

# The



# Leaflet

A Morning at Calmes Neck—Jocelyn Sladen

SUMMER 2013

On April 13, the weather gods smiled upon Piedmont Chapter’s annual field trip to Calmes Neck Bluffs, in Clarke County. Paths through the woodlands led participants through a soft mosaic of Spring Beauty (*Claytonia virginica*), Rue Anemone (*Thalictrum thalictroides*) and Cut-leaved Toothwort (*Cardamine laciniata*) in peak bloom. Up on the slopes, the Twinleaf (*Jeffersonia diphylla*) was blooming abundantly, with Dwarf Larkspur (*Delphinium tricorne*) just opening, while down on the floodplain, beneath the gentle sun filtered through new opening leaves, the flagship plant, our Virginia Bluebells (*Mertensia virginica*), colored the ravine and floodplain.



Calmes Neck Bluffs is one of three VNPS registry sites in the Piedmont Chapter area. The original owner of a significant portion of the land, Fran Endicott, understood the botanical value of the bluffs overlooking the Shenandoah River and in 1998 was pleased to rally other neighboring landowners to approve the registry designation. Virginia Natural Heritage Program ecologist Gary Fleming, did the initial survey, stating in his original description, “The plot is situated on a gently sloping bench at the top of a wooded north-facing cliff along the Shenandoah River. Underlying bedrock is dolomite or limestone of the Rome formation. Despite shallow rocky soils and submesic conditions, vegetation here is extremely diverse, with high species richness. In the spring, masses of showy, flowering lithophytic herbs (e.g. *Aquilegia canadensis*) and calcium-loving ferns is breathtaking.” Gary led the first chapter field trip and, happily for all, has returned each year since to interpret and share the beauty of this remarkable, calcareous site.



Familiar plants were in flower to greet us, like old friends. Dutchman’s Breeches (*Dicentra cucullaria*) and Squirrel Corn (*Dicentra canadensis*) seemed more abundant than in years past, spilling down the banks. Toadshade (*Trillium sessile*) was just opening, but asserting great presence. Downy Yellow Violet (*Viola pubescens*) lit up the landscape. Wild Blue Phlox (*Phlox divaricata*) bloomed here and there. Trout Lily (*Erythronium americanum*) showed its



usual abundance of sterile leaves, but we found two in bloom. Both Blue Cohosh (*Caulophyllum thalictroides*) and Black Cohosh (*Actaea racemosa*) were locally abundant, although not yet in bloom. For several of us, the tiniest of blooms all but stole the show. Harbinger of Spring (*Erigenia bulbosa*) blooms so early that it is easily missed, particularly as the plant is so small. This year, sharp eyes found several still in bloom. The tiny but elegant flowers proved quite worth the effort to get down (with magnifier) on the ground and then struggle back up.

While the dazzling expanse of Virginia bluebells remains the star attraction at Calmes Neck, many of the rarer botanical treasures are found among the rock cliffs above the river. (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 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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#### **The Leaflet**

### **A Morning at Calmes Neck** (continued from page 1)

Clusters of native sedums, Wild Stonecrop (*Sedum ternatum*) and Cliff Stonecrop (*Sedum glaucophyllum*) nestle in the rocks along with colonies of Bulblet Bladder Fern (*Cystopteris bulbifera*). We found Walking Fern (*Asplenium rhizophyllum*) on several rock faces. Columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*), usually a showpiece here, had barely emerged, but both Early Saxifrage (*Saxifraga virginensis*) and the Yellow Fumewort (*Corydalis flavula*) created gardens on the rocks.



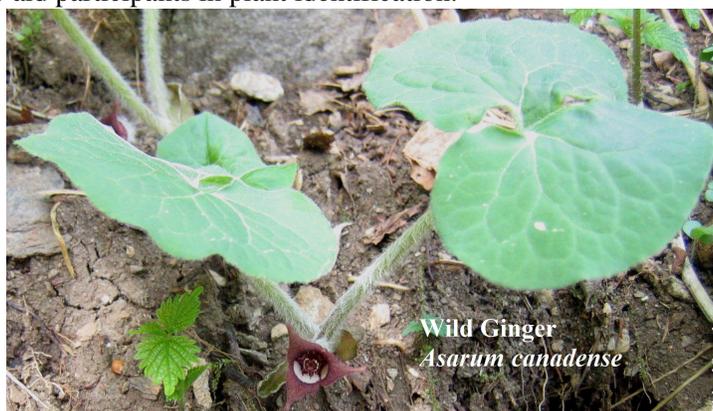
Yellow Fumewort  
*Corydalis flavula*

The Virginia Native plant Society is ever thankful to the residents of Calmes Neck for their shared appreciation of the rare natural area and their continued willingness to protect it.

### **Early Spring C&O Canal Walk—Carla Overbeck**

Twelve participants joined leader Sally Anderson on a walk along the towpath of the C&O Canal starting at the parking lot at Dargan Bend near Sandy Hook, Maryland, on April 21<sup>st</sup>. Piedmont chapter members Carrie Blair and Kristin Zimet were on hand to aid participants in plant identification.

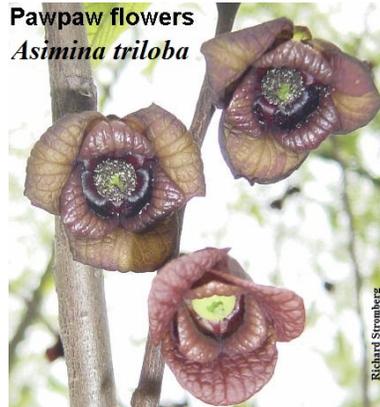
Several flowers were in bloom, including Wild Ginger (*Asarum canadense*) with its elusive maroon flowers, Squirrel Corn (*Dicentra canadensis*), Virginia Bluebells (*Mertensia virginica*), Indian



Wild Ginger  
*Asarum canadense*

Strawberry (*Duchesnea indica*), and Golden Alexanders (*Zizia aurea*). Sweet Cicely (*Osmorhiza berteroi*) and Blue Cohosh (*Caulophyllum thalictroides*) were visible but not yet in bloom, while Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*) and Early Meadow Rue (*Thalictrum dioicum*) had already flowered.

**Pawpaw flowers**  
*Asimina triloba*



Richard Stromberg

(*Urtica dioica*) and Poison Ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*) were identified as plants to avoid. While not a native to Virginia, Striped Squill (*Puschkinia scilloides*), an escaped garden flowering plant, was very pretty in bunches along parts of the path.

Several trees made a handsome presence along the towpath and the ridge above it. Maroon flowers of Pawpaw (*Asimina triloba*) and the white bark of Sycamore trees (*Platanus occidentalis*) provided a striking contrast to the green plants around them.



<b>Sunday</b>	<b>June 9</b>	<b>1pm</b>	<b>Second Sunday Walk</b>
<b>Shenandoah National Park. Stony Man Walk.</b> Join Master Naturalists Cathy Mayes and Marjorie Prochaska and seek out woodland wildflowers as you hike to the summit of Stony Man Mountain (elev. 4,010 ft.) to learn about unusual plants found at high-elevation rock outcrops. Unpaved trail, 1.6 miles. Elevation change about 340 ft. This walk is easy but be mindful of rocks and roots in the trail. Meet at Stony Man Nature Trail parking area (Mile Post 42 of Skyline Drive, North entrance to Skyland Resort. Send your RSVP to <a href="mailto:piedmontvnps@gmail.com">piedmontvnps@gmail.com</a> .			
<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>July 9</b>	<b>5pm</b>	<b>VNPS Piedmont Chapter Board Meeting</b>
<b>Clarke County.</b> The Chapter Board of Directors will meet in The Plains. All Chapter members are welcome. For more details, contact <a href="mailto:piedmontvnps@gmail.com">piedmontvnps@gmail.com</a> .			
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>July 14</b>	<b>1pm</b>	<b>Second Sunday Walk</b>
<b>George Washington National Forest.</b> Join us on west side of Fort Valley as we seek Yellow Fringed Orchids ( <i>Platanthera ciliaris</i> ) and other plants at the bottom of the east side of Green Mountain. For more details, please contact <a href="mailto:piedmontvnps@gmail.com">piedmontvnps@gmail.com</a> .			
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>August 11</b>	<b>2pm</b>	<b>Second Sunday Walk</b>
Being planned. Contact <a href="mailto:piedmontvnps@gmail.com">piedmontvnps@gmail.com</a> for details.			
<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>August 13</b>	<b>5pm</b>	<b>VNPS Piedmont Chapter Board Meeting</b>
<b>Fauquier County.</b> The Chapter Board of Directors will meet at Wildcat Mountain near Warrenton. All Chapter members are welcome. For more details, contact <a href="mailto:piedmontvnps@gmail.com">piedmontvnps@gmail.com</a> .			

### Cedar Creek Battlefield Walk, May 4—Sally Anderson

"In the early morning hours of October 19, 1864, Confederate Lieutenant General Jubal Early launched a surprise attack on Union forces along Cedar Creek south of Middletown, Virginia. The Federal Army of the Shenandoah was under the command of Major General Philip Sheridan, who had been given orders to rid the Valley of any remaining Confederate forces. It would be the zenith of the 1864 campaign in the Valley, and the outcome of the battle would have far-reaching consequences for both sides..." (Cedar Creek Battlefield Foundation website at <http://cedarcreekbattlefield.org/history.html>).



Hoary Puccoon  
*Lithospermum  
canescens*

The battle has some consequences to this day, since it provides us with a very special site to see wildflowers! Our group was treated to several species that do well on the dry limestone bluffs and along the gravel roadside, as well as species that like the more moist parts of the site. Special to this site are Hoary Puccoon

(*Lithospermum canescens*), Green and Gold (*Chrysogonum virginianum*), Wild Pink (*Silene caroliniana* ssp. *pensylvanica*), Allegheny Stonecrop (*Hylotelephium telephioides*), American Arborvitae (*Thuja occidentalis*) and Wild Columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*). In the moist, shady woods we had missed the Virginia Bluebells (*Mertensia virginica*) that grow in the old trenches, and we were barely in time to see the last Shooting Star (*Primula meadia*, formerly *Dodecatheon meadia*) in bloom.

(continued on page 4)



Shooting Star *Primula meadia*



### Cedar Creek Battlefield Walk (continued from page 3)

When the weather warms, the Redcedars (*Juniperus virginiana*) are host to the Juniper Hairstreak butterfly, which I've spotted on previous trips, and some stands of Pawpaw ensure that Zebra Swallowtails (*Protographium marcellus*) will be seen there. The gravel road ends at a nice opening on Cedar Creek, and nearby bluffs, caves and sinkholes provide for interesting terrain and views. The trails provide many other floral treasures, so we will be sure to plan a visit next spring.

### Great Smoky Mountains National Park—The Heart of the Biome—Marjorie Prochaska

The species diversity we find in the temperate deciduous forests of the Southern Appalachians is nowhere more evident than in the Great Smoky Mountains. Knowing this, more than two dozen people were quick to sign up for the VNPS-sponsored trip in April, which Butch & Betty Kelly of the Blue Ridge Chapter organized for us. Several of us from the Piedmont Chapter were able to go and meet with others from around the state. We were also joined by Kirsten Johnson, President of the Maryland Native Plant Society and her fern-expert husband Dwight, who had been with us on an earlier trip to the Blue Ridge.

Butch and Betty planned something different for each day. Mornings we left the kitsch of Pigeon Forge (our hotel was opposite a great climbing King Kong) to enter the sanctuary of the Park. Our first morning we drove up the storied Newfound Gap Road to the Chimneys Picnic Area where we entered a cove hardwood forest for our first look at the spring ephemerals. It seemed early (the Park's Spring Wildflower Week was two weeks later), but we got very good at recognizing plants in their infancy. "What on earth is this?" I asked Sally, and she replied, "It's a Maiden Hair Fern." Well of course it was. It was going to grow and unfold its circle of horizontal fronds. I had just looked at it too quickly and not considered what it was to become, but other things had been fast "becoming", and I think I OD'd on the *Trillium*. Besides the familiar *Trillium grandiflorum*, we saw Yellow Trillium (*T. luteum*) throughout the park, and we learned to recognize the horizontal platform which the Sweet White Trillium (*T. simile*) forms with its three leaves. We completed the day by driving up to the Gap and on to Clingman's Dome, which we hiked to the highest point in the park, 6643 feet. From there the mountains of North Carolina and Tennessee unfolded before us in a blue haze.

The next morning we drove to the southwest corner the Park, on the infamous Tail of the Dragon, 11 miles with 318 curves. We parked in front of Cheoah Dam at Tapoco, made famous by Harrison Ford's jump in the movie The Fugitive. We met Dan Petillo, retired curator of the Western Carolina U. herbarium, our guide to the Joyce Kilmer/Slick Rock Wilderness area. Trillium were everywhere, sometimes three species together. We saw three new species: mottled-leaved, closed, maroon Large Toadshade (*T. cuneatum*), maroon, open Wake Robin (*T. erectum*), and nodding, white flowered Catesby's Trillium (*T. catesbaei*). Dan pointed out the



Giant Solomon's Seal (*Polygonatum biflorum* var. *commutatum*), a tetraploid, which accounts for its large size. Later we saw massive trees which had been spared the axe.

(continued on page 5)



### Editor's Corner

I spent a week hiking around Tucson in mid-April. Amazing what color appears in such a dry place (twelve inches of rain a year): bright orange splashes of Desert Globemallow (*Sphaeralcea ambigua*) and Ocotillo (*Fouquieria splendens*); bright pink *Penstemons* compared to the white and light purple ones in Virginia; and the brilliant cactus flowers.

How plants have adapted is also amazing: Ocotillo produces flowers and tiny leaves when it gets enough water; Cacti have converted leaves to protective spines and photosynthesize through fleshy stems, which also store liquids; Palo Verde (*Parkinsonia florida*) gets small leaves after summer rains and photosynthesizes through its green bark the rest of the year.

I was also reminded by the cacti that plants have their times to bloom: Hedgehog Cacti were in full bloom; Prickly Pears were just starting to open; Cholla were budding but not open; Saguaro will bloom in May-June; Barrel Cactus will not flower until July.

Other plants besides Penstemon reminded me of species back home. Manzanita (*Arctostaphylos pungens*) has bell-shaped flowers like those of related Blueberries back home. Fiddleneck (*Amsinckia menziesii*) looks like a fuzzy version of the fellow *Boraginaceae* Hoary Puccoon seen at Cedar Creek. Canyon Ragweed (*Ambrosia ambrosioides*) looks like a shrub, but the flowers are like our Common Ragweed. Silver Puffs (*Microseris lindleyi*) flowers look like Yellow Goatsbeard (*Tragopogon dubius*), but the crisscrossed stars of its seed head outshine the geodesic seed dome of the *Tragopogons*. Every place has a Fleabane. In this desert it was Spreading Fleabane (*Erigeron divergens*).

– Richard Stromberg

### Great Smoky Mountains (continued from page 4)

Our third morning we went up Porter's Creek Trail to Fern Branch Falls. We saw our first extensive display of *Phacelia fimbriata*, the wonderful Fringed Phacelia the Park is known for. We also saw clumps of Purple Phacelia (*Phacelia bipinnatifida*) throughout the Park. In addition to the Trillium, I finally nailed the Black-throated Green Warbler (*Dendroica virens*), whose familiar *zee zee zee zoo zee* was heard everywhere in the understory.

Camp Lynn Prong area had been heavily logged and then donated to the Park. It had several spectacular river crossings. By this time, I was overloaded by the sheer number of taxa, and, if I felt smug about the Trillium, I lost it on the Violets. In the afternoon we hiked the Chestnut Top Trail, which is surely the most species-dense section of the park. In spite of attempts to be orderly, in the end we were spread out along this steep hillside trail, each of us engrossed in what attracted us most—the ferns, the sedums, the sedges, the photography of all.

The last morning we visited Wes and Rachel Siegrist, artists who opened home and garden to us and explained their miniaturist art, a form they are keeping alive, and for which they are internationally known. Naturalists also, they led us in to White Oak Sinks, an area within the Park but not yet on the map. We hiked up an old roadbed and down into a “sink” caused by soft-dissolving limestone to the unofficially-named Rainbow Falls, a tall falls which plunged into a pool swallowed up by a cave. The approach was steep and slick, and the overall effect for me was primordial—I pondered what early man must have thought of it. Another cave at the other end of the sink was blocked by a huge cage. Walking out, we were treated to an exchange between two Barred Owls and a look at a small population of Shooting Stars (*Primula meadia*). Driving back to Virginia with my new friend Marcia Mabee Bell, owner of Naked Mountain Natural Area Preserve in Nelson County, she reminded me that her and her husband's chance discovery of an amazing population of Shooting Stars on their property in 2006 led to its establishment as a natural area preserve.

This was my third trip to the Great Smoky Mountains, and I hope it will not be my last. I came back floating, and the memories of literally entering the landscape endure. These trips arranged by the state for our members are, to my mind, the best benefit of belonging to VNPS. May you be so fortunate to find a place on a future trip.



Fringed Phacelia  
*Phacelia fimbriata*

Sharon Samford



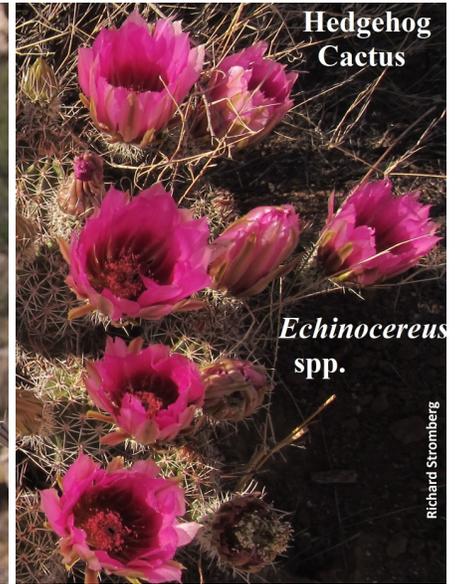
Silver Puffs *Microseris lindleyi*

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Ocotillo  
*Fouquieria splendens*

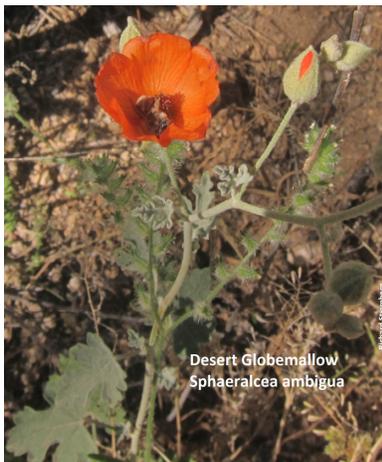
Richard Stromberg



Hedgehog Cactus

*Echinocereus*  
spp.

Richard Stromberg



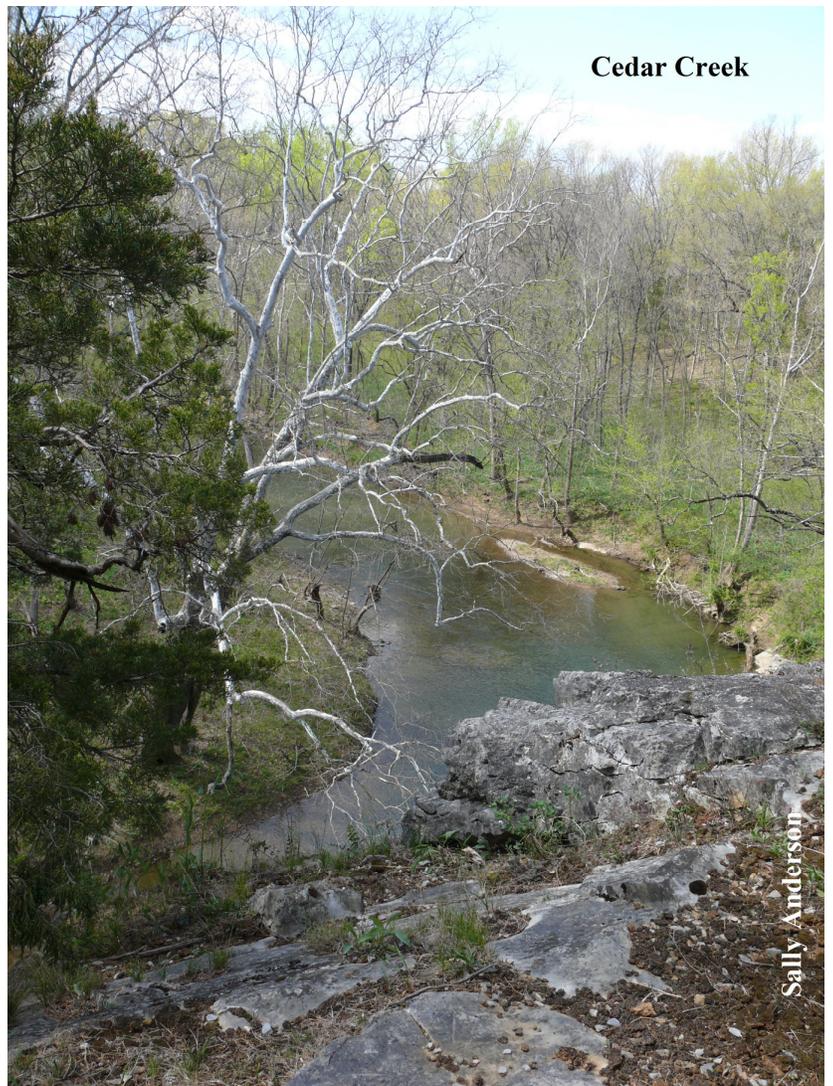
Desert Globemallow  
*Sphaeralcea ambigua*

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Purple Phacelia  
*Phacelia bipinnatifida*

Sharon Samford



Cedar Creek

Sally Anderson