

# POTOWMACK NEWS

Volume 19, No 1

Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

Jan/Feb 2000

## **POTOWMACK CHAPTER TO OFFER TWO EXCITING SPEAKERS AT JANUARY AND FEBRUARY PROGRAM MEETINGS**

### **❖ Elizabeth Wells, Botanist**

Dr. Wells will discuss the **Flora of Eighteenth Century Virginia** at Potowmack Chapter's **January 13th** program meeting. Dr. Wells, who learned the rudiments of botany from her father at an early age, holds an M.A. and Ph.D. in botany and has done post-doctoral work in secondary plant compounds. At George Washington University she teaches courses in field botany, plant ecology, plant taxonomy, the flora of the Mid-Atlantic states, and plant evolution, and she is editor in chief of *Systematic Botany*, the Journal of the American Society of Plant Taxonomists. Her recent research includes the flora of, and naturalized alien plant species at Mt. Vernon, VA; alien plant species at Ft. Belvoir, VA; herbaceous plants in recovery from 1996 flooding on the flood plain of Plummers Island, MD; and vegetation of artificial wetlands in Loudoun County created as mitigation for the Dulles Toll Road.

### **❖ Gary Evans, Environmental Advisor**

Dr. Evans will lecture on the **Ecology of Woodland Habitat** at the chapter meeting on **February 10th**. His talk will focus on **the concepts of habitat, niche, and site in relation to what the lay naturalist should understand and relate to in the field**. Evans holds an M.S. in Range Management and a Ph.D. in Natural Resources Decision Theory, and he was a Senior Executive Fellow, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University. He currently directs the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's Strategic Planning and Analysis Division, focusing on legislative and environmental issues. He has been a research scientist and research administrator for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, including 7 years as chief scientist and policy advisor to the Secretary of Agriculture for global change issues. He teaches at the USDA Graduate School and chairs its Natural History Field Studies Committee.

**Both meetings will be held at 7:30 p.m. at the Horticultural Center at Green Spring Gardens Park, 4603 Green Spring Road, off Rt. 236 in Alexandria. Reservations are not necessary.**

## **LOOKING FOR A WINTER STROLL? RESERVE A PLACE AT THESE FREE WALKS**

Sat., Jan. 15. Walk with a Naturalist. 10:30 a.m.-noon. Hidden Pond Nature Center, 451-9588. Take a stroll through the Pohick Stream Valley and see nature in the winter woods.

Sat., Jan. 22. Tree Trek. 1-3:30p.m. Huntley Meadows Visitors Center. 768-2525. Adults. Learn to identify winter trees from clues such as shape, twigs, and bark. Canceled if rain. Reservations required.

Sat., Feb. 19. Evergreen Hike. 9-11a.m. Scott's Run Nature Preserve, 759-9018. Ages 7 and up. Search for woodland evergreens including mountain laurel, hemlock, ferns, ground pine, and partridgeberry vine. Canceled if rain. Reservations begin 1/19.

Sat., Feb. 19. Winter Plant ID. 2-4:30 p.m. Long Branch Nature Center, 228-6535. Adults. An informal look at some of our native plants in winter. Reservations required.

**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

Welcome to the New Year. Life promises to go on much the same for our Chapter this year: good programs, interesting walks and whatever good deeds we can do. Of course, there's always a little more hope at this time of year. Hope for more rain, that conservation issues predominate, that more lands are preserved, that more members become involved in VNPS--the hopes go on and on. Here's hoping that you all have a wonderful New Year. And I hope to see you at our programs this winter and our walks this spring.

**Marianne Mooney**

**WHY SHOULD VNPS CARE ABOUT CHESAPEAKE 2000?** by Mary Ann Lawler

An extraordinary partnership was formed several years ago among Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, D.C., the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the Chesapeake Bay Commission to protect and restore North America's largest and most biologically diverse estuary--the Chesapeake Bay. Much good work has been done as a result. These partners have drafted a new agreement called Chesapeake 2000 and are asking for public comment.

The draft calls for major habitat protection and restoration for wetlands, forests, and stream corridors. It calls for sound land use to prevent the degradation of habitat. It also calls for land acquisition and preservation targeting the "most valued lands for protection." The Virginia Native Plant Society can help identify key habitat for native plants and can help ensure that appropriate native plants are used in restoration efforts.

Individual citizens can make a difference, too. The partners rely on local communities to develop watershed protection programs and carry out the broad terms of the agreements, such as the requirement for 100-foot streamside buffers. Those communities rely on public input to help in decision-making on public actions. Too often, local planning authorities waive the buffer requirements. VNPS members can keep abreast of planning issues and make their concerns known when planned actions affect habitat.

For a copy of the Chesapeake 2000 plan, log on to <http://www.chesapeakebay.net/> and click on Draft Chesapeake 2000 Agreement. The comment period on the draft agreement is through March 31, 2000. To comment on the plan, visit the same site and click on Comments; write to Chesapeake Bay Program Office, 410 Severn Avenue, Suite 109, Annapolis, MD 21403; or call 1 800 YOUR-Bay (968-7229).

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

## **MOONEY'S LETTER TO GARDEN COLUMNIST FEATURED IN THE WASHINGTON POST**

In the October 28, 1999 issue of the Washington Post's Home Section, garden columnist Charles Fenyvesi quoted a letter written to him by Potowmack Chapter President Marianne Mooney. The letter took issue with a previous column of Fenyvesi's that promoted the use of Russian olive as a drought-resistant tree. Mooney wrote that this tree is "on a nationwide list of alien plants invading our countryside." She pointed out that "the Russian olive, introduced from East Asia in the 1830s, can out-compete native vegetation, interfere with natural plant succession and nutrient cycling, and tax water reserves. It creates heavy shade, which suppresses plants that require direct sunlight. It is also very difficult to control in the wild." Fenyvesi noted that the Virginia Native Plant Society instead recommends the native fringe tree, the red buckeye, and yellowwood, and he goes on to describe in some detail the beauty and benefits of these trees.

*Eds. note: If anyone would like a copy of the article, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Sally Sieracki, 4125 Elizabeth Lane, Fairfax, VA 22032.*

## **CHAPTER MEMBERS VOLUNTEER THEIR TIME TO BENEFIT THE COMMUNITY**

### **New Library Garden**

The Friends of Thomas Jefferson Library in Fairfax County have established a small demonstration garden under a magnolia tree on the library grounds at 7415 Arlington Blvd (Rt. 50) just inside the beltway. The garden was planted and is maintained by **Walker Newman**, a library volunteer and charter member of VNPS. He unofficially calls it the "Mary Painter Garden" for the organizer and first president of VNPS. It is composed of about 25 native plant species attractive to birds and butterflies. It also contains some scented species that color up in the fall. VNPS propagation bed co-chair **Beth Smith** planned the garden layout based on her experience in creating the backyard habitat garden at the Pohick Regional Library. (See *Potowmack News*, Nov/Dec1999.)

### **New School Garden**

At Charles Barrett Elementary School in Alexandria, chapter member **Debbie Crabtree** has established a primarily native garden that includes a butterfly and hummingbird habitat and is used for instruction as well as pleasure. Debbie applied for and received a grant from the National Gardening Association and another from the Alexandria United Way to purchase plants and tools. Potowmack Chapter has also donated many flowers from its propagation beds to the 2-year-old project. Current plans include writing habitat-related curricula to comply with the Virginia Standard of Learning Tests and fostering cooperation with teachers from other schools.

## **TWO LONG-TIME MEMBERS REMEMBERED**

Potowmack Chapter regrets the loss of two long-time members. Margaret B. Thompson died on June 29. She had been a loyal member since 1988. Dr. Jonathan K. Lee, a hydrologist at the U.S. Geological Survey, died Dec. 3. He also had been a member for over 10 years and was an expert advisor in the planning of Runnymede Park in Herndon.

### **VNPS POTOWMACK CHAPTER E-MAIL LISTSERV**

If you would like to subscribe to the chapter listserv, send an e-mail to Sylvia Orli at [stone.sylvia@nmnh.si.edu](mailto:stone.sylvia@nmnh.si.edu), and in the message section write the following: subscribe to vnps-pot, your e-mail address, and your full name. Or use this web address: (<http://www.onelist.com/subscribe.cgi/vnps-pot>) and follow directions to subscribe.


**WWW.NHM.AC.UK/BOTANY/CLAYTON** by Michael Sawyer

Slowly an image downloads onto my monitor and line by line the screen fills to reveal a high-resolution image of a herbarium specimen. Impressive enough as the technology is that delivers this image, it is overshadowed by the actual image itself; before me is the more than 250-year-old specimen of *Cornus florida* L. prepared by colonial botanist John Clayton (1694-1773). Shipped across the Atlantic from Virginia in the early part of the 18th Century to Gronovius in Leiden, Holland, the specimen, now part of the Natural History Museum in London, comes home to Virginia via the Internet.

As part of the Natural History Museum's Linnaean Plant Typification Project, 710 Clayton herbarium sheets were digitized on a large format camera and fed into a computer to create the John Clayton Herbarium database. The images are now accessible through the home page of the Natural History Museum in London. These herbarium specimens were among the first North American botanical specimens to reach Europe. Received first by the German botanist, J.F. Gronovius (1690-1762), they were eventually to be studied by Carolus Linnaeus (1707-1778) who relied heavily on them when preparing his landmark work, *Species Plantarum*, in 1753, introducing standardized binomial nomenclature. Many of the scientific names of our native flora date from this period and specifically these Clayton Herbarium specimens. It is quite something to think that as I download this image of *Cornus florida* L. I am looking at the very herbarium specimen that Gronovius and Linnaeus looked at when naming this plant. A plant so familiar and meaningful to us in Virginia--yet for a moment I am transported back in time and I feel a sense of excitement, looking at this plant like an 18th Century European looking for the first time on a never-before-seen species from the New World.

Renewed interest in the Clayton Herbarium arose after a group of 30 plates was exhibited in this country in 1993, traveling to James Madison University, Colonial Williamsburg, and the Chicago Field Museum. From this interest arose the concept of the database pulling together all of the Natural History Museum's Clayton specimens. The specimens have long been the object of study and now via the Internet are accessible to an even wider audience. Clayton Chapter member Don McKelvey, who brought it to the attention of local VNPS members, researched this site. I would encourage everyone to visit [www.nhm.ac.uk/botany/clayton/](http://www.nhm.ac.uk/botany/clayton/) and reconnect with a portion of our natural history heritage.

*Eds. note: Michael Sawyer is a member of the John Clayton Chapter of VNPS and was, at the time this article appeared, the editor of its newsletter, The Clayton Quarterly.*

| <b><u>Chapter Events</u></b><br><b><u>Calendar</u></b> |     | <b>Potowmack Chapter</b><br><b>Virginia Native Plant Society</b><br><b>P.O. Box 161</b><br><b>McLean, VA 22101</b> |  |
|--|-----|--|---|
| Jan  | 13  |  |   |
|  |     | Board Mtg 6:45;<br>Elizabeth Wells<br>speaks on<br>18thC. VA Flora<br>7:30pm                                       |   |
| Feb  | 10  | Board Mtg 6:45;<br>Gary Evans speaks<br>on Ecology of<br>Woodland Habitat,<br>7:30pm                               |   |
| Jun  | 2-4 | State Annual Mtg.<br>Blue Ridge<br>Chapter, Roanoke  |   |
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