	Pussytoes, Everlastings
Painted Lady	Mallow, Thistle, legumes and more than 100 plants
Pearl Crescent	Asters
Viceroy	Willow
Hackberry Emperor	Hackberry
Zebra Swallowtail	Paw-paw
Sachem Skipper	
Zabulon Skipper	Grasses
Cabbage White (introduced from Europe)	many Mustard Plants



Thanks to Robin and Sally for sharing their knowledge with us, for a delightful day in the field, and to Blandy for sharing their beautiful grounds with us.

Eldon Farms Walk by Linda Murphy; photos by Susan Hayes

On September 10, a small, interested group, including one future member-in-the-making, joined the walk at Eldon Farms in Rappahannock County, by chapter board members Kristin Zimet and Phoebe Muenger. The overcast skies provided needed reprieve from the sun yet ample light to highlight the beautiful landscape. Eldon Farms is a 7000 acre farm that produces beef using sustainable farming techniques and recommended conservation practices and has set aside areas to promote native habitat. The walk centered around one of a series of spring fed ponds that has been restored and planted with a variety of natives. It serves as a site for the annual North American Butterfly Association count and the annual winter bird count. It is a registered native wildlife habitat with the National Wildlife Federation and is on the map as a Homegrown National Park, a program developed and promoted by Doug Tallamy to encourage each of us to take action.



Erica Gonzalez shows Purpletop Grass to futureVNPS member

(continued on page 4)



Eldon Farms Walk (continued)

It is an example of what each of us can do to promote native habitat that promotes well-being for wildlife and humans. The rich mix of texture and color produces a peaceful and relaxing habitat, restorative to the soul as well as a rich environment for birds and insects and all they support. The overcast conditions were not favorable for a large assortment of wildlife. A few did make an appearance including the lady bug assisting in the dispersal of Pilewort (*Erechtite hieraciifolius*) seed.

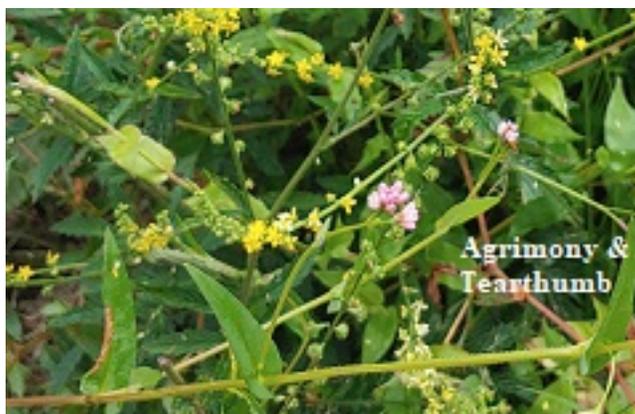


The group explored an open wetland habitat. Sun loving plants that like lots of moisture were featured. September not only offered fall blooming flowers but the seed heads of summer blooming plants, creating a panorama of color, texture, structure, and fragrances that tickled the senses. Among others, we saw natives New York Ironweed (*Vernonia noveboracensis*), Yellow Crownbeard (*Verbsina occidentalis*), Pasture Thistle (*Cirsium pumilum*), the seed balls of Buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*), and the interesting, exfoliating bark of the River Birch (*Betula nigra*). Buttonbush is the 2022 Wildflower of the Year of the Virginia Native Plant Society.



The habitat includes flowers, grasses, sedges, trees and shrubs, both native and non-native. Among the grasses, Deer-Tongue (*Dichanthelium clandestinum*), Purpletop (*Tridens flavus*), Woolgrass (*Scirpus cyperinus*), and Switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*) were identified. Among the flowers not mentioned above were Giant Ragweed (*Ambrosia trifida*), Spotted Jewelweed (*Impatiens capensis*), Smartweed/Tearthumb (*Persicaria* spp.), Boneset (*Eupatorium perfoliatum*), Horse-nettle (*Solanum carolinense*), Agrimony (*Agrimonia* spp.) and Common Evening Primrose (*Oenothera biennis*). Seed heads of Self-heal (*Prunella vulgaris*), Swamp Rose-mallow (*Hibiscus moscheutos*), Seedbox (*Ludwigia* spp.), and Common Cattail (*Typha latifolia*) added to the variety of late season interest. Sassafras trees (*Sassafras albidum*) were present. A couple of clusters of Pickerelweed (*Pontederia cordata*), growing next to pond's edge, caught the eye of the group. It is a native plant of wetland areas, rare in the Piedmont.

Eldon Farms offers nature walks throughout the year (see eldonfarms.com and their Facebook). Patty Lane, Farm Naturalist, who was instrumental in the restoration effort, coordinates events at the farm and arranged for our walk.





The Search for the Hickory Horned Devil text and photos by Karen Hendershot

Some of you may have suspected that I'm more interested in the critters on native plants than the plants themselves. Alas, it might be so. My camera holds an album of more than 100 amazing creatures. VNPS Piedmont Chapter pals have helped me identify the tiny mop-like Butternut Woolly Worm (*Eriocampa juglandis*), larva of the Woolly Butternut Sawfly; the Larger Elm Leaf Beetle (*Monocesta coryli*), which looks like a cartoon car to me; and the Hackberry Emperor (*Asterocampa celtis*), a regular harvester of minerals from my husband's gardener's sweat. Google Lens, iNaturalist, and even books have helped with the red-and-black checkerboard of the Hackberry Leaf Slug, which is larva of the White Flannel Moth (*Norape ovina*); the mini-pinwheels of the Dogwood Sawfly larvae (*Macremphytus tarsatus*); and the Star-Wars-worthy Spotted Apatelodes (*Apatelodes torrefacta*) among many others.



But missing from this pantheon was the remarkable Hickory Horned Devil (*Citheronia regalis*) I had seen in Doug Tallamy's [Bringing Nature Home](#). With so many Hickories (*Carya* spp.) on or property – where was it? In mid-August, I brushed by a small Black Walnut tree (*Juglans nigra*) and there, clad in punk-rock black, was an early instar of the Devil. As with many bad boys, I thought he was kind of cute. Despite its name, it is harmless and cannot sting, as some caterpillars can. After pupating in the ground, it will emerge as the beautiful Regal Moth, also called the Royal Walnut Moth. I kept going back because it was supposed to turn into something colorful. But it had disappeared. Had something eaten this tough guy? (continued on page 6)





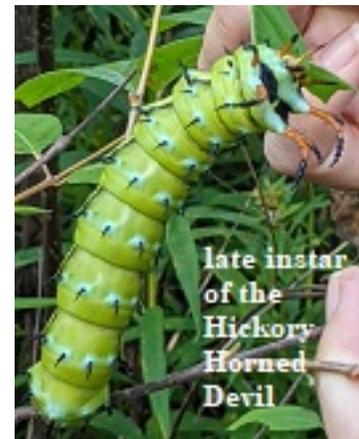
Register for these events at piedmontvnps@gmail.com.

Saturday	Dec 10	1pm	Hill School Walk
Loudoun County. Tour the Hill School campus. Limit 15 people.			
Saturday	Jan 8	1pm	Walk at VOF-BRMNAP
Fauquier County. Tour the north section of the Virginia Outdoors Foundation Bull Run Mountains Natural Area Preserve, not usually open to the public. Explore the plants and fungi of this special preserve.			
Sunday	Jan 22	1pm	Winter Speaker Series: Seedlings
Fauquier County. Emmanuel Episcopal Church in Delaplane. Michele Dani Sanchez specializes in seed saving and propagation and is affiliated with Kew Gardens. She will present on the key principles of seed saving and propagation and will discuss some species native to Virginia she is currently working on.			
Saturday	Feb 11	1pm	Warren Memorial Hospital Trail Walk
Warren County 2021 Virginia Master Naturalist Shenandoah Chapter Naturalist of the Year Sally Anderson will lead a walk on the Andreae Family Wellness & Recreation Trails.			
Sunday	Feb 19	1pm	Winter Speaker Series: Seedlings
Fauquier County. Emmanuel Episcopal Church in Delaplane. Laurie Denker MacNaughton will speak on identifying plants from cotyledons and seedlings.			

The Search for the Hickory Horned Devil (continued)

Mid-August faded into mid-September. Nature's fall bouquet mixes bold flowers of Goldenrod (*Solidago* spp.) and Field Thistle (*Cirsium discolor*) and stunning fruits such as the red cones of Common Jack-in-the-Pulpit (*Arisaema triphyllum*) and Virgin's Bower's (*Clematis virginiana*) fuzzy whirligigs that give its alternate name, Devil's Darning Needles. I tour our field regularly to see what's new. On September 15, I took the path around the Buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*). There, with gaudiness worthy of Mardi, was the late instar Hickory Horned Devil I'd been seeking!

Yes, I've "gone buggy," according to Richard Stromberg. But if I hadn't joined VNPS, I wouldn't wander daily as I do, a tree would still be just a tree to me, and each creature on it just one more "bug."

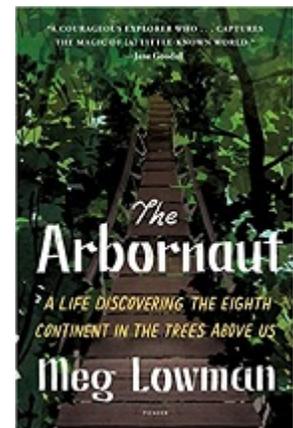


Short Takes on Books We Love by Sally Anderson

The Arbornaut: A Life Discovering the Eighth Continent in the Trees Above Us by Meg Lowman

This is an account of a scientist who seemed destined to study trees and the natural world from an early age. She became a pioneer of canopy research, first in tropical forests and later in many forests around the world. Devising climbing techniques and developing canopy walkways, she has introduced people of all ages and abilities to treetops. Measurements and observations from the windy and sunny canopy were very different from those in the shady understory, revising life histories and revealing species new to science. She also recounts the challenges of women in science in the 20th century. As a side note, her career was launched at age 12 at the Burgundy Wildlife Camp, a summer school run by John and Lee Trott, former board members of our own Piedmont Chapter.

Do you have a nature book you love? Send us a Short Take!





Page County Surprises by Marjorie Prochaska

Who Knew Page County had so many treasures? Richard Stromberg opened our eyes during the Chapter tour in November. The weather was dry, the leaves had fallen, and twenty of us began our hike deep in

We began at the Shenandoah NP Skyland Conference Center parking lot, whence we walked to what appeared to be a small dead tree. There was some dispute, a few thinking that there was new growth down below. What we were seeing were dead Fanleaf Hawthorns (*Crataegus flabellata*) that were in the Virginia Big Tree Register (<https://bigtree.cnre.vt.edu/>), one on them the former National Champion. The current National Champion grows in the Park at the South River Overlook in Greene County.

We passed a wedding reception, the ceremony having taken place on the top of Stony Man, and walked down the lane to the remnant Judd Gardens, which need some introduction.

George Pollack developed a chunk of what is now Shenandoah National Park into Skyland, a rustic summer retreat camp for privileged Washingtonians over a hundred years ago. One of his coterie was George Judd, a successful Washington printer who quite fell in love with the view from the top of the Blue Ridge, and in the early twentieth century began buying up cabin sites as they became available. After he had built his final and largest cabin, he decided to build a garden northeast of what is now Skyland. He may have had some architectural direction, but influenced by his wife and her love of flowers, and relying on local craftsmen for the structural bones of the garden, he developed a four-acre site into a showpiece planting mostly non-natives. Lest you quail, we need to be reminded that what we now relish as mature, second growth forest was a landscape devastated by logging, firewood felling, livestock overgrazing and the Chestnut blight. What Judd succeeded in doing was marrying the wild landscape view of Stony Man summit with a controlled garden planted almost entirely with non-natives. The garden flourished, but curiously, we have very few primary records of it. It is now a cultural artifact, controlled by the National Park Service.

Down the lane, on a hillside to our left was a huge American Cranberrybush (*Viburnum opulus*), heavy with spent blooms. Then we saw two marvelous European Beeches (*Fagus sylvatica*). Two National Park System



rangers saved them from the caterpillar years ago. Behind them was the Virginia state champion Blue Spruce (*Picea pungens*) and the Virginia state champion Japanese Yew (*Taxus cuspidata*), gorgeous trees all, thriving in the protection of the Park. There were some wonderful Eastern Redcedars (*Juniperus virginiana*) too.

We were quite a convoy driving out of Skyland on Skyline Drive to Thornton

Gap, where we headed west through Luray and north up Shenandoah River to Foster's Boat Ramp. We immediately spotted the huge Persimmon Tree (*Diospyros virginiana*), colored orange with fruit, which were eagerly sampled. Then we turned our attention to the riverbank and saw an endless array of (continued on page 8)





Curlyheads (*Clematis ochroleuca*)



Page County Surprises (continued)

American Bladdernut (*Staphylea trifolia*). Richard went through understory to locate the National Champ.

Pileated woodpeckers put on a show as we left to drive to Luray. Behind the Page County government building is a magnificent Chinkapin Oak (*Quercus muehlenbergii*). It was the capstone of our trip, worth a detour, estimated at 250+ years old, but I might wager close to another century.



Richard Stromberg

Luray Chinkapin Oak

Karen Henger:hot