

The Leaflet

Jones Nature Preserve Walk—Joyce Wenger

SPRING 2016

January 17, 2016, Rappahannock County. Despite the gray, drizzly day we had a wonderful time walking on Bruce and Susan Jones Nature Preserve. In the barebones of winter dormancy, we saw the decades of work, still in progress, on a wide variety of micro-ecologies (sun, shade, dry, wet, rock, humus, forest, and field) in a large deer-exclusion study. As we walked, Bruce described a story that captures the heart of any plant lover. We saw the subtle, but unmistakable traces of a diverse abundance of plants: remnant leaves, seed pods, bare woody plants, and even a few brave winter-tolerant species poking through the leaves.



In a meadow we passed a thicket of dry seedheads of *Monarda* (Bee Balm), *Echinacea* (Coneflower), and *Pycnanthemum* (Mountain Mint) where large patches of new dark green Mountain Mint plants had popped up, seemingly ready to take over the whole area before spring is even close. Mixed among them were some *Agastache* (Giant Hyssop). The exquisite dried pods dangling from the female *Dioscorea villosa* (Wild Yam) contrasted with the *Bignonia capreolata* (Cross-vine), which is still green for the winter. We saw *Schizachyrium scoparium* (Little Bluestem) in patches alongside *Anemone virginiana* (Thimbleweed), whose seed heads look like thimbles, of course, and *Sorghastrum nutans* (Indian grass), with curly fuzz protruding from a brown pod and a bent frond jutting out.

We passed a lovely grove of shrub Dogwood (*Cornus*) and imagined its clusters of tiny white blossoms in spring. Other shrubs/trees we saw included *Clethra alnifolia* (Sweet Pepperbush) and *Clethra acuminata* (Mountain Pepperbush), *Itea virginica* (Virginia Sweetspire), *Calycanthus floridus* (Sweet Shrub), *Callicarpa americana* (Beauty-berry), *Pieris floribunda* (Mountain Andromeda), and *Euonymus americanus* (Hearts-a-bustin). The preserve also includes *Zanthoxylum americanum* (Northern Prickly-ash/Toothache Tree) and *Zanthoxylum clava-herculis* (Southern Prickly-ash/Hercules'-club). These shrubs are a food source for a number of butterfly larvae. *Aesculus pavia* and *A. parviflora* (Red and Bottlebrush Buckeye) flowers attract hummingbirds and bees.

In the woods we saw more evergreen plants than I expected, including a large patch of very green *Diphasiastrum digitatum* (Running-cedar), *Mitchella repens* (Partridge-berry), *Pachysandra procumbens* (Allegheny Spurge) with slightly brownish leaves, *Hepatica* (Liverleaf), *Asarum canadense* (Wild Ginger), *Cardamine diphylla* (Two-leaf Toothwort), *Onoclea sensibilis* (Sensitive Fern) (with brown leaves and dark stems) and *Adiantum* (Maidenhair Fern) (with cinnamon colored stems). *Phacelia bipinnatifida* (Fernleaf Phacelia) was a real surprise, what a wonderful green groundcover. After our walk Bruce sent everyone a photo of the *Phacelia* patch in the spring, about a foot tall with gorgeous blue flowers. The plant is also one of the earliest sources of nectar for bumblebees, blooming in April and May. A number of orchids that are noticeable in winter were abundant: *Aplectrum hyemale* (Puttyroot), some with rather large leaves, and *Tipularia discolor* (Crane-fly Orchids), easily identifiable with dark purple on the bottom of the leaf. We also saw a number of clumps of short blue tubes, non-native *Allium canadense* (Wild Onion). Even though it is not native, it didn't seem to be invasive, and added a nice color to the winter woods. *Hydrophyllum virginianum* (Virginia Waterleaf) had toothed, dark green leaves with light speckles. It may be a bit invasive, but is pretty, especially in winter.

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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

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Jones Nature Preserve Walk (continued)



In a wet area we stumbled through a patch of *Taxodium distichum* (Baldcypress) knees that were planted by accident and are not usually found this far north in Virginia. They seemed very happy and are perhaps getting a head start in dealing with climate change. Although our tour didn't focus on trees, a number of people had to stand beneath the fifth largest Black Oak (*Quercus velutina*) in Virginia for a photograph.



With the leaves mostly gone for the winter we were treated to see a *Tenodera sinensis* (Chinese Mantis) egg mass and several bird nests, some of which Bruce said he walked past all spring and summer and didn't know they were there.

A variety of bird sounds followed us, and, though we didn't see any bees, we saw homemade bee houses for leaf cutter and mason bees. They even included an adaptation of screening to keep the winter mice from misusing the houses.

Bruce also talked about how he's done controlled burning, primarily for some of his meadows. He mentioned that a few small scorched areas developed interesting growth and numerous surprise plants after the burn.

As we started our walk, Bruce said, "We will see nothing or we will see everything." What a pleasant winter walk. I believe we saw everything. Of course, now I want to return in the spring, and in the fall!





Art and Botany - The Piedmont Chapter's Winter Speaker Series—Sally Anderson

The first speaker this year was artist Elena Maza Borkland, who moved to Front Royal and joined our chapter a few years ago. Previously, while living in Maryland, she became certified in Botanical Art after attending classes at Brookside Gardens in Wheaton, MD. Elena explained that the purpose of botanical art is to illustrate different features of importance to plant identification in a way that a single camera image usually cannot. She showed a few of her earlier paintings to describe the difference between a pretty picture of a landscape or flower and a scientific illustration.

Drawing on a tour of the National Agricultural Library botanical art in Beltsville, she showed what botanical illustration was like in the 1600s when the purpose to illustrate medicinal plants for herbals. To contrast styles and changes in the field, she showed a later illustrations by the French painter Pierre-Joseph Redouté, a court artist to Marie Antoinette, who specialized in roses. Illustrations by William Bartram, an American naturalist and illustrator gave another perspective.



The focus of her presentation was the certification course. She outlined how students learn to make botanical illustrations. The step by step process was illustrated with examples of her course work: field sketching, black and white drawings, the addition of color and color palette information, some information on pencils and watercolors etc. Many of her illustrations were of gorgeous native orchids that she found in the field and painted, and she had her notebooks available so that we could look at them after the talk. I felt a new appreciation for the work of botanical artists after learning about this

program.

I hope you will join us for the next talks in our series. Our February speaker is Karen Coleman, a Loudoun County artist who is also a certified illustrator and teaches botanical illustration. She considers herself a 'nature artist'. Finally, in March we will have Nicky Staunton, an accomplished illustrator and photographer, who will inspire us with her curiosity about the natural world and show us how she records her observations. Please see our calendar of events in this newsletter for details.



Yellow Lady Slipper
Cypripedium parviflora var. *pubescens*



watercolor with color pencil
by Elena Maza Borkland



Earth Village Education Walk—Carrie Blair

The Second Sunday Walk for December was on a fair 60° day which brought out a big crowd of 23 to Earth Village Education in Marshall, Virginia. Earth Village Education is a nonprofit organization dedicated to transforming culture and renewing the earth by empowering individuals through hands-on education that promotes nature awareness, environmental stewardship, and community development. It is on a big farm run by young entrepreneurs, who are starting a "back to nature" program. They seek to raise their own food and be generally self-sufficient. The skills demonstrated by Tom Brown, Kevin MacDonald, McNeill Mann, and Sawyer Guinn were starting a fire with a bow drill, leather tanning and clothing construction, simple furniture making and more. We walked a lovely woods trail, through open fields, and by ponds and gardens. The staff share construction and farm chores, including butchering and food preservation. They have programs throughout the year to teach homesteading and primitive living skills to adults and children, and connect people with the natural world and their food sources. Contact them at <http://earthvillageeducation.org/>.



Weston Wildlife Management Area Walk—Sally Anderson

Just at the newsletter deadline, a group of hardy people were walking at the little known Weston Wildlife Management Area (WMA) with Piedmont Chapter Board member and Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF) Land and Facilities Manager Ron Hughes. This refuge, located east of Warrenton near the tiny town of Casanova, is a little bit different because it is a wildlife preserve used to train hunting dogs for non-take fox hunts, and, at least at one time, to train beagles, but there is no actual hunting. The WMA surrounds a 10 acre site with an historic house and outbuildings belonging to the Warrenton Antiquarian Society, and we began the visit with a short tour of this interesting property.

While much of the refuge is young secondary woods and cedar, there are two unusual forest community types near Turkey Run: a backswamp and a levee along the stream, where a disjunct population of the more southern Shumard Oak (*Quercus shumardii*) is found. Both these parts of the WMA have been surveyed by the Virginia Natural Heritage Program. From the floodplain back to the house, we walked a hill that was much more acidic with an oak/hickory forest. All together there are ten species of oaks on the property, and we spent some time rummaging in the leaves to see what species we could find.

This is a WMA worth visiting to see these special trees and for its historic interest, and we were told that the spring bluebell display is excellent.





Sunday	Feb 21	2pm	Winter Speaker Series: Karen Coleman, nature artist
Fauquier County. Tri-County Feeds meeting room (upstairs), 7408 John Marshall Highway, Marshall (No dogs allowed). Karen Coleman, a Loudoun County artist, certified illustrator, and botanical illustration teacher. Contact piedmontvnps@gmail.com .			
Thursday	Mar 10	5-9 pm	Homeowners Association Forum: Common Space for the Greater Good
Loudoun County. Algonkian Regional Park Woodlands Conference Center 47001 Fairway Dr, Sterling, VA. This first-of-its-kind event will help HOA residents and leaders discover ways to change landscaping practices to contribute to a healthier local environment, from water and air to habitat for birds and pollinators. Get details and register at http://www.pecva.org/events/hoa-forum-common-space-for-the-greater-good . Free of charge.			
Sunday	Mar 13	1-3pm	Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship Second Sunday Walk
Loudoun County. For more information about the walk, email piedmontvnps@gmail.com . For information about BRCES see http://www.blueridgecenter.org/ .			
Sunday	Mar 20	2pm	Winter Speaker Series: Nicky Staunton, recording the natural world
Fauquier County. Tri-County Feeds meeting room (upstairs), 7408 John Marshall Hwy, Marshall (No dogs allowed). Nicky Staunton, an accomplished illustrator and photographer, will inspire us with her curiosity about the natural world and show us how she records her observations. For more information, email piedmontvnps@gmail.com .			
Sunday	Apr 10	1pm	Calmes Neck Registry Site Second Sunday Walk
Clarke County. Kristin Zimet will lead a walk at this VNPS registry site walk along the Shenandoah River. Rich mesic forest and ravines promise a spectacular show of Bluebells, Twinleaf, Blue Cohosh, Columbines, ferns and many other plants. The walk is moderate but expect to climb over downed trees. To register and request more information, email piedmontvnps@gmail.com . Limit 20 people.			
Saturday	Apr 23	10am-3pm	Sky Meadows State Park Bioblitz
Loudoun County. Bring your family and friends to team up with Park Rangers, volunteers, Virginia Master Naturalists and many others to celebrate Earth Week at the 2016 Virginia Bioblitz and discover the biodiversity of Sky Meadows. This event will also serve as our Stewardship Virginia volunteer event. Participants will receive a certificate signed by the Governor in appreciation of volunteer service to the Commonwealth.			
Saturday	April 23	9am-3pm	Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy Native Plant Sale
Loudoun County. Nurseries will bring a wide variety of plants for you to select from as well as other items. All of the plants are carefully labelled with growing instructions, and volunteers will be on hand to answer your questions and provide advice. For details check the LWC website at http://www.loudounwildlife.org/ .			
Wednesday	May 4	5pm	Trillium Walk
Fauquier County. Trillium Walk on Trillium Trail in Thompson WMA. Contact piedmontvnps@gmail.com .			
Saturday & Sunday May 7 & 8		Wildflower Weekend at Shenandoah National Park	
Appreciate the diversity of wildflowers growing in the Blue Ridge. More than 1,300 species of plants thrive in Shenandoah National Park, a haven for native woodland wildflowers. Choose from among many activities at the Park website, http://www.nps.gov/shen/planyourvisit/event-details.htm?eventID=3747987-307230			
Saturday & Sunday May 7 & 8		9am-4:30pm	State Arboretum Garden Fair
Clarke County. Select vendors with perennials, small trees and fine items for garden and home. Also: children's activities, gardening information, food and much, much more. Directions at www.virginia.edu/Blandy .			
Sunday	May 15	1pm	Dickey Ridge Sunday Walk
Warren County. See a large population of Yellow Lady's Slippers and other spring flowers in Sheanandoah National Park. For more information, email piedmontvnps@gmail.com .			
Saturday	June 4	7am-5pm	Garden Fest
Frederick County. Northern Shenandoah Valley Master Gardeners' annual festival at Belle Grove Plantation on US rt. 11 north of Middletown. Educational sessions and plants and other items for sale.			



Winterberries—Lesley Mack

(re-printed from the February Northern Shenandoah Valley Master Gardener Association Newsletter)

Winterberries (*Ilex verticillata*), even the botanical name is fun to say, and easy to remember. These deciduous hollies are among winter's brightest lights.

We have had our *Ilex verticillatas*, and other *Ilex* species and cultivars for more than ten years, and every year they have produced a vibrant, long-lasting red color, almost like a stop-light-red. Many species of songbirds, waterfowl, and game birds certainly heed the stop-light-red when the berries are all that is left after the higher fat content food sources have been exhausted in the cold days of winter.

While Winterberry flowers are small and not particularly showy, they are very popular with honeybees and other pollinators. Fall leaf color runs from reds to a brief yellow to non-existent, but the display of fruit more than makes up for that shortcoming. Winterberries prefer a site with moist, well-drained, acidic soil in sun, with lots of mulch to retain the moisture.



Richard Stromberg

These hollies are dioecious, with male and female flowers on separate plants. One male plant can pollinate five to ten female plants or more depending on the species and should be planted in reasonable proximity to the females. Choose the male pollinizer that blooms at the same time as the female winterberries you are planting.

As usual with plant species, *Ilex verticillatas* have also been hybridized for color and size. Typically a large shrub at 8 to 15 feet in height and width, there are now dwarf



Lesley Mack

cultivars or varieties that produce persistent and abundant larger berries than the natives. Berries now come in yellows, light yellow, creamy white, and oranges with hints of pinks.

Against a background of fresh snow, winterberries are a dazzling reflection of the sun's light. Well, even one of the cultivar's name tells it all, "Sparkleberry". Something new for your garden's landscape.



Holly (*Ilex*)—Richard Stromberg

(re-printed from the February Northern Shenandoah Valley Master Gardener Association Newsletter)

Lesley Mack's article about Winterberry started me thinking about *Ilex*. We have several *Ilex* species in Virginia. Most of them are wetland plants and restricted to the Coastal Plain. The only holly species native to our area are Winterberry, Mountain Holly, and American Holly.

When we encounter red berries along the trail, my fellow hikers often ask me what they are. On our rocky mountain trails they are usually Mountain Holly (*Ilex montana*). When I tell them, the usual response is, "That doesn't look like the holly I know." Of course, they are thinking of the evergreen species we use for Christmas decorations. While you are singing about decking the halls before Christmas, you are singing about English/European Holly (*I. aquifolium*). English Holly is not found in Virginia except where it has been planted. It is an invasive alien species on the West Coast, likely because of the incoming prevailing winds off the ocean like its home ground on the west coast of Europe.

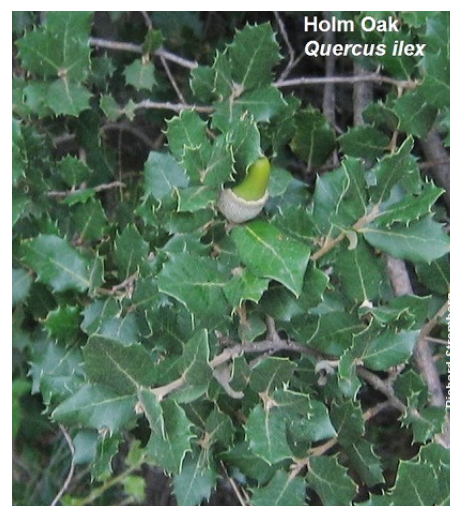
American Holly (*I. opaca*) is very similar to English Holly. It is common throughout Virginia, though infrequent in the mountains. Winterberry (*I. verticillata*), described by Lesley, is common throughout the state and, according to the Flora of Virginia prefers wetlands.

Winterberry and Mountain Holly are very similar. If I'm on a rocky outcrop, I'm pretty sure it is Mountain Holly. Otherwise you have to look very closely to tell which it is. Leaves of Winterberry are rougher and thicker. The flowers and fruit of Winterberry grow in leaf axils while on Mountain Holly they grow on lateral, short shoots from the axils. Other differentiators are more minute.

The name Holly derives from Celtic meaning "to prick".

Ilex was the Latin name for the Holm Oak, also known as the Holly Oak (*Quercus ilex*). I came across this tree in Mallorca, a Spanish island in the Mediterranean. My first thought on seeing the leaves was Holly, until I saw an acorn. When I saw similar leaves four years later in southern Arizona, I knew to look for an acorn on the Emory Oak (*Q. emoryi*).

Ilex is the only genus in the *Aquifoliaceae* family. *Aquifolium* was the Latin name for Holly and means "tree with prickly/pointy leaves".





The *Leaflet*

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Curlyheads (*Clematis ochroleuca*)

