

The Leaflet

A Wonderfully Wild Walk in West Virginia at Ice Mountain

AUTUMN 2014

—Cindy Blugerman

I am a native of the backwoods of the beautiful state of West Virginia. I have visited a few of the awe-inspiring forested/natural areas of the state, and there are many more I wish to visit. Before this walk at Ice Mountain, I never imagined that such a unique and marvelous location existed within my home state. Ice Mountain's microclimate allows northern plants to grow at low elevations and southern latitudes.



Note: Visitors to the Ice Mountain Nature Preserve must register for a tour with a trained site docent.



Kristin Zimet, a trained docent at the Ice Mountain site for The Nature Conservancy, led our group on June 8. The Nature Conservancy's West Virginia chapter protects the rare plants of Ice Mountain on its 149-acre preserve in Hampshire County. Two years ago, the U.S. Department of the Interior designated the site as West Virginia's 15th national natural landmark.

Ice Mountain earned its name due to the algific (cold-producing) talus slopes that create the low elevation chilled microclimate that supports the various boreal plant species that are generally found in Arctic and Canadian climates. This algific talus slope is a north-facing fragile ecosystem that is comprised of shattered sandstone boulders, at the foot of the 1,500-foot-tall peak, that insulate the subterranean ice trapped in the underlying rock strata. During the cooler months, dense, cold air descends through the vent holes between rocks and causes ice masses to form within. Throughout the warmer months, cool air is then released through the vent caves at the talus slope's base.

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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 geographically defined subgroup 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

Sally Anderson, President
rccsca@comcast.net
Robin Williams, Vice Pres.
robinspony2@gmail.com
Brenda Crawford, Secretary
brendacrawford90@gmail.com
Cathy Mayes Treasurer
MayesCD@aol.com

DIRECTORS

Carrie Blair
horseblanketcb@yahoo.com
Cindy Blugerman
ecochild@shentel.net
Chris Lewis
cplewis2@comcast.net
David Roos
davidmroos@aol.com
Emily Southgate
ewbsouthgate@gmail.com
Richard Stromberg
risy@embarqmail.com
Kristin Zimet
kristinzimet@yahoo.com

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Ice Mountain (continued)

One of the most fascinating plants found here is Twinflower (*Linnaea borealis*), which was the favorite plant species of Swedish botanist Carl Linnaeus. Other notable plants found at Ice Mountain's base elevation of around 700 feet include Bunchberry (*Cornus canadensis*), Minniebush (*Menziesia pilosa*), prickly rose



(*Rosa acicularis*), Canada Mayflower (*Maianthemum canadense*), Northern Bedstraw (*Galium boreale*), Appalachian Wood fern (*Gymnocarpium appalachianum*), and Skunk Currant (*Ribes glandulosum*).

Conservation work at this preserve includes removing invasive nonnative plants and treating Eastern Hemlocks (*Tsuga canadensis*), which provide considerable amounts of shade to the talus slope, that are infested with invasive Hemlock Woolly Adelgids.

The North River borders this preserve area. It appears that cold-producing talus slopes usually have a stream at the base of the talus. Various fauna species benefit from this habitat. Northern species of snails and insects live at this preserve. Our group was lucky enough to get a glimpse of a Wood Turtle (*Glyptemys insculpta*), which are semi-aquatic, found primarily in northern latitudes, and are a species of special concern in West Virginia and a threatened species in Virginia.

Unfortunately, wood turtles are targeted by reptile collectors in the pet trade. Collecting Wood Turtles is illegal in West Virginia and every other state in which they occur.



Wood Turtle
Glyptemys insculpta

Cindy Blugerman

Cindy Blugerman

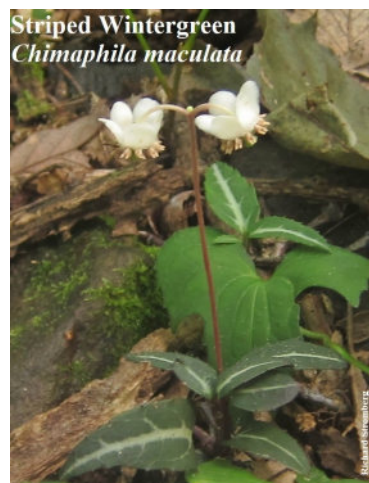




Compton Peak Walk—Richard Stromberg

At 10am on July 13 dozen people gathered at the Shenandoah National Park Dickey Ridge Visitor Center at mile marker five of Skyline Drive and then carpooled to Compton Gap at mile marker ten. Leader Richard Stromberg then led the group along the Appalachian Trail a half a mile with a 500 foot climb up Compton Peak, stopping for a variety of plants. When we reached the top, we took the west spur trail to a fantastic view of the Shenandoah Valley and the mountains to the west.

Among the flowers seen along the way were both Jewelweeds, (*Impatiens pallida* and *I. capensis*),



Striped Wintergreen
Chimaphila maculata

Striped Wintergreen (*Chimaphila maculata*), Spikenard (*Aralia racemosa*), Indian Pipe (*Monotropa uniflora*), Wild Columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*), Longleaf Bluet (*Houstonia longifolia*), Dwarf Spiraea (*Spiraea corymbosa*) and Purple-flowering Raspberry (*Rubus odorata*). At the top we found leaves of Broadleaf Bunchflower (*Veratrum hybridum*), but none of the plants were flowering, a disappointment. We also saw two other monocots, both gone to seed: Fly-poison (*Amianthium muscaetoxicum*) and *Clintonia*. Which *Clintonia* is hard to say because easy differentiation between our two species depends mostly on flower and fruit color, but flowers were gone and fruits were still green. Because of the compactness and number of flower pedicels, I think it was *C. umbellulata*. Indicators that the season is moving on were some *Asteraceae* blooming: Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*), Woodland Sunflower (*Helianthus divaricatus*), Cornel-leaved Aster (*Doellingeria infirma*), and Early Goldenrod (*Solidago juncea*). A Large-leaved Aster (*Eurybia macrophylla*) was still in bud. A bright red blob of Red Raspberry Slime (*Tubifera ferruginosa*) on a log caught everyone's attention.



Dwarf Spiraea
Spiraea corymbosa



Cornel-leaved Aster
Doellingeria infirma

Only four of the participants followed Richard another 300 feet down (and back up) the rocky east spur to see the amazing, basalt columns that loom above you on an overturned fault.

Along that trail we saw Hoary Mountain-mint (*Pycnanthemum incanum*), Spotted St. John'swort (*Hypericum punctatum*), Wild Lettuce (*Lactuca Canadensis*), Allegheny Live-for-ever (*Hylotelephium telephioides*), Lopseed (*Phryma leptostachya*), and a Wild Geranium (*Geranium maculatum*) still flowering.

On the way back to Compton Gap we saw plants we hadn't seen on the way up: False Solomon's-seal (*Maianthemum racemosum*) with a full head of fruit, Shining Clubmoss (*Huperzia lucidula*), Indian Cucumber-root (*Medeola virginiana*) with green fruit, and flowering Common Elderberry (*Sambucus Canadensis*) with a Dot Moth caterpillar (*Melanchra persicaria*) on a leaf.





BRCES: an Exciting Addition to the State Park System—Cathy Mayes

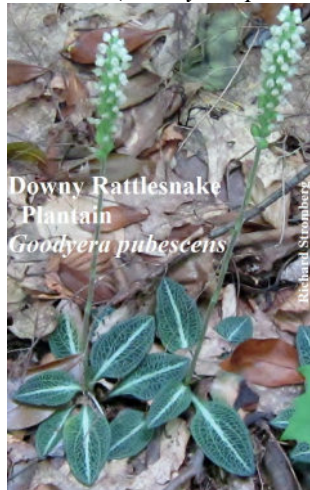
No one expected so much from a mid-summer, woods walk. Dr. Emily Southgate, a botanist and historical ecologist, led our Second Sunday walk along the Farmstead Loop trail at Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship (BRCES).

About the property. BRCES is a 900-acre preserve in Loudoun County near Purcellville. The property is partially wooded. Two rocky streams, Piney Run and Sweet Run, traverse the woods. There is also an organic farm, an education center, and camping facilities in the preserve. The property is managed by a non-profit organization, but negotiations are underway to transfer 600 acres, including the hiking trails in the woods, to the Commonwealth to become a new state park.



The woods has grown up since farming on the land stopped some years ago. Emily showed us how to tell from the size, species, location, and shapes of trees how to tell where fields were, where roads went, and where fence lines ran.

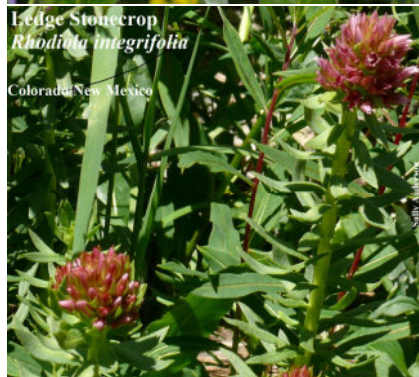
About the plants. The woods at BRCES are dominated by oaks, shade tolerant wildflowers, and, of course, a variety of invasive alien plants. For some, the most exciting find was a Downy Rattlesnake Plantain (*Goodyera pubescens*) in full bloom. We compared Avenas (*Geum* sp.) to Agrimony (*Agrimonia* sp.), Wood Nettle (*Laportea canadensis*) to Stinging Nettle (*Urtica dioica*), and Poison Ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*) to Box Elder (*Acer negundo*). We saw Spotted Jewelweed (*Impatiens capensis*) blooming and butterflies nectaring on Swamp Milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*) and Butterfly Weed (*A. tuberosa*). There wasn't time to walk the Pond Run Spur trail to see a huge stand of Wild Ginger (*Asarum canadense*). VNPS is helping BRCES to prepare a complete plant list. An updated copy of the list will be posted on the Web site vnps.org under Conservation/Land and Nature/Flora.





Identifying Plants away from Home—Sally Anderson

Travelling? Will you recognize the plants where you go? I found the wildflowers in Colorado and New Mexico different, yet familiar. Knowing your Virginia plants can add to your enjoyment of natural areas everywhere. Here are some pairs I came up with. Richard Stromberg has added some from his trips.



(continued on pages 6, 7, & 8)



Sunday	Sept 14	noon-3pm	Chapter Annual Meeting
Culpeper County. Chapter Annual Meeting. Mountain Run Lake Park, 16100 JB Carpenter Drive, Culpeper, VA 22701. Use the third entrance for Picnic Shelter 3 on right near water and portalet. We will have a potluck lunch and a short business meeting including election of officers and directors and then go to the piedmont prairie for a walk with Chris Ludwig of Virginia Natural Heritage and <i>Flora</i> author. For more information contact piedmontvnps@gmail.com .			
Sat-Sun	Oct 11-12	9am-4:30pm	Arborfest at Blandy
We encourage you to visit the VNPS booth during this annual event. Knowledgeable volunteers will offer expert advice on how to select and grow native plants in your special location. There will be handouts with useful information for you to pick up. For more information about Arborfest visit http://blandy.virginia.edu .			
Saturday	Oct 11	11am	State Arboretum Native Plant Walk
A leisurely, informal tour of meadow and wetland to enjoy and identify native plants and grasses. Meet at the VNPS tent. During Blandy's Arborfest there will be a \$10 per car admission.			
Sunday	Oct 12	1pm	Second Sunday Walk
Still being planned. To request more information, email piedmontvnps@gmail.com .			
Saturday	Oct 24	1-4pm	Invasive Plant Removal
Loudoun County. Invasive Plant Removal at the Northern Virginia Blue Ridge Regional Park on Rt. 601. To request more information, email Robin Williams at robinspony2@gmail.com .			
Sunday	Oct 25	10am-4pm	Girl Scout Adventure Day
Fauquier County. VNPS will have a booth at the Fauquier County Fairgrounds. To request more information, email Robin Williams at robinspony2@gmail.com .			
Saturday	Nov 8	tba	The Ecological Regions and Natural Communities of Virginia
Loudoun County. Gary Fleming, Vegetation Ecologist, Division of Natural Heritage, VA Department of Conservation and Recreation will present at the Carriage House at Morven Park. For information, contact piedmontvnps@gmail.com .			
Sunday	Nov 9	1pm	Second Sunday Walk
Southern Fauquier County. Join Ron Hughes, Lands and Facilities Manager at C.F. Phelps Wildlife Management Area, on a stroll through rolling low hills near the Rappahannock River to observe post-frost plants. There will be some plants still remaining, plus dried stalks of earlier fruiting species, a nice trip to contemplate and discuss dormancy and the past growing season. To request more information, email piedmontvnps@gmail.com .			
Sunday	Dec 14	1-3pm	Second Sunday Walk-Shenandoah River State Park
Warren County. A ramble along the South Fork of the Shenandoah River south of Front Royal. For more information, contact piedmontvnps@gmail.com .			

Identifying Plants away from Home (continued from page 5)





Unknown Leaf Mystery Solved—Richard Stromberg

A year ago I wrote about a Second Sunday Walk in George Washington National Forest from Bear Wallow Parking Lot off VA678 in Fort Valley. We could not identify the many large, deeply lobed, single leaves that sprung from the boggy ground through the Peat Moss. I put a picture of it in the article and asked you to let me know what it is. The only response was from Rachel Sullivan, “I scoured the dichotomous key in my copy of the Flora of Virginia and came to the conclusion that those plants are most likely *Hydrastis canadensis* (Golden-seal).”



I responded, “Problems with *Hydrastis Canadensis* are the Digital Atlas of Virginia Flora does not recognize it growing anywhere near where we were, and the Flora of Virginia says its habitat is ‘Rich, mesic and dry mesic forests over calcareous and mafic rocks...’ not in peat bogs. However, you got me thinking *Ranunculaceae*, so I paged through that family and maybe I found it: Tasselrue (*Trautvetteria caroliniensis*).” The Atlas notes it growing here and the Flora says “seepage swamps, seeps, fens...”. Either way, I’ll have to go back in the spring and see if it flowers. [The Flora places *Hydrastis* in *Hydrastidaceae*, a family of two monotypic genera, but the USDA Plants Database has it in *Ranunculaceae*.] The Flora says it blooms May-July, so I looked on May 11. It was not flowering (Pink Lady’s Slippers were, though, in abundance). So I went back in June, and Tasselrue was in full bloom.

Identifying Plants away from Home (continued from page 5)

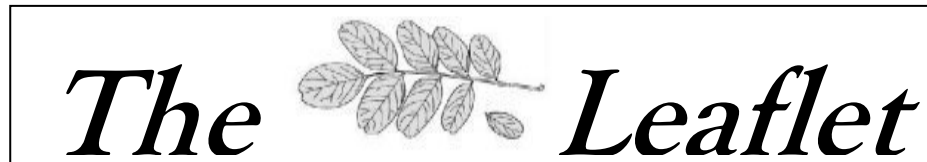




Identifying Plants away from Home (continued from page 5)



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

