

POTOWMACK NEWS

Volume 18, No 4

Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

Jul/Aug 1999

JULY AND AUGUST FEATURE JOINT FIELD TRIPS WITH MARYLAND NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

- ❖ **July 17 and 18. Rod Simmons**, Maryland Native Plant Society president and Potowmack Chapter Site Registry chair, will lead a joint field meeting open to Virginia and Maryland Native Plant Society members at **Crow's Nest Forest in Stafford County, Virginia**. **Hal Wiggins**, trip coordinator, will arrive on the 16th and set up a large tent with maps and information about the site for all to use. There will be a field meeting on Saturday morning and various hikes throughout the day. Anyone who wishes to is invited to camp overnight, and there are canoe trips (canoes provided) and more hikes scheduled for Sunday. Crow's Nest Forest is a 4,000-acre old-growth shell-marl ravine forest near the Potomac River that is being considered for purchase by conservation groups and later inclusion in the National Wildlife Refuge System. The ravines are numerous and steep and support rich glades of ferns and wildflowers, including glade fern, orchids, and many more. Ancient trees, including chinkapin oak, occur throughout the site. This community type is rare in the Mid-Atlantic region. This site also is believed to be the place where Pocahontas was kidnapped and taken to England. **Directions to the site:** Take I-95 south from the DC area to the Stafford exit (about 35 miles). Turn left after exiting onto Rt. 630 towards Stafford Courthouse. Proceed a few miles to Rt. 629 (Andrew Chapel Road) and turn right. Follow Rt. 629 to Rt. 608 and bear left. Proceed a short distance to Rt. 609. Turn right on Rt. 609 and proceed about 1 block to gravel, gated road on left. **Meet at this gate at 10:00 a. m. on the 17th. Call Rod at 256-7671 for further information.**
- ❖ **August 8. Cris Fleming**, botany chair of Potowmack Chapter, will lead a **walk at Great Falls, MD, and the nearby rocky islands, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.** Many rare plants grow in these unusual habitats including narrow-leaved bluecurls, riverbank goldenrod, western sunflower, and others. This field trip will include some scrambling up and over rocks and boulders and several areas of rough walking off the main trails. Wear sturdy shoes and a hat and bring plenty of water. The trip will be cancelled if there is heavy rain. **Call Cris at 301-657-9289 or Shirley Gay at 920-1913 for reservations and directions.** Note: there is a \$4 entrance fee per car for those who don't have a National Park pass.

LORTON HEARINGS TO BE HELD JULY 8 AND JULY 26

Plans for developing the Lorton tract will be discussed on **Thursday, July 8th at 8:15 p.m.** at the Planning Commission meeting to be held at the Fairfax County Government Center. On **July 26th at 4 p.m.** at the Government Center, the Board of Supervisors will also address this topic. For more details, you can pick up a copy of the Staff Report from the Planning and Zoning Office at 12055 Government Center Parkway, Suite 730, or call Charlene Fuhrman-Schulz at 324-1210. To sign up to speak at either of the hearings, call 324-3151.

NATIVE PLANT SEMINAR AND SALE

On **Saturday, August 28**, there will be a seminar and sale of native plants sponsored by the **Irvine Natural Science Center** in Stevenson, Maryland (near Baltimore). Lecture topics include Growing and Propagating Showy Native Plants, Eliminating Invasive Exotics from the Native Landscape, and Woodland Gardens and Sustainable Landscapes. Registration is \$50 for non-members and \$40 for members. For more information, call 410-484-2413.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Without seeming to blow the Chapter's horn, a series of great programs and walks have been held so far this year. Opportunities to learn about and experience the wonders of our region were presented each month. Orchids, trilliums, the Piedmont, coastal wetlands—we explored them all. And, with that, we had great speakers who were willing to share their knowledge and enthusiasm about nature. It's impossible not to admire and be inspired by them. They're dedicated to educating people and to conserving our natural areas. They deserve our thanks and support.

Marianne Mooney

SUCCESSFUL MAY HOME GARDEN TOUR ENJOYED BY MANY

Sunday, May 2, was a perfect day for a garden tour. Forty Potowmack Chapter members took advantage of the lovely weather and toured the Peck garden in Herndon, where Margaret Peck has created many beautiful perennial beds. Her technique was to layer newspapers topped by compost and mulch to create new beds. Margaret added to the specialness of the occasion by serving lemonade and cupcakes in her garden. Visitors to the Herndon part of the tour also enjoyed the Magee-Struve garden, all native in the front yard, with ponds in both front and back yards and many unusual plants.

In McLean, the Beaty-Berry, Metcalf, and Diebold gardens were visited by approximately 80 members. Laura Beaty has spent years removing invasive exotics and planting hundreds of native plants, including a wonderful hillside of golden ragwort (*Senecio aureus*) and creeping phlox (*Phlox stolonifera*). The woodland gazebo overlooks a beautiful property of mature specimens of native trees, shrubs, ferns, perennials, and moss. Hilltop Cottage, home of the Metcalfs, has been recently remodeled and the outdoor garden rooms enhance this property. Philip Metcalf brought back to life the abandoned water gardens and used the original breezeway columns in a creative way. The Metcalfs provided a plant list for visitors. Bobbi and Bob Diebold have filled their beautiful garden with thousands of plants. Their shaded garden contains a number of paths extensively planted with unusual plants chosen for their foliage, texture, color, and form. The rivulet of forget-me-nots was a sight to remember! The Diebolds provided a source list of nurseries.

Billie Trump, assisted by Laura Beaty, Sylvia Orli, and Anne Crocker, was responsible for garden tour arrangements.

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Publicity	Sylvia Orli	979-3545
Site Registry	Rod Simmons	256-7671
Garden Tours	Billie Trump	960-1476
Immediate Past President	Norma Vermillion	451-0572

WANT TO JOIN VNPS? Call Anne Crocker, Membership Chair, at 437-0355, and she will send you an application.

Mark your calendars now for the fall plant sale on September 18th!

NEW, MORE CONVENIENT STORAGE SHED ENHANCES PROPAGATION BEDS

Tool storage at the chapter's Green Spring Park propagation beds had become something of a nuisance. The park has generously allowed VNPS to use a cabinet inside the Horticultural Center but this space had long since become crowded and inadequate. Propagation bed workers came up with an idea: an outdoor tool shed situated next to the beds. Worker Beth Smith, who has had experience with the Eagle Scout program of community service, suggested that a Scout might be found to put together a prefab shed for the chapter. Such a shed was purchased early this spring, and on April 24, an

Eagle Scout candidate named Timothy Woo constructed it. Timothy succeeded in this task despite having one arm in a cast. His parents and other scouts helped with the construction and they also remulched the paths and the new shady area for holding potted plants. Dust Pratt built tool racks and added board and cement block shelves. The total cost to the chapter of the 8 by 8 shed was approximately \$600, and this expenditure was approved by the board. The chapter will continue to use the inside cabinet to store other materials.

NATIVE PLANTS "IN" AT GREEN SPRING GARDENS DAY

The spring plant sale was well attended and a financial success as well as an opportunity to promote the use of native plants. Each year we notice that more and more vendors on Garden Day offer a variety of native plants. Although this may cut into our sales a bit, we are gratified that the message is spreading that native plants are good for the gardener, good for wildlife, and good for our ecology.

We offered 141 different species and a total of about 1,750 potted plants. Of these, half were donated and half were potted up from the propagation beds. Our success each year is due to the overwhelming effort of many of our members. Twenty-seven volunteers were actively involved in the preparation and conduct of the sale, and 16 people donated over 800 plants.

- We wish to commend the following persons for a great team effort:

Nancy Adamson, Laura Beaty, Helen Biggs, Patti Burch, Tiana Camfiord, Margaret Chatham, Deborah Crabtree, Anne Crocker, Roberta Day, Cathy Flynn, Shirley Gay, Eleanor Kask, Bill Kreitz, Joanne Krumviede, Gabriel and Lori Markoff, Marianne Mooney, Louis Nickols, Sylvia Orli, Dust and Gerry Pratt, Gladys Quintero, Bob Schmidt, Sally Sieracki, Beth Smith, Elaine Squieri, and Billy Trump.

- Donors of plants to the sale include:

Nancy Adamson, Laura Beaty, Tiana Camfiord, Margaret Chatham, Barbara Farron, Don Humphrey, Frankie Hull, Eleanor Kask, Lori Markoff, Marianne Mooney, Walker Newman, Marie Olson, Andrew Pratt, Dust and Gerry Pratt, Sally Sieracki, Beth Smith, and Billy Trump.

We welcome all our members to become involved in our propagation and sales activities. Our next sale will be on September 18th at Green Spring Gardens Park. Our work days are Wednesday and/or Saturday mornings. If you are interested in getting active and joining a great group of "VNPSers," call Gerry Pratt at 323-1094.

THIS YEAR, THINK OF YOUR GARDEN AS HABITAT by John C. Magee

It's summer again in my yard. The birds are singing, frogs are chirping, even three snakes have decided to call our backyard home. I've seen more animals in my garden this year than ever. Perhaps it's because they've figured out that not only is my garden filled with lots of interesting plants, but it has become a habitat for all types of animals.

When my wife and I bought this place 4 years ago, it was mostly lawn with a few large trees, a typical sterile suburban home. In the time since moving in, it has evolved into a little more than something sterile. We've added two ponds and a shrub border that (continued on page 4)

weaves itself around the property's edge. The water brings the animals and the shrubs serve as shelter. Perennial gardens are at the forefront and provide most of the flowers the butterflies and bees enjoy. But what all this has really become is a habitat--places where animals can raise their young and find shelter, food, and water.

Habitat is not just a few plants of bee-balm to feed the butterflies, but a whole mix of things that help promote the entire life cycle of an animal. Cedar waxwings, for instance, are dependent upon Eastern red cedars (*Juniperus virginiana*) for food and shelter. When fields of these trees are cleared for development, much (if not all) of their natural habitat is lost. What adds to this loss is that, after sites are developed, they are typically replanted with non-native plant species. In addition, wetland areas where frogs and amphibians would have lived have been drained off to help keep the mosquito populations down. Even open meadows are eliminated and replaced with large areas of maintained, chemically treated lawn.

The net result is devastating to local wildlife populations. The resulting imbalances cause huge upswings in certain, more advantageous species such as fox and deer and the inevitable crash of others, including songbirds (especially deep forest birds), neotropical migrants, and many frogs, toads, and salamanders.

What we need to do is think of what is happening in our own backyards. Think of your property as a little "oasis" from the mass development in our area. Treat all the living creatures there with the same respect. Provide them with some food, shelter, and water. Give them a place to raise their young. Share your land. **Make sure you keep as many chemical sprays away from your property as possible.** Many of the chemicals used for lawn and shrub care are extremely toxic to birds, fish, and amphibians (not to mention humans). Every spring, as I am looking through peoples' landscapes, I will inevitably find the skeletons of a few baby birds nestled into a bush, still in their nest, frozen in time, having been drowned or

poisoned from a chemical bath. It's a sight that haunts me every time I see it, and every year I find them

I know as gardeners, we tend to think of the pretty flowers first when we're planning our gardens, but this year, think about habitat. Look around your garden and ask yourself if you have any. **Establish some evergreens for shelter, add in a cedar or two. Build yourself a pond, or have someone build one for you. Water will attract more life to your garden than anything.** Remember that when you're picking flowers you want to plant, do a little research and find out if they are important food sources. One such source is the milkweed family, which supports a couple of butterfly species, including most everyone's favorite, the monarch.

A few years ago, not many people would have thought of putting milkweed in their gardens; it was considered a weed. Now I and many other designers work it into nearly every garden that has some sun. Instead of planting Leyland cypress, plants that have been created by man and serve little or no ecological purpose (except maybe shelter), plant some red cedars, or maybe even American holly (*Ilex opaca*). Both are important food sources for migrating songbirds and neotropical migrants. As we are losing our North American dogwoods to anthracnose, it is important to think of what fall berry bearing trees will replace them to feed the migrating animals.

Remember also, that plants sometimes pass away. **If you are taking down dead trees on your property, leave some of the trunk standing.** Sooner than you know it, you'll start to have woodpeckers visiting, looking for the insects that are eating the stump. **Placing piles of brush around the property's edge is "rabbitat,"** as I like to call it. Rabbits bring hawks, hawks help control the snakes. Snakes help control the mice. Do you see where I am going with this? Having a beautiful garden is a wonderful thing. Being able to lift a leaf and see a red bellied salamander is really something special. This year, think about habitat.

MY YEAR AT FRASER PRESERVE by Margaret Chatham

If you head west on Rt. 7 from Tyson's Corner, out to the big left turn for Reston, but go right instead on Springvale Road and follow that over the one-lane bridge, past Georgetown Pike, past Chez Francois, you will be in the vicinity of Fraser Preserve, a small Nature Conservancy property that extends in a narrow swath down to the Potomac River.

I've made that trip many times since I responded to a Nature Conservancy survey of its Virginia "acorn" contributors, asking them if they could find a spot for a volunteer to work with plants, outdoors, during the week, not impossibly far from my Falls Church home. Scott Boven, the volunteer coordinator for the Virginia Chapter of TNC told me that there had been a plant survey made of Fraser Preserve in 1988 when the organization accepted the property, but no systematic survey had been made since then. He gave me copies of the old survey, plant lists, and maps, and said whatever I could do to update them would be useful.

It's a wonderful thing to be given a justification to go wander in the woods. I try to get out there once a week, and since the travel takes an hour, round trip, it's not worth doing unless I can spend at least 2 or 3 hours at a stretch. Rarely can I spend the whole day, however, since there are no "facilities." I take note pad and identification books, insect repellent and a hat, and sometimes a camera, and see what I can find to put a name to. Or if I can't identify it, make a note to come back and see if it might offer more clues in a week or a

month. The old plant list was only a starting point, and contained many plants I've never found and lacked many others that are now easy to locate.

There are no truly rare plants at Fraser—at least not that I've found. The Nature Conservancy accepted the donation of the property because it is good habitat for wood turtles, a species without many good places to live these days. But it is an interesting place with a variety of plant communities, ranging from river floodplain forest less than 340 years old (what might be called "scrub") through various stages of regrowth and degrees of moisture to established oak-hickory forest. Some of the differences in the plants I found, compared to what was recorded 20 years ago, are simply the natural succession, as the formerly cleared fields move on toward full-grown forest. Other changes are not so benign. There are areas where you need a machete to find your way through the multiflora rose, where every second seedling is oriental bittersweet, where you walk in a sea of stilt grass or a tangle of the dead stalks of mountain laurel eaten by deer.

But there are also streams where the frogs plop into the water ahead of you, ferny hillsides, pawpaw groves, and the chance of coming across some new wildflower.

Sound attractive? I'm always glad to have company. If you'd like to come along, especially if you are good at identifying plants, give me a call at 698-5456.

Eds. note. Margaret's work is described in the Spring 1999 issue of the Nature Conservancy's Virginia Chapter Volunteer News. The first year of her 2-year survey has now been completed. To visit the preserve on your own or to find out more about it, call manager Joe Keiger at 528-4952 or the Nature Conservancy Virginia office at 804-295-6106.

HABITAT STEWARDS by Mary Ann Lawler

As open space and woodland continue to diminish, it is ever more important to create, preserve, and restore places for birds, pollinators, and other wildlife to live. The National Wildlife Federation has been promoting a Backyard Habitat Program since 1975 and has certified over 22,000 backyards, schoolyards, and other community locations as suitable habitat for wildlife. Because starting a habitat project can be so daunting, 3 years ago the NWF expanded the idea into a new Habitat Stewards Program. Its purpose is to train volunteers to work with others needing help with habitat projects. (continued on p.6)

The Habitat Stewards go through 3 full days of intensive training at the National Wildlife Federation headquarters. They learn the importance of using native plants in creating habitat for wildlife. They learn which plant species are beneficial for butterflies and other pollinators and their larva and which trees and shrubs provide food or shelter for birds. They learn ways to provide water for newts, frogs, salamanders, birds, and other wildlife. They also learn how to develop site plans and how to work with teams of individuals and organizations to leverage the resources available. The stewards then volunteer at least 50 hours working on wildlife habitat projects.

Several members of the Virginia and Maryland Native Plant Societies have completed this training. Their background is particularly helpful when the Stewards work on plant rescues, i.e., transplanting threatened native species to protected locations. For information on becoming a Habitat Steward volunteer or for general information on the program, contact Jean White, Project Coordinator, at 790-4240; send an e-mail to white@nwf.org; or look up NWF's Backyard Habitat Program homepage (www.nwf.org/habitats).

Note: If you'd like to be included on a chapter list of VNPS members whose backyard habitats have been certified by NWF, please call Mary Ann Lawler at 684-8622 or e-mail her at malawler@aol.com.

LONG-TIME POTOWMACK CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP CHAIR TO RESIGN

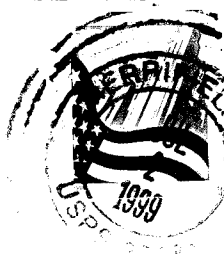
After 15 years as membership chairman of the Potowmack Chapter, Anne Crocker has regretfully found it necessary to resign as of the end of this chapter year, October 31. The board appeals to someone among the computer savvy of the chapter to consider taking over this important position.


According to Anne the job is fairly easy, but involves a monthly commitment of about 4 to 6 hours. In addition to keeping membership records, she attends board meetings and helps at the plant sales.

Updates in membership changes are received each month from the state membership chair, which are then transferred to the chapter database. This can be done by e-mail, if desired. The list is used to print labels for our bimonthly newsletters and other special mailings on an as-needed basis. Anne also prints a yearly membership directory for use by the board and committee chairs.

This is a good opportunity for a plant lover who does not garden to support the organization's hands-on gardeners, botanists, and horticulturists. If you are interested in finding out more about this position, call Anne Crocker (437-0355) or Marianne Mooney (534-8179).

Chapter Events Calendar			Potowmack Chapter
Jul	17&18	Crow's Nest Forest meet 10am	Virginia Native Plant Society
Aug	8	Great Falls Walk with Cris Fleming 9am	P.O. Box 161
	12	Board meeting 7pm	McLean, VA 22101
Sep	9	Board meeting 7pm	
	18	Plant Sale 10am	
Oct	17	Chapter Annual Meeting at Huntley Meadows Park	





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