

The Leaflet

Elizabeth Furnace Walk article and photos by Sally Anderson

AUTUMN 2024

The forest was sunny on June 8. Yes, the Massanutten Mountains can be a little dry and open, but the explanation turned out to be a little different. Our leader, Richard Stromberg, pointed out that we were experiencing a spongy moth (aka Gypsy moth, *Lymantria dispar*) outbreak that is the worst since the initial outbreaks several decades ago. The forest was littered with pieces of oak leaves from these 'sloppy eaters' as Richard called them, and the trees were defoliated enough to make it look more like April in the woods. An article in the Winchester Star in May quotes Virginia Cooperative Extension Agent Mark Sutphin saying that the outbreak is worse because of our recent very dry years. In normal years, the fungal pathogen of spongy moth (*Entomophaga maimaiga*) keeps the caterpillars in check. The Forest Service is spraying Btk (*Bacillus thuringiensis* var. *Kurstaki*) to mitigate some of the damage and keep trees alive.



We walked the Charcoal and Pig Iron Interpretive trails. They have a series of signs describing the nineteenth century iron industry and its impact on the land. Besides the furnace itself, we saw a level area that had been used to make charcoal from the surrounding hardwoods and places where other supporting structures would have stood.

The additional light might have helped promote some blooms. We saw many stems of Spiked Lobelia (*Lobelia spicata*), and Rattlesnake Weed (*Hieracium venosum*), Hairy Skullcap (*Scutellaria eliptica*), and Whorled Loosestrife (*Lysimachia quadrifolia*). Someone with a sharp eye spotted a Ghost Pipe (aka Indian Pipe, *Monotropa uniflora*). The hope for the walk was masses of mountain laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*), but, unfortunately, while the light in the woods may have looked like early spring, the blooms were mostly gone from these shrubs.



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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

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Elizabeth Furnace Walk (continued)

One other plant of interest, Walking Fern (*Asplenium rhizophyllum*), was spotted on the stones of the furnace itself. This fern prefers limestone or other rocks that produce rich soils, and so may be harder to find in much of the Massanutten area. Also, near the furnace, we spotted a native Brome grass (*Bromus pubescens*), also a plant of richer soils.

As always, we had a congenial group and lots of fun finding plants, other organisms, and features of interest.



Walking Fern



Brome grass

Hogback Overlook on Skyline Drive article & photos by Karen Hendershot

Breathtaking views and an enormous array of plants (75 species in total) greeted us on August 10 when Richard Stromberg led our walk around Skyline Drive's Hogback Overlook. This site, located near Milepost 21 of Skyline Drive in Shenandoah National Park, is 3,385 feet above sea level. It offered plants not common in lower regions and later bloom times for more familiar ones.

On the edge of the parking lot, we saw Common Milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*) and the frilly white flowers of Starry Campion (*Silene stellata*). Farther down the hill stood Red Elderberry (*Sambuca racemosa*), a mountain-loving cousin of Common Elderberry (*Sambucus canadensis*), which prefers lower, damper elevations. Another shrub found throughout the area was Upland Willow (*Salix humilis*), its stiff green leaves pale on the underside. Climbing everything in sight were two white-flowered vines. The first was Virgin's-bower (*Clematis virginiana*) with showy flowers and lobed leaves. It is often confused with the nonnative Sweet Autumn Clematis (*Clematis terniflora*), a fragrant version whose leaves are not lobed. Fringed Bindweed (*Fallopia cilioides*) with tiny blossoms and elongated heart-shaped leaves was also common ("fringe" denotes the bristles at the leaf node).



Fringed Bindweed

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Hogback Overlook on Skyline Drive (continued)

At the parking area, too, the low shrub Appalachian Gooseberry (*Ribes rotundifolium*) grew in the crevices of the rock wall. Shining Bedstraw (*Galium concinnum*), with its six slender whorled leaves and petite flowers was all over. American Yarrow (*Achillea borealis*) dotted the area. Kristin Zimet reminded us that the scientific name derives from the legend that the Greek hero Achilles used the European version of the plant to heal battle wounds. The yellow flowers of a Common Evening-primrose (*Oenothera biennis*) brightened the overlook.

A considerable array of nonnative plants also populated the area around the parking lot – not unusual for a place that has been disturbed through construction. Among them were White and Yellow Sweet-clover (*Melilotus albus* and *M. officinalis*), the pink flowers of Spotted Knapweed (*Centaurea stoebe*) and Bouncing Bet (*Saponaria officinalis*), the diminutive yellow blooms on Prickly Lettuce (*Lactuca serriola*), and the white blossoms of Queen-Anne's Lace (*Daucus carota*) and Bladder Campion (*Silene vulgaris*). We even saw a Peach Tree (*Prunus persica*).

Overall, native species were dominant. Heading to the north end of the parking lot, we noticed a tree whose top leaves had been devoured. It was an American Elm (*Ulmus americana*). We crossed the road to hike a portion of the Appalachian Trail and found the lavender flowers of Heal-all (*Prunella vulgaris*) and Wild Basil (*Clinopodium vulgare*) marking the entrance. Sunlight illuminated the long, pointed pods of Poke Milkweed (*Asclepias exaltata*). A clearing in the woods allowed us to see that we were now well above the parking lot. Against the blue sky we could see the fruited stalks of Black Cohosh (*Actaea racemosa*) almost begging for a picture. Richard found a Lanceleaf Figwort (*Scrophularia lanceolata*) with dried fruits—an interesting plant with square stems but is not a mint. Two white Asters (although different genera) lined the path: Big-leaf Aster (*Eurybia macrophylla*) and Whorled Aster (*Oclemena acuminata*). The latter was unique in having alternate leaves that seem to be in whorls, rather than opposite leaves more common in whorled-leaved flora. A statuesque fading flower head of Fly-poison (*Amianthium muscitoxicum*) stood in the middle of the trail.



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Hogback Overlook on Skyline Drive (continued)

This section of the AT is rimmed by wide swaths of Hay-scented Fern (*Dennstaedtia punctilobula*), which Richard noted for its clonal spreading ability. A few Marginal Wood Ferns (*Dryopteris marginalis*) were here as well, so named for the sori (spore-bearing parts) occupying the margins of the underside of their leaves. There were also beautiful round boulders, one of which was covered with Smooth Rock Tripe (*Umbilicaria mammulata*), a lichen edible when soaked and boiled, and Rock Greenshield lichen (*Flavoparmelia baltimorensis*).

We saw several young American Chestnuts (*Castanea dentata*), as well as several Mountain Maples (*Acer spicatum*) and Witch Hazels (*Hamamelis virginiana*). Sally Anderson pointed out that the thick oval nodules on the Witch Hazels were last year's fruit while smaller bumps were flower buds.

A rock outcropping that has become a favored lunch spot for hikers was bordered by American Mountain-ash (*Sorbus americana*). Richard said that the red fruits are a spectacular sight in the fall. Despite the name and a similar pinnately compound leaves, Mountain-ash is not related Ash Trees (*Fraxinus spp.*) found in our region.

We emerged on from the AT on the south side of the overlook to examine the rocks across Skyline Drive from the parking lot. The tapestry of plants clinging to the hard, sheer rocks was a tribute to survival! Large masses of Northern Bush-honeysuckle (*Diervilla lonicera*) dominated much of the space, their yellow flowers having matured to deep burgundy-colored seed capsules. Clumps of Wild Hydrangea (*Hydrangea arborescens*) appeared quite happy on this steep slope. Dwarf Spirea (*Spirea corymbosa*), its white blossoms now dried to beige, was tucked in a crevice.

But a good deal of color remained. Dazzling yellow blossoms of Wingstem (*Verbesina alternifolia*) were just emerging. Fluffy Early Goldenrod (*Solidago juncea*) and Pale-leaved Sunflower (*Helianthus strumosus*) were also represented. Pink buds of a young Sweet-scented Joe-pye-weed (*Eutrochium purpureum*) and the flowering head of a Nodding Onion (*Allium cernuum*) poked through the grass. White Snakeroot (*Ageratina altissima*) was abundant, just starting to open. Purple-flowering Raspberry bore red fruits. Groups of nonnative Catnip (*Nepeta cataria*) showed off their whitish pink flowers. To our surprise, Wild Columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*) was still in bloom!

But perhaps the best of the delights were plants not found at lower elevations. Allegheny Stonecrop (*Hylotelephium telephioides*), still in bud, was nestled in a bed of Common Rockcap Fern (*Polypodium virginianum*). Clumps of Southern Harebell (*Campanula divaricata*) still held some of their delicate blue flowers. But what could match the Spreading Dogbane (*Apocynum androsaemifolium*), a shrubby perennial with blossoms sweet in both appearance and fragrance!



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Registration notices for Chapter events will be sent out three weeks before the event.

Saturday	Sep 7	9am-2pm	Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy Native Plant Sale
Loudoun County. Four vendors will be selling plants at Morven Park. A presentation "Native Plants for Beginners" at 11am. Information at https://loudounwildlife.org/event/fall-native-plant-sale/			
Friday	Sep 13	6-9pm	Hometown Habitat Movie
Clarke County. An outdoor movie night featuring the documentary film: Hometown Habitat - Stories of Bringing Nature Home (producer Catherine Zimmerman, featuring Doug Tallamy). Film starts at 7:30, come early for food, wine, plant sales, and information. State Arboretum at Blandly outdoor amphitheater near the Quarters building. Registration on Eventbrite .			
Saturday	Sep 14	10am-noon	Wenger Cove Forest Walk
Rappahannock County. Explore the magical Wenger Cove Forest's stunning variety of native plants near Flint Hill, Va. Register at https://www.eventbrite.com/e/wenger-cove-forest-tickets-991456602387?aff=oddtcreator			
Wednesday	Sep 18	2-4pm	Nature Journaling
Fauquier County. Eleanor Harris, Co-Director of the Clifton Institute, will give a brief introduction to nature journaling with suggestions for ways to journal about native plants. Then we will practice outside before coming together to share what we've learned. Register https://www.eventbrite.com/e/944976659627?aff=oddtcreator			
Fri-Sun	Sep 20-22		VNPS State Annual Meeting
Massanutta Springs Resort, Harrisonburg. https://vnps.org/events/2024-annual-meeting-and-program/			
Saturday	Sep 21	10am-1pm	Clifton Institute Native Plant Sale
Fauquier County. Plants available at Clifton Institute 6722 Blantyre Road, Warrenton, Va			
Saturday	Oct 19	12-2pm	Piedmont Chapter Annual Meeting
Clarke County. Meeting and Election of Officers and Board of Directors at Peatwood Pavilion at the State Arboretum at Blandly followed by a walk on the property. Details will be sent to you in the meeting notice.			
Tuesday	Nov 5	2-4pm	Piedmont Chapter Business Meeting
Clarke County. Blandly Experimental Farm Library. All Chapter members are welcome to join the Chapter Board at these Meetings.			
Saturday	Nov 9	1pm	Walk on Great North Mountain
Frederick County. Being planned.			

Hogback Overlook on Skyline Drive (continued)





Locust Run Woodland Walk article & photos by Mitzi Fox

Bert Harris, co-director of Clifton Institute led a fascinating July Second Saturday Walk just south of Orlean in Fauquier County. It featured a variety of habitats including a rich riparian forest along Locust Run, a tributary of Carter Run and the Rappahannock River. Part of the property was clear-cut over a decade ago, allowing the persistence of two patches of the globally rare and imperiled Torrey's Mountain-mint (*Pycnanthemum torreyi*), along with incredible numbers of other native plants.

Bert told us

The bedrock is metasandstone which creates an acidic soil in most areas, but there are richer areas (where Little Heartleaf (*Hexastylis minor*) and Wood Anemone (*Anemone quinquefolia*) grow) and more basic areas (Maidenhair Spleenwort (*Asplenium trichomanes*)). Wetter areas host abundant Cinnamon Fern (*Osmundastrum cinnamomeum*), Skunk Cabbage (*Symplocarpus foetidus*), and Water Hemlock (*Cicuta maculata*).

Several professional botanists were among our 20-person group, along with many amateur experts. LOTS of loupes came out when we came to the patch of Torrey's Mountain-mint (*Pycnanthemum torreyi*), plus Hoary and Slender Mountain-mint (*P. incanum* and *tenuifolium*). Their debate of the distinguishing features of these mints was fascinating. We were especially thrilled to see Torrey's because our Chapter just sponsored Torrey's (and Addison's Leatherflower (*Clematis addisonii*)) for special preservation by The Center for Plant Conservation in memory of our dearly-missed Jocelyn Sladen. We also saw Clasping Milkweed (*Asclepias amplexicaulis*), Whorled Rosin Weed (*Silphium asteriscus*), Bashful Bulrush (*Trichophorum planifolium*), Forked Blue Curls (*Trichostema dichotomum*), Rose-pink (*Sabatia angularis*), Maryland Wild Senna (*Senna marilandica*), Fringetree (*Chionanthus virginicus*), Post Oak (*Quercus stellata*), Allegheny Chinkapin (*Castanea pumila*), and Bigtooth Aspen (*Populus grandidentata*). We were struck by the large stands of ferns: Northern Maidenhair (*Adiantum pedatum*), New York (*Amauropelta noveboracensis*), Interrupted (*Claytosmunda claytoniana*), and Cinnamon (*Osmundastrum cinnamomeum*).



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Locust Run Woodland Walk (continued)

A Brocade Moss (*Hypnum imponens*) drew Bert's attention, saying "it's fairly dramatic – for a moss." (It takes quite a moss to be impressive!) Rose Moss (*Rhodobryum ontariense*) was growing with it.

Midway through the walk, it RAINED on us!!! It was startling after our long drought and mandatory water restrictions. We welcomed it with whoops!

Bert led an exciting side expedition to a River Otter Latrine in Locust Run. It was as its name says - scat and "scent mounds" – and very aromatic according to the brave souls who joined Bert. We never know what we will find on a Second Saturday Walks!



Patty Lane, Karen Hendershot, Bob Butcher, Sue Puleo, Maddie Reim, Bert Harris, Natalie Izlar, Steve Paull, Sally Anderson (not pictured: Gary Rzepecki who had to go back to work and Mitzi Fox)



Steve Paull, Bert Harris, Gary Rzepecki and Sally Anderson bowing before the Torrey's and other Mountain-mints



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Curlyheads (Clematis ochroleuca)

Hair on Plants part 5 (continued from the Fall and Winter, 2023, and Spring and Summer, 2024, issues of *The Leaflet*) by Richard Stromberg

Stiff hairs:

Arista—An awn or bristle

Aristate—Having a stiff bristle or awn

Aristiform—Awnlike

Aristulate—Bearing a minute awn or bristle at the tip

Awn—A narrow, bristlelike appendage, usually at the tip or dorsal surface

Bristle—A short, stiff hair or hairlike structure

Bristly—Covered with bristles

Monotrichous—With a single bristle

Seta (pl. Setae)—A bristle

Setaceous/Setiferous/Setiform—Bristle-like

Setose—Covered with bristles

Setulose—Covered with small bristles

Striga—A bristle; a straight, stiff, sharp, appressed hair