

# POTOWMACK NEWS

Volume 23, No 1

Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

Jan/Feb 2005

## **POTOMAC GORGE HABITAT RESTORATION, JANUARY 13, 7:30 P.M.**

The Potomac Gorge, from Great Falls to Georgetown, is one of the most biologically significant natural areas in the eastern United States. The site harbors more than 400 occurrences of 200 rare species and communities, a major river system with numerous tributaries, noteworthy stands of upland forest, seeps and springs that contain rare groundwater organisms, and abundant wetlands. On Thursday, Jan. 13, at 7:30 PM at Green Spring Gardens Stephanie Flack, the Potomac Gorge Project Director for the Nature Conservancy, and Mary Travaglini, the Potomac Gorge Habitat Restoration Manager for the National Park Service, will speak about the importance of the Gorge and how VNPS members can help protect and restore this nationally significant conservation area. *(See related article on page 4.)*



Ms. Flack has been with The Nature Conservancy since 1995 and on Potomac Gorge conservation since 2000. She co-wrote the Potomac Gorge Site Conservation Plan and is now the Potomac Gorge Project Director, working in partnership with the National Park Service, state Heritage programs, county park managers, and private conservation groups to implement the strategies identified in the Plan.

Ms. Travaglini was hired as the Potomac Gorge Habitat Restoration Manager in October 2004. She focuses on invasive species control and rare groundwater invertebrate habitat restoration in the Gorge.

*Directions to Green Spring Gardens Park: From Interstate 395, exit at Route 236 West (Little River Turnpike) in Alexandria, turn right at Braddock Road and proceed 1 block north to the park entrance*

## **A FIELD OF DREAMS: RESTORING THE ORIGINAL GRASSLANDS OF THE EASTERN SHORE, FEBRUARY 10, 7:30 P.M.**

"How do we save species that are endangered because their habitat is disappearing or gone? The urgency to find an answer grows daily as our human population swells, as urban sprawl gobbles up more fields and forests and turns them into bedrooms, malls, and roadways. The answer may be surprisingly simple: Give them back their habitat, and they will come!" So says Dr. Doug Gill, of the University of Maryland, who will present a program at Green Spring Gardens at 7:30pm, Thursday, February 10, on an exciting experiment in bird conservation and habitat restoration taking place on Maryland's Eastern Shore. He has been working to recreate a large sward of the original coastal prairie grassland of the Eastern Shore since Spring 1999, when 227 acres of row cropland were taken out of production and planted in native warm-season grasses and forbs. That summer scores of grasshopper sparrows arrived, nested, and produced young. Now vesper sparrows and dickcissels are also nesting there.

Dr. Gill has been a Full Professor in the Department of Biology at the University of Maryland since 1983. He has been on scientific expeditions throughout the world; he has been active with the with The Organization for Tropical Studies, Inc. (OTS) in Costa Rica; and he has authored three books on the flowering plants of Palo Verde National Park in Costa Rica. He is also on the Board of Directors and Chairman of the Science Committee of the State Chapter of Audubon.

*Directions to Green Spring Gardens Park: From Interstate 395, exit at Route 236 West (Little River Turnpike) in Alexandria, turn right at Braddock Road and proceed 1 block north to the park entrance*

**"Plants are nature's alchemists, expert at transforming water, soil, and sunlight into an array of precious substances, many of them beyond the ability of human beings to conceive, much less manufacture."**

**Michael Pollen in The Botany of Desire**

## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:**

Happy New Year, everyone. This year our chapter has a new goal: to partner with the Nature Conservancy and work on habitat preservation and restoration along the Potomac Gorge. The skills in plant i.d. that our members possess are especially needed in the Gorge where rare plants and endemic communities abound. At our January 13<sup>th</sup> meeting we'll hear from TNC staffers and learn more about how we can help. For a start, our chapter will be sponsoring two workdays per month and there promises to be some interesting training sessions on monitoring deer exclosures and invasive encroachment in rare habitats. The spelling of our chapter's name is a variant spelling of George Washington's Patowmack Canal at Great Falls and relates our chapter's territory to the Potomac River. Poetic justice will be served in our adopting this area as a place of special concern to the chapter. I hope you'll join us.

**Marianne Mooney**

**VEGETATION ECOLOGY OF THE POTOMAC GORGE**

A PDF version of the Virginia Natural Heritage Program (VANHP) powerpoint presentation entitled Vegetation Ecology of the Potomac Gorge is now available for on-line viewing or downloading at: <http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/dnh/nchome.htm> There are two downloads, the actual powerpoint and a second text document with the narrative text, which can be printed and used while viewing the PDF of the powerpoint. This presentation is a detailed and lavishly illustrated treatment of the natural communities and unusual environmental gradients on the Virginia side of the Potomac River west of Washington, D.C. The current version was presented by VANHP ecologist Gary Fleming at the Oct 5, 2004 meeting of the Botanical Society of Washington. A previous version was presented at the Virginia Native Plant Society's (VNPS) 2004 Biodiversity Workshop at the Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden in Richmond, and at the April 8, 2004 meeting of the Potowmack Chapter of VNPS. PLEASE NOTE : The presentation is large and will take approximately 1.5 hours to download on a typical 56k phonline connection. Cable modems will be much faster.

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(All numbers should include the 703 area code, unless otherwise noted.) <i>Potowmack News</i> is published 6 times per year, in Jan, Mar, May, Jul, Sep, and Nov. 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 <a href="mailto:malawler@aol.com">malawler@aol.com</a> .		

**FAIRFAX SUPERVISOR'S 20-YEAR ENVIRONMENTAL PLAN POSTED**

The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors has endorsed a plan to protect and enhance the environment around two principles: 1) Conservation of our limited natural resources must be interwoven into all government decisions; and 2) the Board must be committed to provide the necessary resources to protect our environment. The plan is organized into six areas, including: growth and land use; air quality and transportation; water quality; solid waste; parks/trails/open space; and environmental stewardship. To see the plan and summary go to [http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpwes/environmental/env\\_excel.htm](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpwes/environmental/env_excel.htm)

**WANT TO JOIN THE CHAPTER LISTSERV? Send an e-mail to [STONE.SYLVIA@NMNH.SLEDU](mailto:STONE.SYLVIA@NMNH.SLEDU) 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>**

**To renew your subscription, see [www.vnps.org](http://www.vnps.org) for membership information.**

**NATIVE PLANT INTERNSHIP, GREEN SPRING GARDENS 2004 by Carol Dickerson**

Let me express my gratitude to the Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society for their generosity in making this opportunity possible, and to Brenda Skarphol, Green Spring’s Curatorial Horticulturist, for being a patient and fun mentor. How fortunate we, the northern Virginia community, are to have Green Spring Gardens to enjoy.

I used to think native plants meant a roadside full of Queen Anne’s lace (a native of Europe, North Africa, and Asia that has naturalized in Virginia) in the summer and goldenrod in the fall. However, over this growing season I’ve learned many of my favorite garden plants, including threadleaf coreopsis (*Coreopsis verticillata*), dense blazing star (*Liatris spicata*), and cardinal flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*) are also Virginia natives. I’ve come to realize I chose them not only because they are beautiful, but also because I don’t have to spend much time watering and fussing over them because of their tough nature.

I attended talks this summer and fall at the U.S. Botanic Garden and the U.S. National Arboretum where I learned that many of our native pollinators are becoming endangered due to habitat destruction and habitat fragmentation. Recent research has found that native plants attract more native pollinators, which are beneficial insects we want in our yards. Native plants help maintain our increasingly threatened and fragile ecological balance.

The native plant garden was host to many bees, butterflies, and other beneficial insects, and a special treat this year was to see the 17-year periodical cicada in action. In anticipation of the cicada’s arrival in May, we placed wire cages and plastic netting over newly planted trees for protection. On many smaller branches of unprotected plants, we found the razor-like slits in the bark which were made by female cicadas laying eggs. By early July, the cicadas were gone from sight for another 17 years. Loud and amazing creatures!

Another really cool thing about the native plant garden is that it is not just one garden but a series of gardens. Of the over 2,500 plant species native to Virginia, there are over 500 species, varieties, and cultivars alone in the Virginia Native Plant Garden. The garden includes a sunny mixed border (with trees, shrubs, perennials, and ornamental grasses) along the Townhouse Garden fence, a shrub border and perennial border behind the Kitchen Garden, two rock walls, the sunny and informal forest’s edge, shady slopes leading down to the Turkeycock Run stream valley, and woods along the opposite side of the stream. I’m glad I had the pleasure of spending my summer learning and working in these lovely, magical acres – it doesn’t get any better than that!

**NVRPA PUBLISHES COMPREHENSIVE PUBLIC PARKLANDS MAP**

The Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority announced the publication of a revised, Geographic Information Systems-based, comprehensive wall map featuring local, regional, state and federal parkland in the region for use by local governments and citizens. The full color, 33-inch x 38-inch map locates and displays more than 300 public parks in the Authority’s participating jurisdictions: the cities of Alexandria, Fairfax and Falls Church and the counties of Arlington, Fairfax and Loudoun. Ordering information is on the Authority’s website, [www.nvrpa.org](http://www.nvrpa.org). Copies are \$5.25 each or \$6.50 by mail or telephoned order. Use checks payable to NVRPA or charge to MasterCard or Visa. Maps are also available at four NVRPA parks and the Authority’s headquarters:

- Bull Run Regional Park Camp Store, 7700 Bull Run Dr., Centreville, Virginia 20121; 703-631-0550
- Carlyle House Historic Park Gift Shop, 121 N. Fairfax St., Old Town Alexandria, Virginia; 703-255-3631
- Meadowlark Botanical Gardens Gift Shop, 9750 Meadowlark Gardens Ct., Vienna, Virginia; 703-339-6104
- Pohick Bay Regional Park Camp Store, 6501 Pohick Bay Dr., Lorton, VA 22079; 703-339-6104
- NVRPA Headquarters, The Walter L. Mess Building, 5400 Ox Road, Fairfax Station, Virginia; 703-352-5900

The Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority owns and operates 19 Regional Parks and protects more than 10,000 acres of open space.

Thanksgiving, November 25, 2004
<b>Gratitude</b>
As the last leaves fall, I am appreciating forest trees and shrubs that hold their autumn colours longer. One is Witch Hazel.
Her leaf hues, glowing gold with washes of red, give warmth and delight on cloudy November mornings.
Witch Hazel, also known as Winter-bloom, flowers in autumn, waving little ribbons of golden petals until December and January.
Thank you Witch Hazel for your radiant presence in the land.
Lorne Peterson (Spring Branch valley, Eastern Piedmont hills, mid-Potomac River region)

**THE POTOMAC GORGE: BIODIVERSITY IN OUR BACKYARD**

The Potomac Gorge, the fifteen-mile river stretch from just above Great Falls to Georgetown, is one of the most biologically significant natural areas in the eastern United States and the entire National Park system. While many people appreciate the Gorge's recreational and scenic features, few are aware of its great biodiversity significance. Despite being located in a densely populated urban landscape, this 10,000-acre site supports more than 400 occurrences of 200 rare species and natural communities. While much of the Gorge is in public parkland, a number of threats jeopardize the long-term preservation of its extraordinary natural resources.

From 2000 to 2001, The Nature Conservancy worked in partnership with NPS to develop a "Site Conservation Plan" for the Gorge. This Plan identified seven focal natural resources, six critical threats to their survival, and nearly 30 strategies to abate threats and restore ecological integrity. The National Park Service is the primary landowner (Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park and the George Washington Memorial Parkway), while the Nature Conservancy has a long-standing interest in the site's extraordinary biological diversity. Working collaboratively, the two organizations completed the Potomac Gorge Site Conservation Plan in November 2001.

The site conservation plan is organized around a group of conservation targets representing the site's biodiversity—riparian and terrace communities, upland forest blocks, tributary stream systems, rare groundwater invertebrates, anadromous and semi-anadromous fish, and wetlands. The plan analyzes threats to these targets and presents strategies that will help ensure their conservation, and thus conservation of the gorge's overall biodiversity.

The National Park Service, The Nature Conservancy, and other stakeholders are currently exploring ways to implement the plan strategies. They will be organizing five or more workdays most months of the year, and recruiting volunteers from a variety of sources. VNPS is pleased to participate in this habitat preservation effort and has agreed to recruit volunteers one weekend and one weekday workday per month in priority areas of the Potomac Gorge, mainly on National Park Service land. We want to be able to use our members' plant knowledge to work in rare habitat areas, assuring their protection. While there will be opportunities for invasives removal, we hope to have skilled volunteers who know native plants for vegetation monitoring and to assist with invasive species mapping. Some of the vegetation monitoring will be related to exclosures to demonstrate deer impacts on woody species regeneration and deer/invasive species interactions. The plan includes a "bioblitz" the summer of 2005 or 2006, particularly using any expertise in lichens and other non-vascular plants. Mary Travaglini will be the 2005 point of contact for VNPS volunteers and will be organizing and implementing regular workdays throughout the year. Details on workday areas and timing will be presented at the January 13 program.

**FOUR MILE RUN RESTORATION PROJECT**

VNPS members are strongly encouraged to become involved in the public process to develop a master plan for Four Mile Run from Shirlington to the Potomac. Citizens and staff from Arlington County and the City of Alexandria, the US Army Corps of Engineers, the Northern Virginia Regional Commission, and Congressman Jim Moran's Office have been coordinating an effort for environmental restoration and urban planning focused on the channel portion of Four Mile Run. Benefits of restoring Four Mile Run include an enhancement of aquatic (in-stream) and riparian (adjacent-to-stream) habitats and establishment of the run as a focal point reflecting its value as a community resource.

On December 9 VNPS participated in a project workshop on the project, which included other environmental organizations, such as the Fairfax Audubon Society, the Audubon Naturalist Society, Arlingtonians for a Clean Environment, and the Alice Ferguson Foundation. The Potowmack Chapter provided information on the remnant original plant community in the wildlife sanctuary area on the Alexandria side of Four Mile Run. It includes wild rice (*Zizania aquatica*) and river bulrush (*Scirpus fluviatilis*), which is listed as a rare plant (S2) in Virginia.

The public is invited to a **Visioning Session on Saturday, February 5, from 9:30 to 1:30, at Charles Barrett Elementary School in Alexandria.** Registration begins at 8:30 am. Charles Barrett Elementary School is located at the corner of W. Glebe Road and Valley Drive, though it is officially addressed 1115 Martha Custis Drive. Phone is 703/824-6960. *Directions: Take 395 to S. Glebe Road exit; then take S. Glebe to W. Glebe (one block); turn right onto W. Glebe; at first intersection turn right onto Valley Drive; take Valley Dr a short distance and turn right into the School parking lot.*

For more information on the project, including meeting schedules and meeting archives, see:

**<http://www.novaregion.org/restoration.htm>**

## **FIELD GUIDE TO NATIVE OAK SPECIES OF EASTERN NORTH AMERICA**

This field guide provides species descriptions for the 50 native oaks found to occur east of the 100th meridian in North America north of Mexico. Other features included are: county-level distribution maps, distribution according to eco-region, leaf keys, indices of common and scientific names, a glossary, species summary tables including synonymous species, and a fold-out leaf identification chart. The publication is printed entirely on synthetic paper making it a tear-proof, weather resistant tool for field work. The Field Guide to Native Oak Species of Eastern North America is now available as a [PDF](http://www.fs.fed.us/foresthealth/technology/native_oaks.shtml). [http://www.fs.fed.us/foresthealth/technology/native\\_oaks.shtml](http://www.fs.fed.us/foresthealth/technology/native_oaks.shtml)

To request a copy contact: USDA Forest Service – FHTET, 180 Canfield Street, Morgantown, WV 26505. Phone: (304) 285-1563 Email: [lcress@fs.fed.us](mailto:lcress@fs.fed.us)

### **HERBARIUM ASSISTANT VOLUNTEERS NEEDED**

*Do you like solving puzzles, learning about local flora and walking the trails at Huntley Meadows Park? The Park has openings for herbarium assistant volunteers to help maintain and update the park's herbarium and plant list.*

**Duties:** To assist on a wide variety of activities needed to maintain herbarium specimens and documentation. Tasks may include field work, plant identification, specimen collection and preservation, record keeping and data entry. Volunteers could help with some or all of these duties.

**Qualifications:** Desire to increase knowledge of local flora. Some familiarity with plant taxonomy and plant ID. Ability to use field guides. Attention to detail. Enjoyment of the park. Opportunity to walk off-trail. Basic computer skills. Ability to work with others.

On the job training. Minimum 2 hours weekly time commitment. Flexible schedule. Supervisor/Contact: Volunteer Coordinator-Ann Stat, Huntley Meadows Park 703-768-2525

**INVASIVES INFORMATION:** *Park Science* vol. 22, no. 2, Fall 2004, (a publication of the National Park Service) is a special issue on invasive species. The entire issue is available online at: [www.nature.nps.gov/parksci](http://www.nature.nps.gov/parksci)

## **ARLINGTON'S RiP PROJECT**

Congratulations to Jan Ferrigan and Kasey Spriggs of Arlington County's invasives Control program. They attracted 215 people to their October "Make a Difference Day" event removing invasive exotic plants in 20 parks.

**Sat. Jan 8 - Second Saturdays at Bluemont Park** 10am to 1pm. Neighbors and RiP volunteers will continue to meet at Bluemont Junction Park on second Saturdays. Come help out for an hour or two. Park near bike trail at the bottom of Illinois St. Enter Illinois St. from Wilson Blvd. Meet at "the rocks" next to the bike trail. Contact John Huennekens at 524-3853, or [jhuenn@gwu.edu](mailto:jhuenn@gwu.edu).

**Sat. Feb. 12 Second Saturdays at Bluemont Park** 10 am to 1 pm (See above for details)

**Saturday Feb. 19. 10 AM –Invasive Species Removal Lubber Run Park** - Meet at Lubber Run Amphitheater. N. Columbus at N. Second St. With the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust. Contact: Paul Kovenock (703) 525-5221

**Note: Some tools provided. If you have your own gloves, clippers, loppers or dull flat screwdrivers, please bring them along to removal events. Long pants and long sleeves recommended. For information about any of these events, please contact Jan Ferrigan, Invasive Species Program Coordinator at (703) 228 7636 or [jferriga@vt.edu](mailto:jferriga@vt.edu) or Kasey Spriggs at (703) 228 6401**

## **LOCAL EVENTS AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES:**

**Sat. Jan. 8 Winter Tree Identification** 10am-noon; Audubon Naturalist Society, Rust Sanctuary, Leesburg \$14 for non-members. For Information call: 301-652-9188 x16

**Wed. Jan 12-Mar 16 Winter Woody Plant Identification (10 classes and 3 field trips).** USDA Graduate School; Woodend Sanctuary, Chevy Chase Wednesdays 7 – 9pm. Classes plus 3 field trips: \$295 Instructor, Cristol Fleming. Call 202-314-3320 or register on line at [www.grad.usda.gov](http://www.grad.usda.gov)

**Mon. Jan 17 Invasive removal/Trash Collection Dyke Marsh.** Alexandria, 10am to noon Call Brooke Andrews of the Northern Virginia Senior Environment Corps at 703 -549-1607 Ext. 141 for information. Volunteers should wear pants, sturdy shoes, bug spray and bring sunscreen if needed. If working with invasive plants please also wear a long-sleeve shirt.

**Sat. Jan 22. Winter Tree ID** Hidden Oaks Nature Center, Annandale. Slideshow & Hike, 10am-12pm. With Northern Virginia Conservation Trust. Free but \$10 donation would be appreciated.

**Sun. Jan. 23 Native Populations: A New Frontier for Gardening.** Green Spring Gardens Park 1:30-3:00 Fee: \$9 Chris Bright, president of Earth Sangha (a Buddhist environmental nonprofit that focuses on ecological restoration), will describe how gardeners can play a vital role in preserving native species by taking an interest in local, wild plant communities. In addition to local preservation, Bright will discuss the Sangha's work, the art and science of restoration and offer a restorationist's view of "horticultural pollution." Please call 703-642-5173 to register.

**Sat. Jan. 29 Winter Botany 9am-5pm Woodend Nature Center, Chevy Chase, MD;** Audubon Naturalist Society \$38 for non-members. For Information call: 301-652-9188 x16

**Sun. Feb. 6 Habitat Open House** Meet Arlington's Community Wildlife Habitat Team, and learn about how you can create habitat in your backyard. Arlington hopes to be the first county in the Nation recognized through the National Wildlife Federation's Backyard Habitat Program as a Certified Wildlife Habitat Community. Long Branch Nature Center 1-4 pm Free. Call 703-228-4747 to register.

**Wed. Feb. 23 Habitat Gardening with David Mizejewski, National Wildlife Federation.** 7:30 pm. Free. Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington, 4400 Arlington Blvd. Contact Laura Dely for information: [ldely@yahoo.com](mailto:ldely@yahoo.com)

**Sat. Febr. 26 Wildlife Gardening** 1-3pm; Audubon Naturalist Society, Rust Sanctuary, Leesburg \$14 for non-members. For Information call: 301-652-9188 x16

**Virginia Native Plant Society, Winter Workshop on Biodiversity  
Saturday, February 26: 9 AM -- 3 PM , University of Richmond**

Registration and coffee at 9 a.m., program starts at 10 a.m. \$30.

**SPEAKERS:**

- Kathryn Kennedy, Executive Director and President Center for Plant Conservation
- John L. Randall, Assistant Director for Conservation North Carolina Botanical Garden
- Jil M. Swearingen, Regional IPM Coordinator, National Park Service, National Capital Region, Center for Urban Ecology

*Details will be available soon on the VNPS website: [www.vnps.org](http://www.vnps.org)*



**Potowmack Chapter  
Virginia Native Plant Society  
P.O. Box 5311  
Arlington, VA 22205**

**Chapter Events Calendar**

Jan.	13	Board meeting 6:45 Potomac Gorge 7:30 Green Spring
Feb	10	Board meeting 6:45 Eastern Grasslands 7:30 Green Spring
Feb	26	VNPS workshop U of Richmond 9am – 3pm

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