

POTOWMACK NEWS

Volume 27. No. 6

Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

November/December 2009

ARLINGTON COUNTY'S NATURAL HERITAGE RESOURCE INVENTORY THURSDAY NOVEMBER 12, 7:30 P.M. Green Spring Gardens

Greg Zell, Natural Resource Specialist with Arlington County, Virginia, will discuss the County's efforts in documenting Arlington's natural resources, which are more extensive and diverse than one would expect to find in an urban setting. Within Arlington's boundaries are globally-rare natural communities, old-age forest remnants, wetlands and springs, other unique locations harboring uncommon plants and wild flowers, and a number of state champion trees. Finding and cataloging Arlington's significant natural resources and vegetative communities, and most importantly, citing exactly where they are, has enabled the development of the County's Natural Resource Management Plan, which will soon be available for public review and comment. Please join us for a preview of the natural resources inventory, share Greg's discoveries and find out where Arlington's largest tree lives.

Directions to Green Spring Gardens: From Interstate 395, exit at Route 236 West (Little River Turnpike); turn right at Braddock Road and go one block north to park entrance: 4603 Green Spring Rd., Alexandria.



ELIMINATING EMISSIONS AND DELIVERING PLANTS, TOO!

Our Chapter's Vice President, **Su Jewell**, dug up some of her sensitive ferns (*Onoclea sensibilis*) to donate for the plant sale and delivered them to the propagation beds at Green Spring Gardens on her bicycle!

The backdrop in the photos is the new garage next to the propagation beds. Su is an avid cyclist. She rides her bike from Springfield to her work with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Ballston just about every day.

"Tomorrow will be too late to stop drastic effects of global warming....Through innovation and conservation we can make our homes, automobiles and workplaces far more energy efficient than they are today - to the entire planet's benefit. Start by planting a tree on the south side of your house"

World-renowned botanist Peter Raven on climate change (see Page 3)

"... if species extinctions increase dramatically with our present climate disruption, exacerbated with other human impacts, then Earth cannot ever be the same as it was before that disruption. Extinction really is forever."

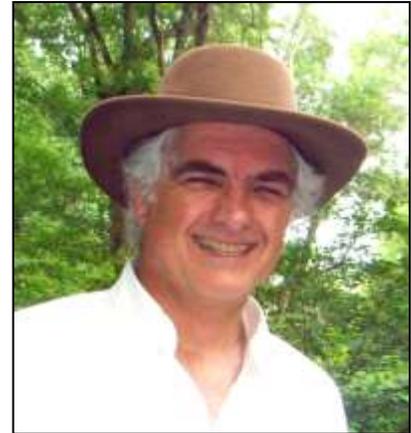
Stuart L. Pimm , Nicholas School of the Environment and Earth Sciences, Duke University

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Thanks to all who attended and participated in our annual meeting. You will read further on about the many interesting presentations made so I will take my time to thank **Su Jewell** for her successful efforts to coordinate the event. The food and drink were just fine and the day turned perfect for the walk following the meeting. It was a pleasure to talk with so many engaged and thoughtful folks.

I want to say a few words about conservation. We are seeing, every day, the loss of habitat to the expanding spread of highways and development and are justly challenged to ask what we can do to mitigate this. The consequence of this increase in impervious surface is undeniable. Increased runoff in our streams with each rain event leads to rapid erosion and stream degradation. Loss of forest cover only increases the consequence of the urban heat island effect, as buildings and cars generate heat and pavement absorbs solar energy. A forested community can be as much as 4 degrees cooler due to the beneficial effects of evapo-transpiration from the tree cover.

Conservation is about protecting the green space that remains, through assertive acts such as establishing land trusts through the Nature Conservancy, and supporting bond efforts for the county to acquire land for parks. But the task of conservation is complicated by the continual loss of available land to impact beneficially. We need to find ways to reclaim the edge, those slices and slivers of land around roadways and buildings, that are usually maintained in turf grass. It may be easy to mow it all, but it misses a critical opportunity to restore some forest cover. We can plant trees and shrubs to provide shade to the sidewalk and slow the rush of rainwater into the storm drains and shelter birds



Alan Ford

VIRGINIA TECH'S DIGITAL FLORAL ATLAS

If in doubt as to whether or not it is native and found in Arlington, Alexandria, Falls Church or Fairfax County, a great resource is the digital flora atlas run by Virginia Tech. It lists what is found on a county by county basis:
http://www.biol.vt.edu/digital_atlas/

(Thanks to Alonso Abugattus.)

Old VNPS Potowmack Chapter newsletters can be found on line at <http://www.vnps.org/>. Click on Chapters and then scroll down and click on Potowmack Chapter. You can see the photos in color!

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<p><i>Potowmack News</i> is published 6 times per year, in January, March, May, July, September, and November. The deadline for submissions is the 15th day of the month prior to publication. Call Mary Ann Lawler for more information or e-mail her at malawler@aol.com or Susan Wexelblat at susanwexelblat@gmail.com</p>		

WANT TO JOIN THE CHAPTER LISTSERV? Send an e-mail to Orlis@si.edu and in the message section write subscribe to vnps-pot, your e-mail address, and your full name. Or visit <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/vnps-pot/join>

STRATEGIES AND OTHER CONCERNS RELATED TO CLIMATE CHANGE FROM:

U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) Secretarial Order on Climate Change The unprecedented scope of climate change impacts requires Interior bureaus and agencies to work together, and with other federal, state, tribal and local governments, and private landowner partners, to develop landscape-level strategies for understanding and responding to climate change impacts. A network of Landscape Conservation Cooperatives will engage DOI and federal agencies, local and state partners, and the public to craft practical, landscape-level strategies for managing climate change impacts within the eight regions. The cooperatives will focus on impacts such as the effects of climate change on wildlife migration patterns, wildfire risk, drought, or invasive species that typically extend beyond the borders of any single National Wildlife Refuge, BLM unit, or National Park.

United States Fish and Wildlife Service's Climate Change Strategic Plan Accelerating climate change will affect our nation's fish, wildlife, and plant resources in profound ways. While many species will continue to thrive, some populations may decline and in some instances, go extinct. Others will survive in the wild only through direct and continuous intervention by managers. This defining challenge for the conservation community requires the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and its employees and partners to apply the skill, determination, creativity and commitment to conserving the nation's natural resources that have defined the American conservation movement since its inception more than 130 years ago.

Geological Survey's National Climate Change and Wildlife Science Center Five Year Strategy Climate change is having, and will continue to have, profound impacts on the nation's wildlife, fish, plant communities, and terrestrial and aquatic habitats. Natural resource management and conservation agencies are faced with the daunting task of developing and implementing effective strategies to mitigate and adapt to these impacts in the face of considerable complexity and uncertainty of outcomes.

U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Vilsack - New Direction and Vision for American forests Declining forest health and the effects of our changing climate have resulted in an increasing number of catastrophic wildfires and insect outbreaks. It is time for a change in the way we view and manage America's forestlands with an eye towards the future. This will require a new approach that engages the American people and stakeholders in conserving and restoring both our National Forests and our privately-owned forests. It is essential that we reconnect Americans across the nation with the natural resources and landscapes that sustain us.

Virginia Governor's Commission on Climate Change Local governments in the coastal area of Virginia should include projected climate change impacts, especially sea level rise and storm surge, in all planning efforts, including local government comprehensive plans and land use plans. Both the Department of Conservation and Recreation and the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries have established planning documents (e.g., Natural Heritage Plan and Wildlife Action Plan) that identify important habitat types, specific habitat sites, areas important for maintaining biodiversity, and conservation actions needed to conserve all of Virginia's wildlife and native habitats. Using these plans to identify critical conservation areas, Virginia should implement a statewide effort to conserve 5% of these areas that are currently unprotected by 2015 and 20% of these areas that are currently unprotected by 2025. This effort should utilize an assortment of management tools including education, financial incentives, regulations, and additional state investments.

An Overview of the Physiography and Vegetation of Virginia, Natural Heritage Program Ongoing global climate change and the contemporary loss of barriers to the worldwide migration of plants and other organisms will no doubt continue to generate shifts in vegetation distribution and composition across the Commonwealth.

Conservation Science: Sea-level rise is a particularly acute problem for the Chesapeake Bay, which is already losing marshland twice as fast as the global average due to natural subsidence caused by movement in the North American plate. The region supports about 30% of the salt marsh along the Atlantic Coast, and 60% of the salt marsh north of the Carolinas.

An op-ed piece by Peter Raven, world-renowned botanist and environmentalist, and president of the Missouri Botanical Garden Tomorrow will be too late to stop drastic effects of global warming. The scientific evidence of global warming - and of human activities as its main cause - is incontrovertible....Climate scientists project that unchecked global warming alone could result in the loss of 10 percent to 30 percent of the world's plant and animal species during this century....Through innovation and conservation, we can make our homes, automobiles and workplaces far more energy efficient than they are today - to the entire planet's benefit. Start by planting a tree on the south side of your house.

THE 2009 OCTOBER ANNUAL MEETING

The Potowmack Chapter annual meeting was held on October 19. The 2010 slate of officers was unanimously elected: **Alan Ford** remains President; **Su Jewell** continues to serve as Vice President; **Pat Salamone** remains our Secretary; and **Steven Wertime** is our new Treasurer. Thanks to all of these officers for being willing to serve.

The proposed budget was approved after discussion. The 2010 budget includes spending of approximately \$3,500 more than we expect to receive in income. The additional funding will be drawn from the approximately \$42,000 in funds that the chapter has in the bank.

Shirley Gay was recognized for her 10 years of service as Program Chair. During her tenure she scheduled over 100 walks and talks for our enjoyment. She will be missed. Anyone who would like to help fill her shoes is encouraged to contact our Board members and volunteer.



In addition to the yearly business there was a wide range of snacks and drinks available for the social hour before the meeting. A swap table for members to exchange good used or new garden books, ornaments and tools was a great success. Many people went home with, if not fewer things, at least different ones. Thanks to everyone who helped make the swap table a success.

The chapter display board was on view, showing off the wonderful pictures taken by our members including **Laura Beaty** and **Becky Super**. Thanks to Becky for labeling and laminating the pictures.



Lauren Reichenbaugh brought in a computer display about gardening for elementary school children at Randolph Elementary. Many children in school today have never had the opportunity to work in a garden or to grow, care for, or pick and eat fresh food. The experience of gardening at school can teach children an amazing variety of lessons: from how to behave in a garden (don't pick plants that don't belong to you), to what a fresh strawberry tastes like (delicious!). For more information about this project contact Matthew Tusiello at Randolph Elementary.

Five members also shared their plant-related projects. **Paul Kovenak** shared his backyard full of natives in a segment of Habitat at Home, a DVD produced by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. The 40 minute program contains four segments which showcase different types of beautiful habitat gardens, with tips for improving wildlife habitat on your own property. . The DVD is \$12 and comes with an informational brochure and plant list. It is available through the Department's online store at www.dgif.virginia.gov.

Steve Dryden spoke about his work around Burke's Spring Branch. The spring is one of the few springs in the area that has not been covered-over by development. During the building of a new housing development, a group of concerned citizens was able to convince the developer to spare this spring. They have worked with Fairfax Trails and Streams to restore the foundations of the historic spring house and to remove nearly an acre of bamboo plants and restore native plants to the area. Additional work is needed and more volunteers would be welcome. See www.fairfaxtrails.org and www.fobsb.org .



Clifford Gay treated us to pictures and a synopsis of the week-long state VNPS trip to southwest Virginia. The trip included some of Virginia's highest mountains and beautiful valleys. The first day explored Pinnacle Natural Preserve near the Clinch River. Following days took hikers to Elk Garden, White Top, and Sugar Hill mountains. The trip concluded with a visit to Natural Tunnel State Park for a view of the beautiful valley, complete with natural tunnels that now provide a route for trains to pass through this beautiful area. If the trip is ever offered again – go!

Margaret Chatham brought in a living example of the latest weed to invade our area: Wavyleaf Basket Grass (see page 6). Although her visual aid was carefully sealed in a bag to prevent spreading the extremely sticky seeds, it is incredibly easy for humans and animals to contribute to the spread of this plant. Margaret discussed her work removing the grass at Fraser Preserve along the Potomac. She also mentioned that the resident dogs will definitely spread seeds this year, so additional volunteers to remove this pest are welcome. See www.dnr.state.md.us/wildlife/wlbg/index.asp for more information.

Marianne Mooney spoke about Huntley Meadows. This 1,424 acre Fairfax County Park Authority land contains wetlands, meadows, forest and many areas in between. Park highlights include the half mile wetlands boardwalk, two mile interpretive trail system and wildlife observation tower. The park is home to a wide variety of bird and animal life including the beavers whose dams have contributed to maintaining the wetlands. See www.friendsofhuntleymeadows.org for more information.

Rod Simmons concluded the activities by leading a walk to Turkey Cock Run Stream Park. This park is one of the highest points locally and contains a wide variety of oaks and other dry area trees. The valleys in the park contain seeps that demonstrate the local hydrology.

Thanks to all who shared their adventures and to all who came to hear! **Susan Wexelblat, Co-Editor**



VIRGINIA’S NEW MONSTER–WAVY-LEAVED BASKET GRASS— by Cathy Mayes

Many thanks to the Piedmont Chapter in whose newsletter--The Leaflet--this article was first published.

Highly invasive Wavy-leaved Basket Grass (*Oplismenus hirtellus ssp. undulatifolius*) has found its way into Virginia. It was first discovered by alert botanists in Maryland in 1996. In spite of some frantic efforts to eradicate it in that state, it crossed into Virginia this decade.

Wavy-leaved Basket Grass is frightening because it invades the forest floor even more quickly and completely than Japanese Stiltgrass (*Microstegium vimineum*). Unlike Stiltgrass, Wavy-leaved Basket Grass is a perennial. It tolerates dense shade, has a highly effective seed dispersal system, and stays green later in the year than native woodland plants, even after light frost.

This new alien has been spotted in two places in our membership area. The first discovery was at Swift Run in southern Shenandoah National Park (near Stanardsville in Madison County), and now covers about 200 acres. The second site is on Ovoka Farm near Paris in northern Fauquier County. Both sites are crossed by the Appalachian Trail, which suggests that it is being dispersed on the legs of hikers and horses. It has also been seen in Fairfax County. Given the distances among these known sites, there is every reason to fear that Wavy-leaved Basket Grass is growing in many other places in the region.

In the wild, Wavy-leaved Basket Grass grows only about a foot tall. It is delicate, like Japanese Stiltgrass. Its leaves are light green, ½ inch wide, 1½-4 inches long, wavy like corrugated tin, with short, scattered hairs on both surfaces. The leaf sheaths and stems are noticeably hairy. The plant produces fine stolons (horizontal, rooting stems) along the ground. Sticky seeds appear in September—although they have been seen as early as July—and persist through November on racemes with 3-7 stalklets. When Wavy-leaved Basket Grass starts, it is often seen growing within beds of Japanese Stiltgrass. As the invasion matures, Wavy-leaved Basket Grass overtakes Stiltgrass and a distinct boundary appears between the two.

The author spent a couple hours hand-pulling this new plant August 1st in Fauquier County. That day the waves on the leaves did not jump out and were more noticeable in the morning light than after the sun got higher. Nonetheless, the plant was easy to spot because the leaves are rounder than Stiltgrass and are perfoliate (the stem seems to grow through the leaf), especially at the growing tips. It is shallow-rooted, making it easy to pull. It had not started forming seed-heads, but we were pulling along a sunny trail. There was a report of basket grass blooming deeper in the woods nearby.

Please be on the look-out for Wavy-leaved Basket Grass. If you find it, notify Kevin Heffernan, Staff Biologist at the Division of Natural Heritage at Kevin.Heffernan@dcr.virginia.gov or (804) 786-9112. It still can be eradicated. The best chance we have to stop this menace is to get it out of town early!



FAIRFAX COUNTY’S INVASIVE MANAGEMENT AREA (IMA) PROGRAM

The IMA program is a volunteer-based project that is working towards habitat restoration. Help us remove invasive plants, learn new species of invasive plants, and work outdoors during the following workdays:

- Wed. Nov. 4, 9:00 – 12:00, Lake Accotink
- Sat. Nov. 10, 9:30 – 11:30, Woodglen Lake
- Wed. Nov.11, 9:00 – 12:00, Americana
- Wed. Nov. 18, 9:00 – 12:00, Lake Accotink
- Sat. Nov 21, 10:00 – 12:00, Pohick Stream V.
- Sat. Nov 21, 9:30 – 12:00, Huntley Meadows.

- Wed. Nov. 25, 9:00 – 12:00, Lake Accotink
- Wed. Dec. 2, 9:00 – 12:00, Lake Accotink
- Wed. Dec.9, 9:00 – 12:00, Americana
- Wed. Dec. 16, 9:00 – 12:00, Lake Accotink
- Wed. Dec. 23, 9:00 – 12:00, Lake Accotink
- Wed. Dec. 30, 9:00 – 12:00, Lake Accotink

For more information contact: Katherine.Frederick@fairfaxcounty.gov or call 703 324 8681. Check out the IMA schedule of events and activities at: www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/resources/nrp-ima.htm.

INVASIVES CONTROL WORK PARTIES AT TURKEY RUN PARK ALONG THE POTOMAC

Join with The Nature Conservancy to help control invasive plant species on National Park Service lands in the Potomac Gorge at Turkey Run Park off the GW Memorial Parkway. Wear work gloves and boots or sturdy shoes, and bring water, snacks, and hand saws or loppers if you have them. Time is 10-1 on each workday. The dates are: Nov. 12, Nov. 14 and Dec. 10. The November workdays may involve some harder-to-find viburnum patches so please sign up to get the details.

Contact Alan Ford: 703.732.5291; email: amford@acm.org or Mary or Jamie at potomacgorgevol@tnc.org.

ARLINGTON COUNTY RiP PROGRAM

Free. For ages 9 to adult. Not all plants are good for the environment. Invasive plants crowd native ones out for space and light and some can even grow a "mile-a-minute"! Come learn what these troublesome beasts look like and help rescue our parks from these alien invaders! We meet monthly at the locations listed below. If you have your own garden gloves and tools, please bring them along. Some supplies will be provided. Be sure to come dressed for work, wear sturdy shoes, long pants, long sleeves, and perhaps a hat. You may also want to bring along a reusable water bottle. Register at jtruong@vt.edu or 703-228-7636.

Long Branch Park Cleanup. Sunday, December 6, 1:00 - 3:00 pm. Join Arlingtonians for a Clean Environment and the Remove Invasive Plant (RiP) Program volunteers to clean up our park by removing trash and invasive plants. Please bring gloves and small hand tools if you have any and dress for the weather. Meet at Long Branch Nature Center (625 S Carlin Springs Rd). Registration is appreciated by contacting volunteer@arlingtonenvironment.org or 703-228-6406.

<p>Second Saturdays @ Lacey Woods 1200 N. George Mason Dr., Arlington, VA 22205 Nov. 13, Dec. 10 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM Meet at the N. Frederick St. & 11th St. N. entrance. Site leader: Nora Palmatier</p>	<p>Third Saturdays @ Tuckahoe Park 2400 N. Sycamore St., Arlington, VA 22213 Nov. 21, Dec 10, 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM Meet in front of Tuckahoe Elementary Site leader: Mary Mclean</p>
<p>Second Sundays @ Gulf Branch Nature Center 3608 Military Road, Arlington, VA 22205 Nov. 8, Nov. 13 12:00 PM – 2:30 PM Site leaders: Jen Soles, Lorne Peterson</p>	<p>Third Sundays @ Long Branch Nature Center 625 S. Carlin Springs Road, Arlington, VA 22204 Nov.15, Dec. 20, 2:00 PM - 5:00 PM Site leaders: Matt Neff, Steve Young</p>

FALLS CHURCH HABITAT RESTORATION TEAM UPCOMING EVENTS:

Join the Falls Church Habitat Restoration Team in restoring the natural ecosystems in city parks. We will be removing damaging invasive plants as well as planting natives that benefit our local birds and butterflies.

November 7 Cherry Hill Park 10am-Noon

December 5 Hamlett/Rees Track 10am-Noon

Cherry Hill Park – From West Street head east on Broad Street/Rt. 7. Turn left onto Little Falls Street. Turn left into the Community Center entrance then park in the rear. Walk behind the basketball courts towards the wooded area of the park.

Hamlett/Rees Track - From West Street head east on Broad Street/Rt. 7. Turn right onto South Virginia Avenue then right again to stay on South Virginia Avenue. Then a right onto Rollins, the street dead-ends at the Park. Enter from the end of Rollins Street. *More parking is available at TJ Elementary School.

For more information: contact Jeremy Edwards, City of Falls Church Senior Urban Forester, 703-248-5016 or email jedwards@fallschurchva.gov

LOCAL EVENTS AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES:

Sat. Nov. 7 Long Branch's 37th Birthday Bash 1:30 pm - 3:30 pm Families with children 3 and up. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Come one, come all to the nature center's 37th Birthday Jubilee! Visitors will get to meet the animals on display as well as ones that are not. Party go-ers are also welcome to participate in a scavenger hunt, make a craft, and look at a slide show of Long Branch Nature Center, past and present, and help blow out the candles on a tasty treat that us naturalists enjoy. The cake will be cut at 2:30pm. Please submit photos to be included in the slide show to mneff@arlingtonva.us. The event is free of charge, but registration is required and donations are greatly appreciated and encouraged. Call 703-228-6535. Program #613751-23 Free.

Sat. Nov. 7: Volunteer Workday Starting at 10 am at Potomac Overlook Park. Spend a morning with park staff and volunteers helping with indoor and outdoor projects in your favorite park! Reservations NOT required-meet at the nature center at 10 a.m. Call 703-528-5406 for details.

Sun. Nov. 8 Fall in the Forest 1:00 pm - 3:30 pm Adults. Fall leaf color is one of the glories of our eastern deciduous forests. We'll talk about how leaves change color, why most local trees lose their leaves in autumn and why some don't, and what happens to all those fallen leaves as we hike along Long Branch and Four Mile Run. Information: 703-228-6535. Meet at Long Branch Nature Center, 625 S. Carlin Springs Rd., Arlington, VA 22204 Program #613741-05. \$5 fee payable upon registration.

Sun. Nov. 22 Birding for Beginners 8 am to 11 am at Huntley Meadows. Observe the transition of our bird community as the summer breeding population moves south and winter residents arrive. A park naturalist helps sharpen your bird identification skills. Meet in the parking lot. Reservations required. Cost \$6. Call 703-768-2525.

Sat. Dec. 5 or Sun. Dec. 6: Holiday Crafts Workshop Starting at 1 pm at Potomac Overlook Park. A perennial favorite! This year we're doing two craft programs. Come make your own wreath or centerpiece from local greens, pinecones and other natural materials. Cost is \$18. Call 703-528-5406 for details and reservations.

Sat. Dec. 5: Volunteer Workday Starting at 10 am at Potomac Overlook Park. Spend a morning with park staff and volunteers helping with indoor and outdoor projects in your favorite park! Reservations NOT required-meet at the nature center at 10 a.m. Call 703-528-5406 for details.

Chapter Events Calendar



Photinia pyrifolia in fall
(red chokeberry)

- Nov 11 **Board meeting 7:15
Green Spring**
- Nov 12 **Arlington County Natural
Resources 7:30 pm
Green Spring**
- Dec 9 **Board meeting 7:15
Green Spring**

**Potowmack Chapter
Virginia Native Plant Society
P.O. Box 5311
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