

NEWSLETTER OF THE PIEDMONT CHAPTER OF THE VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

# The Leaflet



**Winter Speaker Series--Karen Coleman: Art and Botany,  
The Path of Botanical Art** by Jocelyn Sladen

SUMMER 2016

Botanical artist Karen Coleman combined insights into her professional work with fascinating botanical notes in a February 21 lecture, the second in Piedmont Chapter's winter lecture series. The series featured artists in our region whose work in varied media entails botanically accurate portrayal of wild plants. Karen chooses colored pencil for much of her work. Information about her techniques and subtle tricks spurred interested questions from fellow artists in the audience and simple awe from the rest of us. Karen also shared highlights of her plant hunting pursuits, including her story of finding and drawing the Fuzzywuzzy Airplant, *Tillansia pruinosa*, a rare bromeliad. The resulting work was selected for a recent international exhibition, "Losing Paradise, Endangered Plants Here and Around the World". A skilled botanical artist should show a plant's characteristics with scientific accuracy, but Karen's art, like that of others featured in the winter series, Nicky Staunton and Elena Maza Borkland, also proves how a good artist can wonderfully enhance the innate beauty of each plant. Below are her watercolor Common Persimmon (*Diospyros virginiana*) and colored pencil and acrylic Flowering Dogwood (*Cornus florida*).



R. Coleman





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**The Leaflet**

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](http://www.vnps.org/piedmont)

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## Winter Speaker Series--Nicky Staunton: Curiosity and Conservation Motivates Botanical Art by Susan Sharpe

On March 20 artist Nicky Staunton delivered the final lecture of the winter series to a standing room only crowd at Tri-County Feeds in Marshall.

Staunton's theme was curiosity and conservation, twin passions that have motivated her botanical art. She showed us the tools that help her record the objects of her curiosity. Her camera features a telephoto lens with a flip screen (because "belly botany" gets harder as we get older) and a macro for close-ups. In addition, she carries a compact watercolor paint box with brush, a small cup for water, a pad and a pencil, and her third copy of Newcomb's *Wildflower Guide*. All fit handily into her lunch bag.

The lecture was illustrated with gorgeous photos from her wide-ranging explorations and conservation work, from Canada to Occoquan, including the rare White Screwstem (*Bartonia verna*), "the highlight of my botanical life." Nicky discovered the only population in Virginia in 2001 at False Cape State Park, Virginia Beach. Nicky says "it was last seen by F. Pursh in the 1700's. Fernald doubted Pursh's report when he could not locate it in the '40's. The fun of botany", says Nicky. Here are Nicky's photo and drawing of *Bartonia verna*.



She encouraged us all to draw and photograph as a tool for seeing and learning, no matter what skill level we start with.

Her drawing of our Chapter flower, Curlyheads (*Clematis ochroleuca*) serves as the logo on the address page at the end of this newsletter.

Staunton's most recent work is charming watercolor and ink illustrations for a children's book, *Isabella's Peppermint Flowers* by Susan Leopold. See the Autumn, 2015, issue of this newsletter for a description of the book ([http://vnps.org/piedmont/download/newsletters\(2\)/15Autumn.pdf](http://vnps.org/piedmont/download/newsletters(2)/15Autumn.pdf)). She is also a regular illustrator for the state VNPS Bulletin.



## Second Sunday Walk at Calmes Neck by Carla Overbeck

April 10<sup>th</sup> Sally Anderson, assisted by Carrie Blair, led a group of about 25 VNPS members and Calmes Neck residents into three natural communities of Calmes Neck: a rich hardwood forest, bottom land along the floodplain of the Shenandoah River, and a steep ridge above the river.

In the mesic forest area we saw many spring ephemerals, including Cut-leaved Toothwort (*Cardamine concatenata*), Spring beauty (*Claytonia virginica*), and Rue Anemone (*Thalictrum thalictroides*). Both Common Blue Violets (*Viola sororia*) and Yellow Violets (*Viola pubescens* or *pensylvanica*) were found in the mesic forest area with the blue variety predominating.

Patches of Dutchman's Breeches (*Dicentra cucullaria*) and Squirrel Corn (*Dicentra canadensis*) required us to focus on the differences in the flowers and bulbs which had been washed into the bottom land area. We found the lumpy reddish bulbs of Dutchman's Breeches as interesting as the yellow corn-like bulbs of the aptly named Squirrel Corn.



Twinleaf  
*Jeffersonia diphylla*



Trout Lily  
*Erythronium americanum*

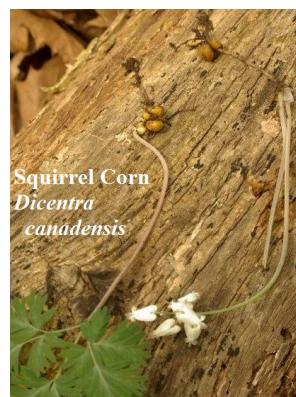
Blue Cohosh (*Caulophyllum thalictroides*) flowers were beginning to bud out in the forest area, along with several Toadshade Trilliums (*Trillium sessile*). Large fields of Twinleaf (*Jeffersonia diphylla*) opened a few flowers to enjoy, and one lone squaw root (*Conopholis americana*) appeared. We found a few Dwarf Larkspurs (*Delphinium tricorne*) in full bloom, which is always a special treat at Calmes Neck. Trees in bloom included Redbud (*Cercis canadensis*) and Flowering Dogwood (*Cornus florida*).

Virginia Bluebells (*Mertensia virginica*) showed as far as the eye could see in some areas of the first two natural communities.

I had to stop once in a while to see the whole picture instead of looking down for plants and for roots to trip over. Trout Lily (*Erythronium americanum*) abounded in the bottom land with a few spectacular yellow flowers in bloom. Wild Ginger (*Asarum canadense*) was in evidence, but it was too early to find the maroon flowers hiding under dead oak leaves.



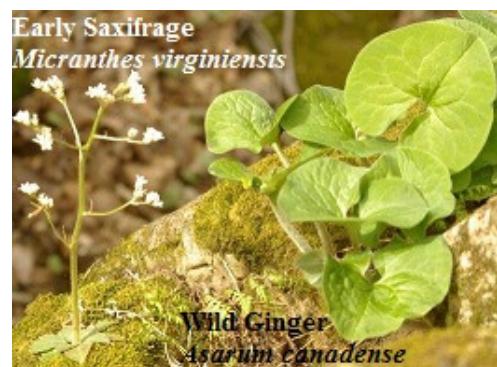
Dutchman's  
Breeches  
*Dicentra cucullaria*



Squirrel Corn  
*Dicentra canadensis*



Toadshade  
*Trillium sessile*



Early Saxifrage  
*Micranthes virginiana*  
Wild Ginger  
*Asarum canadense*

The bluff or ridge overlooking the Shenandoah River revealed the more unusual plants of the walk. I expected to see Early Saxifrage (*Micranthes virginiana*) but did not expect to see a small field of them in flower on top of the ridge. Wild Columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*) bloomed on top of the ridge in some places and peeked around rocks on the underside of the ridge. Ferns in evidence were Walking Fern (*Asplenium rhizophyllum*), Bulblet Fern (*Cystopteris bulbifera*) and Maidenhair Spleenwort (*Asplenium trichomanes*).



## Shenandoah National Park Flowers—Kristin Zimet, Cathy Mayes, and Richard Stromberg

Six Piedmont Chapter members lead walks for Shenandoah National Park's 30<sup>th</sup> annual Wildflower Weekend May 7-8

Ann and Rob Simpson did triple duty. On Saturday morning, they conducted one of two featured programs, "Wild About Shenandoah, From Wildflowers to Wildlife", showing some amazing ways plants and animals depend on each other in the habitats protected by SNP, followed by a short walk. Saturday afternoon they led a walk to Franklin Cliffs. On Sunday, they led a walk in Limberlost, the only hard-surface trail in the park, to point out the succession of new plant life following the devastation wrought by the Hemlock Wooly Adelgid. They saw eight species of violet in bloom on this walk.



Rob Simpson  
Identifies a violet

Ann Simpson



Wood Anemone  
*Anemone quinquefolia*

Richard Stromberg

vulgaris) also called Yellow Rocket, the shiny Early Buttercup (*Ranunculus fascicularis*) and Common Bluets (*Houstonia caerulea*). The uncommon blooms included Moss Phlox (*Phlox subulata*) and Purple Clematis (*Clematis vericillaris*). The summit is home to several rare plants, remnants of the time when glaciers pushed boreal species all the way into Virginia.

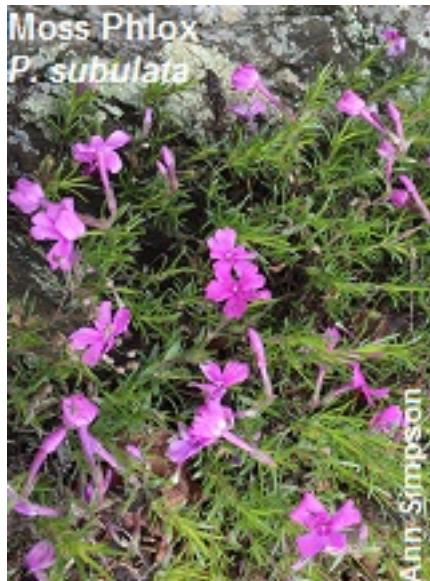
Although none were blooming, the summit supports healthy stands of Rand's Goldenrod (*Solidago randii*), Three-Toothed Cinquefoil (*Sibbaldiopsis tridentata*), and the indicator species of the Central Appalachian High Elevation Boulder-field Forest, Allegheny Stone-crop (*Hylotelephium telephoides*). It is also home to an unusual tree, the Balsam Fir (*Abies balsamea*).



Painted Trillium  
*(Trillium undulatum)*

Richard Stromberg

Kristin and Robin shepherded a group down the trail to the "Wonders of Mill Prong". Painted Trillium (*Trillium undulatum*), never seen before on this trail, was an exquisite surprise. Large-flowered Trillium (*Trillium grandiflorum*) was lovely as always. The uncommon Rose Twisted-stalk (*Streptopus roseus*), with its pink fairy bells, was a delight, and so were Pink and (continued on page 5)



Moss Phlox  
*P. subulata*

Ann Simpson



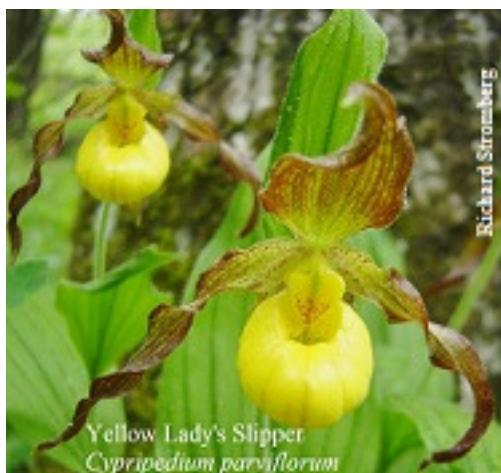
Eastern Twisted Stalk  
*Streptopus roseus*

Richard Stromberg



<b>Saturday</b>	<b>June 4</b>	<b>7am-5pm</b>	<b>Garden Fest</b>
<b>Frederick County.</b> Northern Shenandoah Valley Master Gardeners' annual festival at Belle Grove Plantation on US 11 north of Middletown. Educational sessions and plants and other items for sale.			
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>June 12</b>	<b>1pm</b>	<b>Bull Run Mountain Sunday Walk</b>
<b>Fauquier County.</b> Being planned. For more information, email <a href="mailto:piedmontvnp@gmail.com">piedmontvnp@gmail.com</a> .			
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>July 10</b>	<b>1pm</b>	<b>Shenandoah NP Fire Regeneration Sunday Walk</b>
<b>Shenandoah National Park Southern Section.</b> Ranger Steve Paull will lead a 2 - 3 hour hike through the recently burned area. The hike will leave from either Rocky Mount or Brown Mountain overlook. Participants will need to be prepared for some steep terrain. Limited to 15 people. To register email <a href="mailto:piedmontvnp@gmail.com">piedmontvnp@gmail.com</a> .			
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>August 14</b>	<b>1pm</b>	<b>BRCES Sunday Walk</b>
<b>Loudoun County.</b> Walk at Blue Ridge Center For Environmental Stewardship. Being planned. For more information, email <a href="mailto:piedmontvnp@gmail.com">piedmontvnp@gmail.com</a> .			

### Shenandoah National Park Flowers (continued)



Yellow Lady's Slippers (*Cypripedium acaule* and *parviflorum*). The group enjoyed a close-up of the lacy fringes on Miterwort aka Bishop's Cap (*Mitella diphylla*), the red hairiness of Herb Robert (*Geranium robertianum*), and the lime green new leaves, bendable twigs, and demure flowers of Leatherwood (*Dirca palustris*), among other special plants in bloom. (The birding was also magical, with Ovenbird, Red-eyed Vireo, Scarlet Tanager and Veery showing off.)



Richard led 25 people up the Dickey Ridge Trail past the broad view to the south and west at the hang-glider jump-off clearing and then to the Snead Farm Trail past the white barn of the old homestead. He came back a week later to lead twelve people on the Chapter walk on the same route. We identified over 50 species in flower plus some ferns. Highlight was the masses of Yellow Lady's Slippers (*Cypripedium parviflorum*) at the junction of Dickey Ridge and Snead Farm Trails. I counted 120 blooming and probably missed many. On the way back from the farm we saw Miami-mist (*Phacelia purshii*) flowering. The Flora of Virginia and "Digital Atlas of the Virginia Flora" say that it does not grow north of Rockbridge County except for outliers in Arlington County.



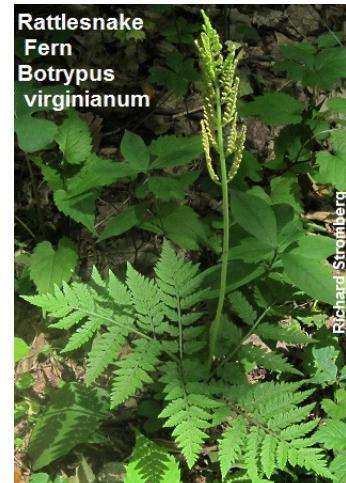


## Whence "Rattlesnake"—Richard Stromberg

On the May 15<sup>th</sup> Chapter walk on Dickey Ridge Trail, I stopped the group to look at Rattlesnake Fern (*Botrypus virginianum*). I explained that the single, triangular, sterile frond spreads horizontally at almost a ninety degree angle from the erect stalk, and the fertile frond, which develops the reproductive spores, grows vertically from the base of the sterile frond. Then I admitted that I did not know why it was called Rattlesnake Fern.



I know that the Rattlesnake Plantain orchid (*Goodyera pubescens*) and Rattlesnake Weed (*Hieracium venosum*) are so named because the vein pattern on their leaves resembles the pattern on a rattlesnake, or at least whoever named them thought it did. Other plant genera have rattlesnake as part of their name because they were used to treat rattlesnake bites: Rattlesnake Master (*Eryngium*) and Rattlesnake-root (*Prenanthes* or *Nabalus* depending on which taxonomist you talk to).



Kristin Zimet came to my rescue. She explained that the erect, bumpy fertile frond pointing up from the horizontal sterile frond resembles a coiled rattlesnake with its rattling tail pointing vertically. This struck home to me because on a hike the previous day I had seen a rattlesnake in just this position.



## Walk at Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship—Cindy Blugerman

Our March 13 walk at BRCES let us identify trees and look at old homesteads and the early signs of spring such as buds breaking, insect and frog eggs, and a salamander. We plan to walk there again in August for a different seasonal view.





## Big Bend National Park—Richard Stromberg

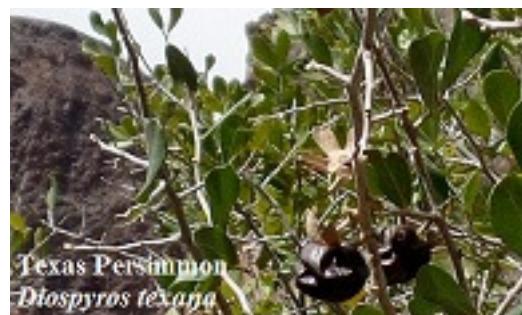
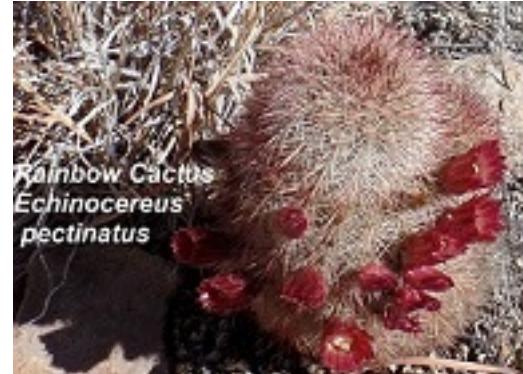
I spent the first week of March doing day hikes in Big Bend National Park, Texas. Big Bend contrasts drastically to our Shenandoah NP. While Shenandoah is within easy reach of millions of people, Big Bend is a four hour drive from the nearest airport (Midland). And the lush, deciduous forest of Shenandoah is starkly different from the sparse vegetation of the Big Bend Chihuahuan Desert. Also the vegetation varies more in Big Bend because the elevation ranges from 2,000 to almost 8,000 feet while Shenandoah is 600 to 4,000.

When we got to our room at Chisos Mountain Lodge, I saw purple-flowering members of the pea family from the balcony at the back and grabbed my camera to run around behind the building. From past trips to the western deserts, it said, “Locoweed (*Astragalus*)” to me. From the Peterson *Southwestern and Texas Wildflowers* guide I had with me, I determined it was Ground Plum Milkvetch (*Astragalus crassicarpus*) because of the large seed pods that give it its name.

I also had with me *Flowers of the Southwest Deserts* and *Shrubs and Trees of the Southwest Deserts*. The Park has no phone service and wi-fi access was poor, so I had to wait until I got home to get internet access. I found two websites with pages devoted to Big Bend flora: [www.inaturalist.org](http://www.inaturalist.org) and [swbiodiversity.org/seinet](http://swbiodiversity.org/seinet). I also used the USDA Plants Database advanced search option. It allows you to enter over a hundred parameters. The most useful to me were family and county. I tried flower color but usually could not find what I was looking for, probably because they have not entered data for that parameter, while family and county where the plant has been located is always entered.

Along the way to a notch called “The Window” the next day, I spotted another purple-flowering Pea family member. Peterson does not include shrubs and the other books I had with me did not have it. I put Brewster County, Fabaceae, shrub, and purple into USDA Plants Database advanced search option and it returned three possibilities and one matched, Mescal Bean (*Sophora secundiflora*), also known as Texas Mountain Laurel.

The Park newsletter boasted seventy cactus species—another contrast to back home, where we have only Eastern Prickly-pear (*Opuntia humifusa*). I identified a dozen. Only two had flowers open this early: Rainbow Cactus (*Echinocereus pectinatus*) and Purple Prickly Pear (*Opuntia violacea*).



In a dry wash I saw Texas Persimmon (*Diospyros texana*). Leaves were rounder and thicker than our Persimmon (*Diospyros virginiana*) back home, but the fruit looked the same, except, when ripe, it is black!

On dry, open trails vegetation was sparse, but occasional splashes of color were delightful. Indian Paintbrush (*Castilleja*) is always astonishing. The USDA Plants Database county locator let me pin down the one we saw as Mexican Indian Paintbrush (*C. Mexicana*). Nearby I spotted

a large white flower I had been looking for, Hedgehog Pricklypoppy (*Argemone squarrosa*). Bright white stands out in this dusty terrain. Another one had be baffled for a while. I looked to me like a Poppy or or Mariposa Lily. The Peterson Guide took me to Plains Flax (*Linum puberulum*). Checking the USDA Plants Database county locator got me to correct that to Chihuahuan Flax (*Linum vernale*).

(continued on page 8)



## Big Bend National Park (continued)

One flower had me baffled for a while. It looked like half-inch, purple mickey-mouse ears atop a naked, three-foot stalk. Finally I realized two more petals were curled beneath the mickey-mouse ears, and I and saw a siliqua below a flower, so I knew it was Mustard Family (*Brassicaceae*). Searching *Brassicaceae* in Brewster County, Texas, in the USDA Plants Database got me to Slimleaf Plains Mustard (*Schoenocrambe linearifolia*).

Exciting to see so many new species. I enjoyed the challenge of identifying them, especially that I identified all eight composites! You can see all my pictures at <https://risy.smugmug.com/Travel/Big-Bend-NP-March-2016>.



# The Leaflet

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Curlyheads (*Clematis ochroleuca*)