

The Leaflet

Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship—Sally Anderson

AUTUMN 2018

On a crystal clear morning in early July, Emily Southgate led a walk at the Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship (BRCES) located on the eastern side of the Blue Ridge south of Harpers Ferry. Although early July is a hot time of year, it's the time to see meadows and pollinators, and the morning start time was not too bad. We had a good sized group, and the parking lot was jammed, as a number of horseback riders had also chosen this date for an outing. Once we sorted out the parking we were off.

We visited several fields on the Sawmill Road part of BRCES, each with different origins and/or management. The gravel lane from the parking follows a wooded fence row (with berries), and on the other side is a pretty traditional hayfield that is hayed annually. Farther along under the larger power line the field has been planted with 'natives', that is, some of these plants are found growing naturally in Virginia, while others are midwestern plants that are often planted in these situations. Very shortly we found Eastern Gamagrass (*Tripsacum dactyloides*) growing along the gravel lane. This large and interesting grass is known as a cob grass, meaning that the seeds formed by female flowers are embedded in the flowering stem, a little like corn but smaller. Above them on the same stem are the male flowers. At the time we saw them, these spikes were pretty showy for a grass, with brightly colored pistils and stamens waving in the breeze.



Below the power lines, the planting mix has blended with many native and non-native volunteers, forming a diverse array of plants that we and the pollinators were happy to visit. Aster family plants, also known as composites, are usually dominant in these areas. The name composite comes from the characteristic



flower heads that usually contain both ray flowers (the 'petals') and a tightly packed disk of small tubular flowers that forms the centers. There can be several to hundreds of these small flowers, and each provides nectar. It's like a department store for pollinators, and with careful observation you can see a butterfly or bee probing the many tubes with their mouthparts. For me, the Joe-Pye-weeds (*Eutrochium* spp.) are a favorite. They can be much taller than a person, and in their prime are draped in butterflies. Wikipedia says the name comes from a Monican indian healer (Jopi, who adopted the name Joseph Pye) in the area of Stockbridge, MA in the 1740s. There are several wet areas along this part of the trail too, providing yet more diversity of plants.

After a respite from the sun on a trail through a dense woodland, we emerged into a third field. Besides being kept open by annual bush hogging, this area has not been given any special treatment. It is probably the nicest of the fields, and we were treated to stands of Common Milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*), Butterfly-weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*), Narrow-leaved Mountain Mint (*Pycnanthemum* (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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Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship (continued)



Butterflyweed

tenuifolium), and typical composite Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*). The butterflies were rather late coming out this year, but we saw quite a few that day.

About two-thirds of the 900 acre BRCES became a State Park in 2017, though it is still



Narrow-leaved Mountain Mint

all managed by the Robert and Dee Leggett Foundation. Several years prior to this when the transfer was announced, our board took an interest in the property and began regular visits to see what is there. When the park is developed, we'd like to be able to comment on areas that would be good to protect. It has been good getting to know the fields, woods, and ponds that make up BRCES.

Shenandoah National Park Drive—Mary Keith Ruffner

The August 12 "Second Sunday Walk" was a driving tour led by Piedmont board member and Virginia Master Naturalist Richard Stromberg. At 10am fifteen of us carpoled from Dickey Ridge in Shenandoah National Park and headed South along Skyline Drive for the first of seven planned stops. The backdrop at Signal Knob Overlook was beautiful as Richard showed points of interest and explained geology. A bonus was getting to watch the storm clouds gather on the peaks.



Wild Basil

Our first botanizing started across the Drive from the overlook, seeing Wild Basil (*Clinopodium vulgare*) and Common Evening Primrose (*Oenothera biennis*) among many others. We could have spent an hour there, but we had six more stops to go.

We played cat and mouse with rain storms, which made temperatures cool and views dramatic. Richard provided a list of the plants at each of our stops, which made keeping track of what we were looking at easier and enticed us on to our next location. Each stop brought its own unique plant community to enjoy and to study with plant list, guides and Flora of Virginia app.



Common Evening Primrose

(continued on page 3)

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Shenandoah National Park Drive (continued)



Purple Flowering Raspberry

The community of plants at Indian Run Overlook was a lovely grouping of Virgin's Bower (*Clematis virginiana*), Purple Flowering Raspberry (*Rubus odoratus*) and Pale Jewelweed (*Impatiens pallida*) among others. The rock face across the road from the north end of Indian Run Overlook has a display of basalt columns.



Virgin's Bower

Mary Keith Ruffner



Basalt Columns

Nancy Vehrs

As we drove between stops we were treated to gorgeous views of plants in bloom along the sides of the road. I was especially enthralled by the large swaths of yellow composites mixed with Joe-pye-weeds with nectaring bees and butterflies.

We covered close to 20 miles enjoying the flora, fauna, dramatic weather and the good company of fellow plant enthusiasts. Richard created an outstanding outing, highlighting dozens of native plants. We capped it off at Elk Wallow Wayside, where many of us enjoyed the park's specialty, blackberry ice cream and blackberry milkshakes.



Pale Jewelweed

Nancy Vehrs



The rain abated while we ate our ice cream, so some of us drove back to Hogback Overlook, which we had abandoned when the skies opened up. We were astonished to see Wild Columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*) blooming so late in the year. We were admiring the natural rock garden (see picture on page 7) across the Drive from the Overlook when the skies opened up again.



Wild Columbine

Nancy Vehrs



Nancy Vehrs



Clifton Bioblitz–Karen Hendershot

An Impressionist’s dream landscape awaited us on our fourth bioblitz at the Clifton Institute near Warrenton on August 5. The intense purple flowers of New York Ironweed (*Vernonia noveboracensis*) stood against a delicate tapestry of green vegetation and white Queen Anne’s Lace (*Daucus carota*).



The Clifton Institute, dedicated to research and education related to the ecology of our area, has long been a friend to the Piedmont Chapter, regularly hosting our walks. Through our “bioblitz”, we are helping the Institute identify plants in a 100-acre pasture to be restored to native meadow. But first an inventory must be made of plants already on the site to know what non-natives need to be removed and what natives will grow there.

Clifton’s Director, Bert Harris, and Sally Anderson have spearheaded the process. We have visited the pasture each month since May and by August were battling shoulder-high vegetation - mainly Ironweed,



Goldenrod (*Solidago* spp.), and Yellow Crownbeard (*Verbesina Occidentalis*). Sally has taken many tricky plant samples home for identification. Our plant list now tallies approximately 175 species, which we have been able to see in different stages of growth. Two lovely examples in August were a Knotroot Bristlegrass (*Setaria parviflora*) in bloom and a Longleaf Ground-cherry (*Physalis longifolia*) with its Chinese-lantern-like fruits.

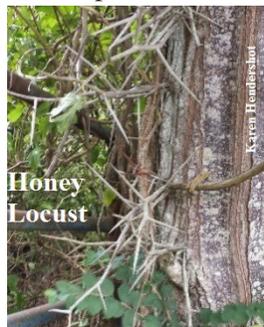


Our work has led to some interesting discoveries, including a solitary Ragged Fringed Orchid [*Platanthera lacera*] found in July. We’ve been surprised by occasional white blossoms on Red Clover (*Trifolium pratense*), as well as on an otherwise blue Chicory (*Cichorium intybus*).

Despite our careful inspection, it is easy to miss things in a sea of green. We had not noticed Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium* sp.) on the property but Bert suspected its presence because he had seen a Crossline Skipper (*Polites origenes*), for which Little Bluestem is the only host. Sally found the Bluestem, pointing out the alternating red and green on the stems.



An old pasture does not discriminate much in the types of plants allowed to put down roots. Among the grasses and sedges in this field, Grapes (*Vitis*) coexisted with Berries (*Rubus*), Pasture Roses (*Rosa carolina*) with Multiflora Roses (*Rosa multiflora*), and Narrow-leaf Mountain-mint (*Pycnanthemum tenuifolium*) with Wild Basil (*Clinopodium vulgare*).



If left untended, the forest would eventually reclaim the land by shading out most other vegetation. We could see the early signs of invasion with seedlings of Redcedar (*Juniperus virginiana*), Ash (*Fraxinus*), Cherry (*Prunus*), Bradford Pear (*Pyrus calleryana*), and Honey Locust (*Gleditsia triacanthos*) – the last likely the offspring of a spiky old tree.

Short Takes on Books We Love (Do you have a nature book you love? Send us a short take.)

The Living Landscape by Rick Darke & Doug Tallamy (2014, 392 pp.) Perhaps your interests veer more to the aesthetic than the scientific, but you want to “do the right thing” in your garden. Landscape consultant Rick Darke and entomology professor Doug Tallamy show you how to use native species to lovely effect. Beautiful photographs lure you to read about important interactions of plants, insects, and birds. Practical advice on different types of terrain, useful plant combinations, weed suppression, and maintenance are also included. A nearly 80-page reference of recommended plants and their ecological value will help you create your own private Eden. [review by Karen Hendershot]



VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY
PIEDMONT CHAPTER ANNUAL MEETING
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2018, NOON

Shelter 1, Shenandoah River State Park, 350 Daughter of Stars Dr, Bentonville, VA 22610

AGENDA

- Pot Luck Luncheon
Business Meeting
Tour in the Park

The Board of the Piedmont Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society presents the following candidates for election to serve 2018-2019. Board members and Officers may be elected to two consecutive 2-year terms, but then are ineligible for reelection for one full year to assure opportunity for others to participate and contribute new ideas. We hope to have a few more nominees by the time we meet in October and invite members to come forward and add their name to the list. Nominations are welcome from the floor.

Officers:

President: Karen Hendershot 2018-20, 2nd term
Vice President: Diane Krumme 2017-19, 1st term
Secretary: Sally Anderson, 2018-2020 1st term
Treasurer: Cathy Mayes, 2018-2020 1st term

Directors (terms begin and end in October):

Continuing: Brenda Crawford, 2017-19, 2nd term
Ron Hughes 2017-19, 2nd term
Ellie Daley 2017-19, 1st term
Karen Fall 2017-19, 1st term
Kristin Zimet 2017-19, 1st term
Returning: Mary Keith Ruffner, 2018-2020 1st term
Robin Williams, 2018-2020 1st term
Emily Southgate, 2018-2020 1st term
Leaving: Lil Ledford, Jocelyn Sladen, Blanca Vandervoort, Richard Stromberg

2018 Piedmont Chapter Ballot

For the proposed Officers and Directors
I am in favor ___ not in favor ___
Signature _____

For the proposed Officers and Directors
I am in favor ___ not in favor ___
(second person of a family membership)
Signature _____

IF YOU CANNOT ATTEND THE CHAPTER ANNUAL MEETING ON OCTOBER 14, PLEASE COMPLETE THIS BALLOT AND MAIL BY SEPTEMBER 21 TO Piedmont Chapter Virginia Native Plant Society, P.O. Box 336, The Plains, VA 20198 or email your vote to piedmontvnps@gmail.com

Directions: Shenandoah River State Park is 8 miles south of Front Royal on US-340. Follow Daughter of the Stars Drive to the dead end and turn left. Go to the last parking lot near Shelter 1, where we will meet. Park entrance fee is \$7.

View from Cullers Overlook in Shenandoah River State Park





Sunday	Sep 23	1pm	Sunday Walk at Clifton Institute
Fauquier County. Autumn fields at Clifton Institute. Easy hike through fields near Warrenton. Identify grasses, native trees and shrubs, and late wildflowers. For more information, contact piedmontvnps@gmail.com [Note: The date, previously announced as Sep 9 had to be changed because of another event at Clifton Institute.]			
Sunday	Oct 14	noon	Chapter Annual Meeting
Warren County. See page 5 for details.			
Sunday	Nov 11	1pm	Second Sunday 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. While flowers will be gone, we should see many fungi and non-flowering plants. For more information, contact piedmontvnps@gmail.com			
Sunday	Dec 9	1pm	Second Sunday Walk at Banshee Reeks
Loudoun County. Autumn fields at Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve (near Leesburg). Identify grasses, native trees shrubs, and wildflowers gone to seed. For information, contact piedmontvnps@gmail.com			

Carrie Blair is Moving to North Carolina—Karen Hendershot

What does a passionate native plant advocate do, when she wants to move to someplace new? First, she checks the biodiversity! Well, maybe it didn't happen *exactly* that way but our two-time former Piedmont Chapter President, tree expert, walk leader, teacher, and dear friend is moving to Brevard, NC, an area rich in plant life. Brevard is also at the entrance to the Pisgah National Forest, home to the "cradle of American forestry", the Biltmore Forest School. What could be more appropriate for Carrie Blair!



Like many others in our chapter, Carrie got her start with native plants through classes with Professor Marion Lobstein. Marion notes that the joy of teaching is "lighting the spark" in a student and that now Carrie has surpassed her teacher in her knowledge of trees. Helping to send Carrie on her way to a new life in North Carolina, Marion presented her with a copy of the *Manual of the Vascular Flora of the Carolinas* at our August 14 Board Meeting. A primary author of this work was noted botanist, C. Ritchie Bell, who had been Marion's professor.

Carrie's careful instruction has cured many of us of "tree blindness". We will be forever grateful for her generosity – and great patience with at least one of us (I'm speaking for myself) – in sharing her knowledge. Thank you, Carrie, and Chapter Mascot, Ernest. We will miss you and wish you both the very best!





Hogback Natural Rock Garden—Richard Stromberg

The rock wall behind the Hogback Overlook in Shenandoah National Park is a natural rock garden with niches in the lichen-covered rocks filled with Goldenrod (*Solidago* spp.), Southern Harebell (*Campanula divaricata*), Allegheny Stonecrop (*Hylotelphium telephiodes*), ferns and mosses.



Richard Stromberg

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Curlyheads (*Clematis ochroleuca*)



Mary Keith Ruffner