

POTOWMACK NEWS

Volume 12, No.2

Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

Spring 1994

Peter Mazzeo to Speak at May Meeting

PETER MAZZEO, DIRECTOR OF THE HERBARIUM AT the U.S. National Arboretum, will speak at the General Membership meeting on Thursday, May 26. His topic will be "Ferns: You Should Be Frond of Them". If you are, come and enjoy Peter's informed and always witty talk. If you are not, come and learn about these wonderful native plants which can add variety and interest to home gardens and nature walks alike.

PLEASE NOTE: This meeting will be held at Hidden Oaks Nature Center. The Center is located on Hummer Road off Route 236, just inside the Capital Beltway. For further directions, contact Liz Smith at 703-768-1697. The meeting will begin at 7:00 pm. Refreshments will be served and there will be a drawing for a door prize. There will be no individual notification of this meeting so please mark your calendar now! ■



Roosevelt Island Weekend

by Nancy Luria

WHAT STARTED OUT TO BE A CHAPTER-SPONSORED walk to revisit the portions of Roosevelt Island on which we pulled ivy last fall, turned into a society-wide weekend event. The desire to assess the fall efforts grew into a need to formally document the project by doing plant surveys and deciding which areas should be targeted for particular eradication techniques.

April 9th was a perfect spring day. We had an impressive turnout of members — many from our chapter — so the survey and even more pulling got done. And Dan Sealy was right — the bank near the marsh where we tackled the ivy last fall was filled with trout lily and Dutchman's breeches. It was definitely the proverbial breathtaking scene. Even veteran society members had never seen such a thick carpet of these species. What we will watch to see now is if removing the ivy makes a difference in the density of these populations (the ivy we pulled there had just invaded — we'll leave a control area where we will not pull ivy so that the effect of removal can be assessed).

In addition to working, we played. Mary Ann Gibbons arranged a pizza picnic with her usual

continued on page 5

Backyard Habitat Tour '94

Saturday, May 21 from 11 am - 6 pm (rain date Sunday, May 22).

Don't miss Herndon's fourth annual habitat tour, sponsored by Tree Action, a local grass roots environmental organization. The purpose of this event is to increase public awareness of how to help wildlife in our urban-suburban areas and to demonstrate a variety of approaches that can be taken on various-sized lots, ranging from a townhome to a 1/2-acre lot.

Tour stops include many examples of native and other low maintenance plantings in both sun and shade, ponds, intensive food gardens, raised beds, composting and soil building. Learn what plants are best for birds, butterflies and wet areas. Get tips on bird feeding and nest boxes. There are great examples of decks, patios and pathways, too! The tour may also include school, community and commercial habitats. Proceeds are used for environmental education and public landscaping.

Tickets: \$3/adult; \$1/kids 12 & under; max. \$8/family.

For more information, call 703-471-4337 or 703-450-0608.

Message from our New Conservation Chair

Dear Members,

Our interest in native plants often extends beyond our love of gardening to the desire to protect the ecosystems of the "wild" places in our own neighborhoods. As the new conservation chair of the Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society, I welcome the opportunity to be a part of these efforts.

One of my primary goals in the next few months will be to define our chapter's role in local conservation efforts. I think if the chapter has a focused, supported program, we can accomplish a great deal. In order to do this I need your feedback, ideas, past experiences and wealth of contacts in the conservation community. Please feel free to call me at home on weekdays between 5:00 pm and 9:00 pm.

Abbie Duchon, Conservation Chair
703-255-9031

Potowmack Chapter
Virginia Native Plant Society
P.O. Box 161
McLean, VA 22101

Board Officers

President	Nancy Luria	(703)528-3612
Vice President	Anne Van Ryzin	(703)938-3227
Secretary	Laura Beaty	(703)534-8746
Treasurer	Dan Sealy	(703)549-9782

Committee Chairs

Botany	Cris Fleming	(301)657-9289
Programs	Liz Smith	(703)768-1697
Hospitality	Joan Van Ryzin	
Membership	Anne Crocker	(703)437-0355
Propagation and Sales	Gerry Pratt	(703)323-1094
Publications	Liz Smith	(703)768-1697
Newsletter	Mark Etheridge	(703)503-5975
Site Registry	Jane Collins	(703)525-1304
Native Trail Coordinator	Edith Bradbury	(703)971-8878
Conservation	Abbie Duchon	(703)255-9031

Mail articles for the newsletter to:
Mark Etheridge
9422 Fairleigh Court
Burke, VA 22015

Deadline for next issue is: **July 28**

President's Message

by Nancy Luria

"TEACHER" IS ONE OF THE HATS A NATURALIST wears and so it is one of mine. Some weeks a hundred children visit Potomac Overlook Park. I worry about whether or not they learn anything. Seventh graders won't sit on the ground, first graders just want to touch the snake, they really don't care what you call it. When you're giving a piece of yourself for someone else's benefit and they don't seem to care, it can be very frustrating. You don't always get thanked. Once I did get an unexpected piece of mail: "Dear Nace, thank you for tecking me haw to plant fos and vechabols." Wise friends tell me: "You never know what seeds you've planted." Hmmm.

The advice is well taken and the note was a real morale booster, but there are still all those blank faces. Sitting on an organization's board can be frustrating, too. No one wants to chair a committee this month, those builders don't want to preserve a natural habitat, very few people sign up for walks. In short, your efforts just don't seem to be appreciated.

One time, instead of the "you never know what seeds. . ." lecture, a friend posed these questions

continued on page 4



THE CHAPTER BOARD IS PLEASED TO announce the appointment of two new members:

Joan Van Ryzin, Hospitality Chair

Abbie Duchon, Conservation Chair

Both of these new board members have already begun to serve the chapter in much needed and extremely helpful ways.

The nominating committee is currently seeking volunteers for several 1994-95 board positions (including programs and secretary). If you are interested in serving on the board, please contact nominating committee member Ben FitzGerald (280-4918).

Huntley Meadows Park

by Cris Fleming

HUNTLEY MEADOWS PARK, the largest park in Fairfax County, is located near a busy commercial strip south of Alexandria. The park contains over 1,000 acres of non-tidal wetlands, forests, and open meadows in the midst of heavy suburban development. Huntley Meadows is considered a prime natural area and has been proposed as a registry site by the Potowmack Chapter of VNPS.

Huntley Meadows was once part of a large plantation owned by the Mason Family. The land was extensively farmed for many years; remains of canals used to drain the wetlands can still be seen. In 1974, Huntley Meadows was donated to the Fairfax County Park Authority through the federal Legacy of the Parks program with the stipulation that it be used "exclusively for park and recreation uses in perpetuity." During the 1980's, the unique environment of Huntley Meadows was threatened by proposed construction of the Lockheed-Van Dorn Connector road on the northern boundary of the park. Vigorous opposition by citizens groups coupled with scientific studies showing potential damage to the wetlands were instrumental in the defeat of this plan.

The many different habitats at Huntley Meadows Park include freshwater marsh, shrub swamp, forested wetlands, oak-pine forest,

and open fields. The Cedar Trail through the woods leads to the Heron Trail, which follows the boardwalk through the marsh and connects with the Deer Trail in the forested wetland.

Huntley Meadows provides fine wildlife habitat and is home to beaver, deer, otter, great egret, great blue heron, yellow-crowned night heron, the elusive king rail, and many other animals.

Summer and early fall are the best

The many different habitats at Huntley Meadows Park include freshwater marsh, shrub swamp, forested wetlands, oak-pine forest, and open fields.

times to see wildflowers at Huntley Meadows. In June and July, in the open fields, you can find spotted St. Johnswort (*Hypericum punctatum*), whorled loosestrife (*Lysimachia quadrifolia*), narrow-leaved mountain-mint (*Pycnanthemum tenuifolium*), ox-eye daisy (*Chrysanthemum leucanthemum*), and balsam ragwort (*Senecio pauperculis*). In very dry, sandy soil grow bracted plantain (*Plantago aristata*), wild yellow flax (*Linum virginianum*), and dwarf dandelion (*Krigia virginica*). Flowering in the marsh are swamp rose (*Rosa palustris*) and button-bush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*).

In August, the wetlands are dominated by a large stand of lizard's-tail (*Saururus cernuus*). Other summer-flowering species are swamp rose mallow (*Hibiscus moscheutos*), seedbox (*Ludwigia alternifolia*), swamp milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*), square-stemmed monkey-flower (*Mimulus ringens*), winged monkey-flower (*Mimulus alatus*), humped bladderwort (*Utricularia gibba*), and cardinal flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*).

In the open fields near the parking lot are partridge-pea (*Cassia fasciculata*), blue curls (*Trichostema dichotomum*), hyssop-leaved bone-set (*Eupatorium hyssopifolium*), and early goldenrod (*Solidago juncea*).

September brings an abundance of bright gold to the open fields with the flowering of masses of tick-seed-sunflower (*Bidens polylepis*), as well as tall goldenrod (*Solidago canadensis*), rough-stemmed goldenrod (*Solidago rugosa*), and lance-leaved goldenrod (*Solidago graminifolia*). Other fall-flowering species of dry areas are calico aster (*Aster lateriflorus*), white heath aster (*Aster pilosus*), and sweet everlasting (*Gnaphalium obtusifolium*).

The marsh still blooms in fall with white turtlehead (*Chelone glabra*), New York ironweed (*Vernonia noveboracensis*), hollow Joe-pye weed (*Eupatorium fistulosum*), flat-topped aster (*Aster umbellatus*), and climbing hempweed (*Mikania scandens*).

Even in mid October, a visit to Huntley Meadows yields a pleasant surprise. A small colony of closed

continued on page 4

HUNTLEY

from page 3

gentian (*Gentiana clausa*) flowers in the forested wetland.

Huntley Meadows Park is managed by the Fairfax County Park Authority and is located at 3701 Lockheed Boulevard, Alexandria, VA, 22306; telephone (703)768-2525. The trails are well marked and there is an attractive visitor center with informative displays. The rebuilding of the boardwalk is now complete and the open marsh is accessible again.

Directions: From the Capital Beltway (I-495), take US-1 south for three and one-half miles to Lockheed Boulevard. Turn right and go one-half mile to the park entrance on the left. ■

NOTE: Cris Fleming will be leading walks at Huntley Meadows on Saturday, October 8 from 10-12 and 1-3. Walks are sponsored by the Smithsonian Resident Associate Program. Fee \$11/15. Call (202) 357-3030.

ANNUAL TRILLIUM WALK

by Anne Crocker

ACCOMPANIED BY THE PERSISTENT song of towhees and a colorful entourage of several species of butterflies, the annual trillium walk in the Thompson Wildlife Management Area was held April 28. Participants represented Prince William, Piedmont and Potowmack Chapters. The weather was perfect and the millions of *Trillium grandiflora* were in bloom. Yellow violets, may-apples, wild geraniums, jack-in-the-pulpit as well as the toothworts vied for attention.

Although the trillium show is over for 1994, summer and fall flowers are worth the 50 mile trip. For directions to the Thompson Tract, send a self addressed, stamped envelope to:

Anne Crocker, Membership Chair
909 Van Buren St
Herndon, Virginia 22070

PRESIDENT
from page 2

"Why do you do it? What's in it for you?" That's easy — I love nature, particularly native plants. "Ah," she said, "so you want other people to love it, too?" Exactly. Whoops. . . we're not supposed to impose our wills in a free society. Gee —so I can, like, just do this stuff and not have expectations? Ding, ding, ding.

Causes are greater than individuals. As board members, volunteers, and dues-paying members, we may not always be recognized for our contributions and we may not always see what difference we make. We can, however, always feel the joy a walk among wildflowers brings us and delight in sharing that joy with others. Positive attitudes instruct, too. ■

Butterflies at Huntley Meadows Park

by Mark Etheridge

HUNTLEY MEADOWS, WITH ITS variety of habitats, hosts a large number of butterfly species. Eighty species have been recorded in and around the park, including a colony of Dion skippers (*Euphyes dion*), the only known colony in Fairfax County. These skippers utilize marsh habitats, where they may be seen almost anytime during the summer months, nectaring at such plants as Buttonbush and Pickerelweed. Dion skippers lay their eggs on certain sedges, such as *Scirpus cyperinus*, *Carex stricta* and *C. lacustris*. The Dion skipper is fairly difficult to identify on the wing, and is a rare find. Anyone wishing to look for it should study a butterfly guide first. One good one is "Butterflies East of the Great Plains", by Paul A. Opler and George O. Krizek. Many of the photos in the book were taken at Huntley Meadows. For a list of butterfly species that have been found at the park, see "Butterflies Through Binoculars", by Jeffrey Glassberg. ■

National Trails Day at Riverbend Park

Saturday, June 4, 10:00am - 3:00pm

Eastern Mountain Sports will sponsor a day of meadow restoration at Riverbend Park in Great Falls, Virginia. Help plant and re-seed the meadow. Bring shovels, trowels, lunch and water. To register and get directions, call Chris Kyle (703)506-1470.

Native Plant Trail Needs Your Help!

This is the third Spring for our native plant trail at Green Spring Gardens Park. We are very excited over the progress we've made so far, but we need your help.

Volunteers are now being sought to assist horticulturist Brenda Skarphol with planting, raking, mulching and weeding. She has scheduled work days for the second Saturday of each month, 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Come spend a morning outdoors with us!

If you have any questions or would like to volunteer, please call Edith Bradbury, Native Trail Coordinator, at (703)971-8878.

Potowmack Chapter
Virginia Native Plant Society
Membership/Renewal Form

Name (s) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (home) _____ (work) _____

Individual \$15 Family \$25 Student \$10
 Patron \$50 Sustaining \$100 Life \$400
 Associate (group) \$40: delegate _____

To give a gift membership: Enclose dues, name and address.

I wish to make an additional contribution to Potowmack Chapter
in the amount of \$10 \$25 \$50 \$100 \$ _____

Check here if you do not wish your name
to be exchanged with similar organizations. Check here if you do not wish
to be listed in a chapter directory

Make check payable to VNPS and mail to:
VNPS Membership Chair, Route 1, Box 381, Delaplane, VA 22025



Potowmack Chapter
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