

POTOWMACK NEWS

Volume 29, No. 1

Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

January/February 2011

WINTER WOODY PLANT ID, LECTURE Thursday, January 27, 7:30p.m., Green Spring Gardens and WALK, Saturday, February 5, at Theodore Roosevelt Island.

Winter unmasks nature, revealing our local woody plants in their most skeletal form. **Elizabeth Rives** will help us identify trees and shrubs by studying the bare bones of plants branching structure, bark, buds and leaf scar. Join us for her presentation at Green Spring Gardens at 7:30 p.m. on January 27, and a week later on Theodore Roosevelt Island to see the shape of the forest. We will send out details about the February walk on the VNPS listserve or email Alan Ford at: amford@acm.org.

Elizabeth Rives teaches tree selection for Arlington-Alexandria's tree steward training class. She has conducted tree identification surveys, advised on tree care and maintenance, and researched native flora. Ms. Rives is an Environmental Educator for the Alice Ferguson Foundation's award-winning Bridging the Watershed program. A partnership with the National Park Service, Bridging the Watershed provides personally meaningful, educational experiences that connect high-school students to their place in the natural and cultural world.

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

NATIVE PLANTS FOR BUTTERFLIES, Thursday, February 10, 7:30p.m., Green Spring Gardens



Buckeye butterfly

Everybody knows that monarch caterpillars must have milkweed leaves to eat, and some of us grow milkweed for them. But what about mourning cloaks? Eastern tiger swallowtails? Buckeyes? Red admirals? 2010 was a very good year for chasing butterflies with a small digital camera, and **Margaret Chatham** is ready to share the pictures she took of butterflies in our watershed, their caterpillars, and the native plants they need, all in plenty of time for planning this spring's additions to your yard or garden.

Margaret Chatham skipped high school biology, but has always wanted to be able to name the plants around her. This has led her down the slippery slope from work with VNPS Propagation Committee, on through Potomac Gorge Weed Warriors, Fraser Preserve Visitation Committee, to becoming a Certified Virginia Master Naturalist, and leading an Early Detection/Rapid Response team for Fairfax County's Parks Department. Sounds impressive, but she'll still listen when you know something she doesn't.

Directions to Green Spring Gardens: See above.



The United Nations (UN) General Assembly has declared 2011 as the International Year of Forests to bolster efforts to promote sustainable management, conservation and development of forests worldwide. In 2011, the U.S. Forest Service – in partnership with its sister federal land management agencies, as well as state and private and other partner organizations -- will host/coordinate many activities to celebrate the International Year of Forests. See: www.usfs.gov.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT



Friends,

It is increasingly difficult in our busy, driven, and distracting daily surroundings to pause for a moment and listen to the sound of birds searching in the leaves, to see the wind in the treetops, to relax and absorb the pace of the natural world. Winter is a time to reflect, with the ground frozen and the forest bare we can spend more time in contemplation. Winter is also a time to plan, to consider our goals for the new year and choose our path towards achieving them.

I would like to encourage you to consider the Chesapeake Bay and the watershed that sustains it.

We live within a natural wonder, fertile and fascinating. Over half of Virginia drains into the Bay and our Potomac River is one of the major tributaries. The Bay influences our regional climate and serves as part of the eastern flyway for migratory birds, providing critical feeding habitat during

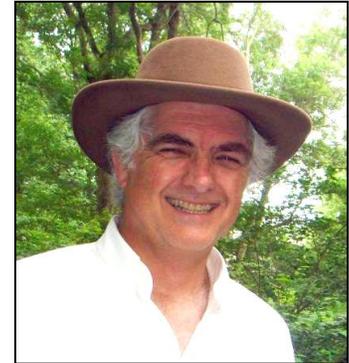
their migrations. Yet this great wonder is threatened by development and pollution and needs attention and consideration.

We would like to invite you to join us this year in learning more about the Chesapeake Bay and the estuaries and tributaries and wetlands and forests that sustain and contribute to the health and productivity of this glorious natural wonder. We hope to provide opportunities to learn about the plant communities which influence and are directly influenced by the water. We look forward to fieldtrips to explore these communities.

One great advantage of winter is the ability to see the structure of the forest. Most of the leaves have fallen, although the Beeches don't seem to get the message, and the branches are open allowing us to see the canopy unobstructed. Join us in January to hear from Elizabeth Rives on the winter forest.

In February Margaret Chatham will talk about the relationship between butterflies and our native plant species which serve as their hosts. Please join us this year in exploring our watershed and to watch, learn, and grow with our chapter.

Alan Ford



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Potowmack News 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 malawler0@gmail.com or Susan Wexelblat at susanwexelblat@gmail.com

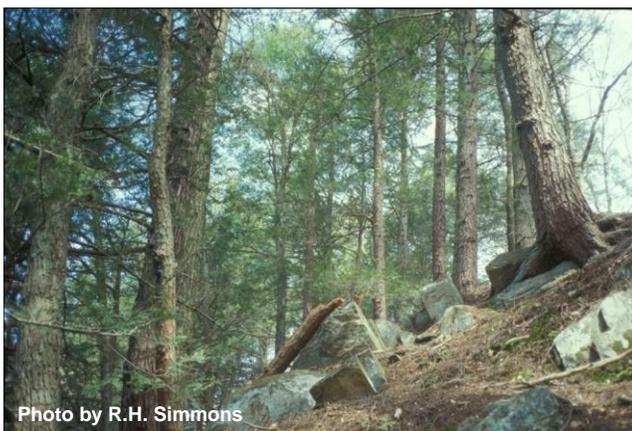


Photo by R.H. Simmons

HEMLOCK OVERLOOK On steep rugged slopes overlooking the confluence of Popes Head Creek and Bull Run is one of our region's most scenic and wild natural areas. This special place was named for the ancient stands of Hemlocks (*Tsuga canadensis*) that occur on the extremely steep and rocky north-facing slopes - relics from long ago when montane flora was more widespread in the piedmont and coastal plain. These rare communities have persisted for millenia here and in a few other sites throughout the piedmont and coastal plain in places with conditions similar to those of montane habitats.

This area also has the Fairfax County champion Butternut (*Juglans cinerea*), Wintergreen (*Gaultheria procumbens*), Rattlesnake Plantain (*Goodyera pubescens*), Shinleaf (*Pyrola spp.*), a variety of oak and hickory species, numerous heaths, and many other plants.

Rod Simmons.

**HOLMES RUN GORGE FALL FOLIAGE-
BOTANY-GEOLOGY FIELD TRIP,
OCTOBER 30, 2010**

Rod Simmons led a field trip for Arlington Master Naturalists (ARMN) and VNPS members to the upper Holmes Run Gorge beginning at the trail entrance off Columbia Pike just below the Lake Barcroft dam. The scenic Holmes Run Gorge is one of the most floristically and geologically diverse areas of northern Virginia. Dramatic cliffs and massive outcroppings of bedrock abound, capped by ancient gravel terraces and deposits of the Potomac Formation. This is an area of old-age forest in the Fairfax County section of the Gorge where a massive bedrock exposure of muscovite (quartz monzonite or monzogranite) gradually converges with bedrock of the Indian Run Formation. The vegetation of the Gorge is diverse, with old-age forest stands and many species that are uncommon to rare in the region.



Photo by R.H. Simmons

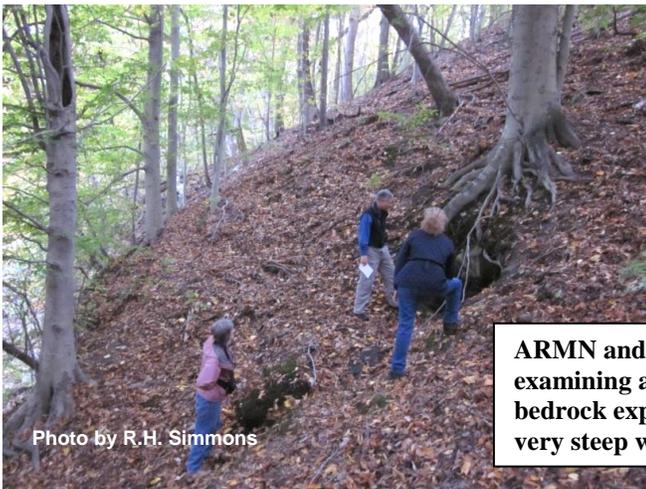


Photo by R.H. Simmons

ARMN and VNPS field trip participants examining a pristine, perennial spring flowing from a bedrock exposure beneath an old American Beech on a very steep wooded cliff high above Holmes Run.

On ancient stream banks in the Holmes Run Gorge are old-age stands of American Beech - probably the oldest and largest in Fairfax and Arlington counties and the City of Alexandria. Streambanks and lower to mid-

slopes of ravines and stream valleys are the historical

habitats for American Beech in our region.

A geologic map of the City of Alexandria by Tony Fleming, including the Holmes Run Gorge and parts of Arlington and Fairfax (Plate 3: Bedrock Geology and Topography), and a checklist of the native flora of the City can be found at:

<http://alexandriava.gov/recreation/info/default.aspx?id=22560>

(Thanks to **Rod Simmons** for these descriptions and photos.)

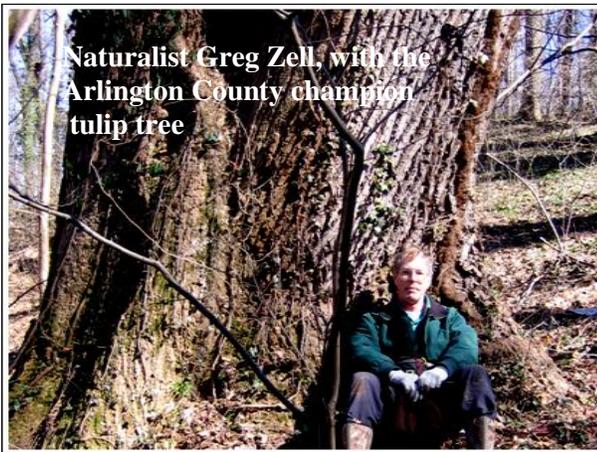


Photo by R.H. Simmons

Ancient Sweet Pignut Hickory (*Carya ovalis*) - also called False Shagbark Hickory - at Holmes Run Gorge, Fairfax County

SOME NEAT THINGS ABOUT *LIRIODENDRON TULIPIFERA* THE TULIP TREE

Liriodendron tulipifera L. is a common tree of the eastern forests, and grows in every county of Virginia. According to the Virginia Department of Forestry it is by volume the most common tree species in Virginia. But its common names--yellow poplar, tulip poplar, and tulip tree—are misleading. *Liriodendron tulipifera* is the only member of the *magnoliaceae* family in Virginia whose genus name is not magnolia. Its name comes from the Greek *lerion*, lily, and *dendron*, tree. The largest known tulip tree in Virginia is also the largest known in the country. Located in Chesapeake, Virginia, it is 359 inches in circumference at breast height; 115 feet tall, and 83 feet across at the crown. Taller ones (140 feet) grow in Fairfax County and in Arlington County, but their crowns and circumferences are much smaller.



Naturalist Greg Zell, with the Arlington County champion tulip tree

Alonso Abugattas, Arlington County naturalist, had the following to say about *Liriodendron tulipifera*:

“Just a couple of neat things about Tulip Trees (a better name than tulip or yellow poplars since they really aren’t poplars but more closely related to magnolias...): They were one of the trees most often used by the Algonquian-speaking Native American Indian people here in Virginia for making dugout canoes (another common name for it was canoe wood). They grow very fast (one of the tallest growing and widest on the East coast) so have softer wood for carving using the stone and burning tools of the time; and also have very straight trunks that often shed the

lower branches. So despite rotting fairly easily, they were ideal for this use. John Smith reported that some canoes could hold 40 warriors at a time. I saw some in the Smokies that were so huge that my whole family could stand in front of the trunk for a picture.

Honeybees use it quite a bit when it is in bloom and so it makes up a bulk of the honey produced where it is plentiful. The flowers are also sugary snacks for lots of critters (I’ve seen orioles ‘nectaring’ on them and raccoons raiding them also). The helicopter-like (samara) seeds themselves are consumed by various critters, including squirrels, but are not a favorite really of any. The leaves though make it a preferred host plant for Eastern Tiger Swallowtail butterflies and our largest inchworm species, the Tulip Tree Beauty moth, as well as Tulip-tree Silkmoths

It is a very common tree and often makes up a good portion of the trees in stands of young woods. It is the state tree of Indiana and Tennessee.

A neat trick for those of you that work with kids is to take a large, fairly undamaged leaf and fold it in half along the petiole (leaf stalk), then just a poke a hole evenly through the sides and you end up with a nice, yellow, cat mask that kids can use, especially for Halloween.

The leaves of the tulip tree in general can be quite variable, depending on where on the tree it grows (the leaves lower down are often larger to be able to ‘catch’ more sunlight) or the age of the tree (younger trees are smaller thus need bigger/wider leaves in the understory to survive). The terminal buds are really neat looking and in the early spring look like duck bills in shape.”



ARLINGTON COUNTY RiP PROGRAM. Help keep Arlington County parks beautiful! Events include regularly scheduled invasive removals as well as special lectures, workshops, and other opportunities. Join hundreds of other volunteers to help control invasive plants and clear trash in your local park. Check the website: <http://www.arlingtonva.us/Departments/ParksRecreation/scripts/parks/ParksRecreationScriptsParksInvasiveEvents.aspx>.

LOCAL EVENTS AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Wed. Jan. 19 – Mar. 16. (Field Trips Jan 29, Febr. 12, Mar. 5) Winter Woody Plant Identification. 6-8:15pm Capital Gallery DC, \$355. Instructor: Elizabeth Rives. Winter unmasks nature, revealing our local woody plants in their most skeletal form. Students will learn to identify trees and shrubs by studying the “bare bones” of plants – branching structure, bark, buds, and leaf scars. Classroom lessons and three field trips will help students develop observational skills and use clues such as persistent and fallen fruits and leaves, aromatic twigs, and habitat to identify trees in the winter landscape. **To Register Online:** http://www.graduateschool.edu/course_details.php?cid=NATH1146E

Sat. Jan/ 22 Mosses for Beginners (1 - 3 pm) Leader: Linda Davis Want to know more about the miniature world of mosses? Using slides, dramatization, models and microscope work, this class at our Woodend Sanctuary will introduce participants to moss anatomy, life cycle, human use, and gardening. Our leader and her husband have inventoried mosses and liverworts for the National Park Service at Great Falls Park, VA, and Piscataway and Fort Washington Parks in MD. She is the convener of a monthly moss study group in Howard County. Members: \$17; Nonmembers: \$24 . For information or to register call: 301-652-9188 x16 or visit: <http://www.audubonnaturalist.org/> for registration.

Mon. Jan. 24 – April 4 Introduction to Ecology (Field trips 3/15 and 3/26) 6-8pm. Capital Gallery, DC \$355. Instructor: Dennis Apeti. A fundamental understanding of ecology and the physical and biological principles on which ecosystems depend is essential for any naturalist. In this course students learn to interpret the patterns and processes of nature by studying energy flow, food webs, biogeochemical cycles, population dynamics, communities, behavioral and evolutionary ecology, biodiversity, biomes and plant/animal, interactions. Prerequisite: Biology for Naturalists (NATH1110E) or another biology course is recommended. **To Register Online:** http://www.graduateschool.edu/course_details.php?cid=NATH1160E

Sat. Febr. 19 Winter Tree Identification (9 am - 3 pm) Leader: Cris Fleming Using the clues of buds, twigs, bark, and fruit, we’ll practice identifying trees in winter in an all-day workshop at our Woodend Sanctuary in Chevy Chase, MD. We’ll begin inside with a look at techniques of winter tree identification, take a lunch break, and then move outside to use our new skills to identify many species of woody plants that grow on the Woodend grounds. **Members: \$28; Nonmembers: \$39** For information or to register call: 301-652-9188 x16 or visit: <http://www.audubonnaturalist.org/> for registration.

SAVE THE DATE: March 27 Lahr Native Plant Symposium and plant sale will be at the Beltsville Area Research Center this year. Cole Burrell will be one of the speakers.

SAVE THE DATE: May 7, Invasive Species Day throughout Virginia

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:

Mon. Jan. 17, 9:00 - 12:00 Nottoway	Wed. Feb. 16, 12:30 - 3:30 Lake Accotink
Wed. Feb. 2, 12:30 - 3:30 Lake Accotink	Wed. Feb 23, 12:30 - 3:30 Lake Accotink
Wed. Feb. 9, 12:30 - 3:30 Americana	Sat. Feb 26, 9:00 - 12:00 Nottoway

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 in the Potomac Gorge at Turkey Run Park. 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. For work days and dates, watch the VNPS listserv or contact Alan Ford: 703.732.5291 or amford@acm.org or Mary or Jamie at volunteermd@tnc.org.

FALLS CHURCH HABITAT RESTORATION TEAM Check with us in March.

For more information: contact Melissa Teates, 703-538-6961 or melanite@verizon.net.



BARCROFT BOG NAMED IN COUNTY RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN By Marty Nielsen

The Barcroft magnolia bog and surrounding park was named the “most ecologically significant natural site owned by [Arlington] County”, in the Natural Resources Management plan approved by the Arlington County board on November 13th. See:

<http://www.arlingtonva.us/departments/parksrecreation/documents/file76445.pdf>

On Saturday December 11th volunteers from VNPS and the Arlington Master Naturalists joined forces to pull porcelainberry from young trees planted around the bog.

Chapter members Pam Weeks and her companion John, Nan Miller, Lori Bowes, Jim Hurley, and master naturalist candidate Kathy assiduously pulled, piled and dug their way for two hours. Later I wandered around looking for bush honeysuckle to cut and saw 3-4 deer bedded down in the area. I had heard they were around but had never seen them before. Hopefully they will spare the rare plants!

Sun Jan 16 and Sun Feb 20. **BARCROFT PARK (11am-1pm)** 4200 S. Four Mile Run Drive. Help preserve Arlington's globally rare magnolia bog, a chapter heritage site. Meet by the parking garage off Four Mile Run. Wear sturdy footwear and bring pruners, hand saws and heavy gloves, if you have them (limited number available on-site). Rain dates Monday 1/17 and Monday 2/21. Contact Marty Nielsen (mrtynlsn@gmail.com) 703-485-7517.

Chapter Events Calendar



- Jan. 13 Board Meeting
Green Spring 7:00pm
- Jan. 27 Winter Woody ID
Green Spring 7:30pm
- Feb. 5 Woody ID Walk
Roosevelt Island
- Feb. 10 Board Meeting 7:00pm
Native Plants for
Butterflies
Green Spring 7:30pm

**Potowmack Chapter
Virginia Native Plant Society
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