

POTOWMACK NEWS

Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

VOLUME 33, NO. 1, JAN-MAR, 2015

VNPS Registry Sites: MANASSAS NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD PARK BY MARION LOBSTEIN



PHOTO BY NANCY VEHR

The Manassas National Battlefield Park, the second PWWs Registry site, is a National Park administered by the National Park Service. This rich historic site of the First and Second Battles of Manassas provides a wide array of natural habitats with good plant species diversity. This Park is a multiuse Park with facilities and trails for hiking, horseback riding, and picnicking and is enjoyed by visitors from the local area as well as from around the country and abroad. The Park is 26 miles southwest of Washington, D.C., and straddles VA Route 234 and US Route 29 just north of Interstate Route 66. As development of the Manassas area continues, this provides one of the last significantly sized undeveloped tracts of land in the area.

There are a number of diverse sites within the Park designated in the Registry Agreement. Of these sites three are of particular interest and readily accessible to the public: Stone Bridge, Deep Cut, and the Unfinished Railroad site. The Stone Bridge site located on the banks of Bull Run River is at its flowering peak in mid-April to mid-May before the overhead canopy of oaks and sycamores leaf out. The show of Virginia

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Upcoming Events

Plant Communities Shaped by Water

Thursday, January 8, 7:30-9 pm

Charles Smith explores how water defines plants' reproductive strategies, community composition, and how land use & climate affect the health and future of our ecosystems. Horticulture Center at Green Spring Gardens, 4603 Green Spring Rd, Alex

Great Falls Winter Tree ID Walk

Saturday, Jan 17, 1 pm

Led by Carrie Blair. Watch for announcement with eventbrite reservation information

A Year in Rock Creek Park, the Wild, Wooded Heart of Washington, DC

Thursday, February 12, 7:30-9 pm

Melanie Choulkas-Bradley wrote and Susan Austin photographed to create the book of the same name, and they'll both be here to talk about it. Green Spring Hort Center

Botanical Artists for Education and the Environment

Thursday, March 12, 7:30-9 pm

Eileen Malone-Brown speaks about the basics of botanical art, the founding of her organization, and the book they have published featuring not just the native plants but the butterflies and moths associated with them. Green Spring Hort Center

All events are free and open to the public

Appreciation: Diana Carter

Diana Carter served as Chair of the Programs Committee for three years, planning lectures and field trips, publicizing them, and attending to all the myriad details that made them successful.

She researched locations and materials for the Viburnum Identification walks, organized a field trip to the Potomac Gorge with geologist Gary Fleming, and both a *Flora of Virginia* Workshop and Summer Grasses and Wildflowers Walk with Marion Lobstein. She put together three annual April wildflower walks at Turkey Run with Cris Fleming and a Trillium Trek to Thompson WMA with Alonso Abugattas. Under her leadership, we've had a timely Wavyleaf Grass Workshop, a presentation on seed propagation by Lisa Bright followed by a seed collection field trip, walks led by Rod Simmons at Hemlock Overlook Park, Holmes Run Gorge, the Magnolia Bogs of the fall line, and a presentation and walk on native grasses. She brought us USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center Biologist Sam Droege to show us a Bee's Eye View of Native Plants, a program on Pollen as Window to the Past by Dr. Emily W. B. (Russell) Southgate, and too many more treats to list here.

Diana is a real asset to the VNPS Potowmack Chapter, and after resigning as chairman of the programs committee, she remains on the committee and continues to support the new chairman. Thank you, Diana!

DIANA CARTER AT EARTH SANGHA PLANT NURSERY; PHOTO BY MARGARET CHATHAM



ALL CHAPTER PROGRAMS AND WALKS ARE FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC. JOIN OUR LISTSERVE AT [HTTP://GROUPS.YAHOO.COM/GROUP/VNPS-POT](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/vnps-pot) TO RECEIVE NOTICES WITH WALK REGISTRATION LINKS.

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bluebells (*Mertensia virginica*) along the banks of Bull Run is spectacular. In addition, the troutlilies (*Erythronium americanum*), Dutchman's breeches (*Dicentra cucullaria*), Mayapple (*Podophyllum peltatum*), spring beauty (*Claytonia virginica*), and several violet (*Viola* spp.) species add to the spectacular show of spring wildflowers. This site is located off Rt. 29 as one drives east from the center of the Park.

As old field/meadow sites, Deep Cut and the Unfinished Railroad show their greatest plant diversity summer into fall. These sites are located near each other on Featherbed Lane, which is reached from Rt. 29 going west towards Gainesville. These sites include many native species that would have been present in old fields of the area at the time of the Civil War. Deep Cut, one of the sites of a battle during Second Manassas, is an old field/meadow habitat that has both dry and wet habitats and therefore a diverse species list. Summer and fall wildflowers of particular interest feature the slender ladies' tresses (*Spiranthes gracilis*), whorled milkweed (*Asclepias verticillata*) and green-flowered milkweed (*A. viridiflora*) as well as the swamp (*A. incarnata*) and common milkweed (*A. syriaca*). The bracted plantain (*Plantago aristata*) and pinweed (*Lechea racemulosa*) are less conspicuous species that are of interest with some magnification. The composite family is well represented at this site by scaly blazing star (*Liatris squarrosa*), orange coneflower (*Rudbeckia fulgida*), yellow sneezeweed (*Helenium autumnale*), flax-



leaved aster (*Sericocarpus linifolius*), whorled rosinweed (*Silphium asteriscus*), New York ironweed (*Vernonia noveboracensis*), tickseed sunflower (*Bidens aristosa*), and a variety of species of asters and goldenrod (*Solidago* spp.) that add color well into October. The pea family is also well represented with the large-flowered partridge pea (*Chamaecrista fasciculata*), wild senna (*Senna hebecarpa*), the pencil flower (*Stylosanthes biflora*), and two species of wild bean (*Strophostyles helvola* and *S. umbellata*). Rose pink (*Sabatia angularis*), false pennyroyal (*Isanthus brachiatus*), hyssop skullcap (*Scutellaria integrifolia*), bluecurls (*Trichostema dichotomum*), wild yellow flax (*Linum virginianum*), rose polygala (*Polygala sanguinea*), and flowering spurge (*Euphorbia corolata*) are some additional colorful species. Late summer and fall is also a prime time to see the native grasses such as Indian grass (*Sorghastrum nutans*) and little bluestem (*Andropogon scoparius*) at both these sites. Many of these species can be found at the Unfinished Railroad site but the discovery of blue hearts (*Buchnera americana*) made during a fieldtrip to that site at the 1993 VNPS annual meeting, is an exciting addition to species that can be observed at the MNBP but has not been found again in recent years.



The main concern in working with MNBP staff and administrators to preserve these species diverse sites is to coordinate mowing schedules at the Deep Cut and Unfinished Railroad sites. There have been some challenges with this coordination over the years but with the renewal of the Registry agreement in 2011 with MNBP staff and a review with the new MNBP Superintendent this year, this relationship has been improved. There is concern that the introduction of additional plants of big blue stem has crowded out other native plants. In late August 2014 Marion Lobstein led a walk for Potowmack, PWWS and Piedmont VNPS chapters. During the walk Jerri and Carl Taylor found several plants of quillwort (*Isoetes appalachiana*) that had not been identified in previous surveys. In addition the Potowmack Chapter's Grass

Bunch looked at grasses and added a number of species to the checklist of plants for Deep Cut, including prairie three-awn (*Aristida oligantha*), witch grass (*Panicum capillare*) and, unfortunately, Johnson grass (*Sorghum halapense*).



Marion Lobstein and other members of PWWs as well as members of the Piedmont Chapter have surveyed Deep Cut each year since the early 1990's. They have noted changes in the composition of plant species identified over the years. The rarer milkweeds such as whorled milkweed (*Asclepias verticillata*) and green-flowered milkweed (*A. viridiflora*) have become less frequent. The ragged fringed orchid (*Platanthera lacera*), found in early surveys, has not been seen in over 18 years. Also rose pink (*Sabatia angularis*) has not been seen in many years. There is concern that alien species such as compass plant or prickly lettuce (*Lactuca scariola*) and grasses such as arthraxon (*Arthraxon hispidus*) and stilt grass (*Microstegium vimineum*) are becoming more invasive.

Updating the checklist for Deep Cut is an ongoing project of Marion Lobstein, Sally

Anderson, Charles Smith with input from members of the Grass Bunch. For an updated list, please email Marion Lobstein at mblobstein@earthlink.net.

PHOTOS PRECEDING PAGE: *LIATRIS SQUARROSA*, SKIPPERS ON *CIRSIUM DISCOLOR*. THIS PAGE: MARION LOBSTEIN WITH INDIAN GRASS & BIG BLUESTEM. PHOTOS BY NANCY VEHR

Word of the Month: Endozoochory

Plant dispersal by seeds traveling through the gut of a bird or animal, like all those lovely berries you see waiting to be eaten in the winter. This includes natives such as dogwoods, spicebush, magnolias, and Mayapples (spread by box turtles), but also invasive exotics, such as bush honeysuckle, Autumn olive, English ivy, multiflora rose, and burning bush.

AN INTERVIEW WITH MAX FERLAUTO

BY SUZANNE DINGWELL

Events conspired in a fortunate way for the VNPS Powtownmack Chapter when a young man by the name of Max Ferlauto decided that he would make 2014-2015 a Gap Year before he headed off to college. Max has not only been an active participant in Chapter events this year, but he has generously contributed his time, helping in the propagation beds weekly, lending a hand at plant sales, and taking over the Chapter's Facebook page.

Max took the time recently to sit down and talk about what brought him to VNPS, what he has learned, and what he suggests as a way for VNPS to focus on future membership. Chapter members who have participated in the Tuckahoe School's Discovery Program will not be surprised to hear that it was there Max acquired his affinity for the natural world. He still remembers the gardens: the Peter Rabbit Garden, the Mediterranean Garden, and the Colonial Garden.

He remembers going out into Tuckahoe Park as part of a special nature group. They found a tree knocked over by Hurricane Elizabeth and observed the huge root system. Once they dug into its root ball they found clay pottery, artifacts from when the area was a farm. Max remembers being very proud in second grade because he was the only kid allowed to handle the turtles in the courtyard. The first plants he fell in love with were mosses. He learned about their structure and reproductive systems and did not hesitate to teach his classmates, friends and even teachers about them. Max admits that he occasionally elaborated on the simple elementary school curriculum with more complex information about nature,

sometimes to the annoyance of his teachers. Yet he felt that his teachers at Tuckahoe were some of the best and most supportive that he has ever had.

When his mother took the Master Naturalist course at Long Branch Nature Center, Max met Alonso Abugattas and his dedication to the study of natural world really took off. As a participant in the International Baccalaureate program during his last two years of high school, Max was able to choose a focus for his studies. In each course, he picked a theme related to study of the environment. In history, it was Rachel Carson; in art; he used all natural materials for projects; in math he studied Fibonacci sequence in botanical applications.

By the end of his senior year, though, Max found that all his study, while interesting, had kept him away from what he most loved, being outdoors where he could witness in person the surging cycles of the plant world, get up close to the moss, and catch the spring ephemerals in their special moments of glory.

And so, after being accepted at Juniata College, in Huntingdon, PA, Max decided to take a gap year. He did not plan to just sit around either. He wanted to be engaged and to further his learning. At this point, attending our chapter's plant sale last spring, he met another key person who was to influence his new 'career path:' our chapter's president, Alan Ford.

Through Alan's encouragement, Max came to a Wednesday work day at the propagation beds. He warmly describes what happened next: " Laura Beaty was so accepting, and open, and nice. And Margaret Chatham knew every plant and you could ask her anything about the plant beds and the bugs..."

He joined the Grass Bunch, too, and enjoyed meeting even more people. He said, "I think the best thing about VNPS is getting to meet people, and of course, I love the hiking, too. VNPS has some really knowledgeable people, and they always have stuff for you to do!!" So it seems that Max's relationship with our chapter has been a two-way street!

Max also completed his Master Gardener course this year, worked in the herbarium at Huntley Meadows, and at the Bug Lab for the National Park Service. He recently went on his first AAH (Audubon Ambassador at Home) visit; for the first time the two groups are cooperating to allow hours served as an Ambassador to count for the MG program.

As the interview ended, Max had a few suggestions for engaging young people as active members. Number one on his list: programs for young children. Get them while they're young, he said, and they will be interested for life. Camping trips were second on his list, and lastly, an interactive website that had games and learning programs. Something for us to think about!

Max is looking ahead to a career as a naturalist or natural resource manager, hopefully living in the woods. He wants to have a positive impact on the environment, but not behind a desk! Last year he was swamped with schoolwork and missed the spring wildflowers so he can't wait for all the hikes planned for this year!

HOW YOU CAN HELP IN THE COMMUNITY

Falls Church Habitat Restoration Team

Help restore the local ecosystem in city parks. Remove invasives and plant natives that will benefit local birds and butterflies. For more information contact Melissa Teates at 703-538-6961 or melanite@verizon.net

Arlington County's Remove Invasive Plants (RiP) Program

Help Rescue Arlington parks from alien plant invaders! Please bring your own tools. For more information, contact Sarah Archer at 703-228-1862 or sarcher@arlingtonva.us

Reston Association's Habitat Heroes Program

Help restore local wildlife habitat through invasive plant removal and replanting with native plants For more information, contact Ha Brock at 703-435-7986 or ha@reston.org

Fairfax County's Invasive Management Area (IMA) Program

Help remove invasive plants and plants and learn about new species. For more information, contact Erin Stocksclaeder at 703-324-8681 or erin.stocksclaeder@fairfaxcounty.gov

TAKE A CLOSER LOOK -- WINTER



Cut-Leaf Grape Fern

By Margaret Chatham

This is the time of year when any plant that is green in the woods deserves a closer look: often it is an invasive exotic that one wants to remove, but sometimes it is an unusual native worth a moment's attention. The cut-leaf grape fern is a case in point, a fern that marches to a different drummer, coming up in late summer or fall, taking advantage of the open canopy of winter, then dying back in the spring. It has had its name changed, so older books call it *Botrychium dissectum*, but the *Flora of Virginia* calls it *Sceptridium dissectum*. There is wide variation within the species in how much the leaves are divided: this specimen has fairly blunt lobes, but others can be very lacy.

A couple of other winter natives to look out for are the Crane-fly and Puttyroot orchids. Crane-fly orchid (*Tipularia discolor*) has leaves that are green on top and purple underneath, and blooms in mid-summer with no leaf visible. Puttyroot (*Aplectrum hyemale*) has pleated leaves striped green and white, and blooms in May, when you may still be able to find a trace of a leaf.

If you would like to receive this newsletter (in full color!) electronically, contact Alan Ford at: amford@acm.com

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