

POTOWMACK NEWS

Volume 25. No.1

Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

Jan/Feb 2007

BUILDING THE NATIONAL GARDEN, A NEW HOME FOR NATIVE PLANTS, THURSDAY, JANUARY 11

Bill McLaughlin, Plant Curator of the U.S. Botanic Garden, will give a presentation "Building the National Garden, a new home for native plants in Washington" on Thursday, January 11, at 7:30pm at Green Spring Gardens Park. Bill's most recent accomplishment was to help implement the installation of the National Garden, a three acre outdoor garden featuring mid-Atlantic natives which opened October 2006 at the U.S. Botanic Garden near the Capitol. He will discuss the inception of the garden and give an overview of its construction and development. The following is a quote from Bill: "The unlikely event naming the rose as our national floral emblem lead to the construction of a garden with native plants at its heart. The garden showcases plants from the piedmont and coastal plain along a moisture gradient that decreases maintenance, watering and evokes natural communities."

Directions to Green Spring Gardens Park: From Interstate 395, exit at Route 236 West (Little River Turnpike); turn right at Braddock Road and go 1 block north to park entrance.

GEOLOGIC HISTORY OF VIRGINIA, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 8

The native plants in our natural areas grow where they grow, because of the underlying geology that created Virginia's topography, types of rocks, and soils. **Martha Slover of George Mason University** and a long-time member of the Virginia Native Plant Society will present a program on the Geologic History of Virginia at 7:30pm on Thursday February 8 at 7:30 pm at Green Spring Gardens Park. She will discuss the geologic processes that have taken place over the 4.5 billion years of earth history, beginning with the formation of Pangea and ending with the rock outcrops familiar to us today. Ms. Slover currently teaches in George Mason's Department of Geography. *Directions to Green Springs (see above).*

CHAPTER WALK AT HEMLOCK OVERLOOK REGIONAL PARK, SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 10

Rod Simmons, noted regional field ecologist and VNPS Registry Chair, will lead a walk at Hemlock Overlook Regional Park near Clifton in Fairfax County on Saturday, February 10 from 10am to 2pm. The types of plant communities we will be seeing are old-growth hemlock forest and mixed oak-heath forest with mountain laurel and pyrola. There is also open water and edge habitat. It is a picturesque area where Bull Run and Pope's Head meet.

The walk will be on moderate terrain. Wear sturdy shoes and bring water and lunch if you like. The walk will be cancelled in the event of snow. Meet at the park entrance.

Directions: Take I-66 west to Route 123; drive south on 123 to Clifton Road; turn right on Clifton Road and drive 3.7 miles; turn left on Yates Ford Road and follow it to the park entrance. (13220 Yates Ford Road, Clifton)



Skunk Cabbage (see page 3)

Until he extends the circle of his compassion to all living things, man will not himself find peace.
-Albert Schweitzer

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE:

Happy New Year to all our chapter members! This is a traditional season for rest and reflection and for me, a time to think about the wonderful people associated with our organization. From board members to volunteers who remove invasives to our propagation committee and to those who faithfully attend our walks and programs, our organization is built on involved, caring people. We have a really great group and I am thankful to all who belong to our chapter. I encourage those who may not be active in the chapter to come to our winter programs, to join a walk and to work at Turkey Run. You'll meet the best people while supporting the chapter and our mission of conservation and education.

I wish you all a good year with plenty of time for enjoying the diversity and beauty of the flora of our region.

Marianne Mooney

CONTROLLING INVASIVE PLANTS ALONG AMERICA'S ROADWAYS

The National Forest System invasive species management program and the engineering program, in partnership with the Department of Transportation Federal Highways Administration, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Wildlife Refuge System, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, and others have produced and released the first video of a series on invasive species prevention best management practices. It is called **DANGEROUS TRAVELERS--CONTROLLING INVASIVE PLANTS ALONG AMERICA'S ROADWAYS**, and the video targets road maintenance personnel and equipment operators.

This first video is very high quality and is available on DVD or via the internet free of charge. The web address to view the 26-minute program is: <http://www.fs.fed.us/invasivespecies/prevention/dangeroustravelers.shtml>

BIOCONTROL OF INVASIVE PLANTS

Anyone interested in a fairly recent status report on biological control agents on invasive plants might try this link: www.invasive.org/eastern/biocontrol. It will take you to a USDA Forest Service Technology report with chapters on purple loosestrife and 28 other eastern US invasive plants for which biological control has been attempted or is being explored.

NEW INVASIVE PLANT MANAGEMENT TOOL AVAILABLE FOR NATURAL LAND MANAGERS AND EDUCATORS

The "Invasive Exotic Plant (IEP) Management Tutorial for Natural Lands Managers: A Comprehensive Tool for Addressing Your IEP Needs" is now available on-line at the website of the Mid-Atlantic Exotic Pest Plant Council (<http://ma-eppc.org/>) or <http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/invasivetutorial/index.htm>. The tutorial is designed as a "one-stop-shop" for users and includes information available on the world-wide web and other forms of media. Given the ever-changing science of IEP management, new and updated information is being made available every day both on management and control, as well as information about individual plant species.

SKUNK CABBAGE—A FORETASTE OF SPRING

BOARD OFFICERS		
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(All numbers should include the 703 area code, unless otherwise noted.) *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 malawler@aol.com.

Some time in mid-winter the hooded spathes of *Symplocarpus foetidus*, the skunk cabbage, will rise up out of the wet, mucky bottomland like little forest gnomes. Inside each one is a ball-like spadix with tiny flowers, which use oxygen to break down plant starches, creating heat. Biologists have found that skunk cabbage flowers use as much oxygen as a small mammal, and they produce warmth over a period of about 14 days, remaining on average (36° F) above the outside air temperature. The plant's unusual thermal regulatory system amazingly keeps the inside of the spathe a constant 70° F.

The skunk cabbage is in the Arum family (*Araceae*), which includes the *Arisaema triphyllum* (Jack in the Pulpit), *Arisaema dracontium* (green dragon), and *Acorus calamus* (sweet flag), all of which have small flowers on a fleshy spadix.

The name of the genus comes from *symploke*-- "connection"-- and *karpos*-- "fruit" which refers to the way the berries grow around the spadix. The species name, *foetidus*, means evil smelling. Both the odor of the flower and the color of the spathe are reminiscent of spoiled red meat. That odor and color, as well as the warmth of the plant, attract flies, bees, and other insects, which pollinate the flowers. The plant's leaves, which arrive much later, smell like a skunk when they are bruised.

The earliest records of skunk cabbage bloom in the D.C. region are the first week in January and the latest are in April, but on average early to mid February is when the spathes rise from the ground and flower. Look for them in swampy lowlands. **Finding Wildflowers in the Washington Area** by Cris Fleming, Marion Lobstein, and Barbara Tufty lists numerous places to find skunk cabbage. Those close to us include: the Boundary Bridge area at the northern end of Rock Creek Park; in swampy areas near the streams in Turkey Run Park along the George Washington Memorial Parkway; the swamp in Great Falls Park ; and the wet swampy places at Hidden Pond Park southwest of Alexandria. (See the February 24 walk at Hidden Pond on page 5). **M.A. Lawler**



SCIENTISTS: WILDLIFE CORRIDORS BENEFIT PLANT BIODIVERSITY, NATIVE PLANTS

(Excerpted from a University of Florida news release dated August 31, 2006)

Wildlife corridors appear to support not only wildlife but also plants —especially the oft-threatened native variety. A six-year study at the world's largest experimental landscape devoted to the corridors — links between otherwise isolated natural areas — has found that more plant species, and specifically more native plant species, persist in areas connected by the corridors than in isolated areas. The results suggest that corridors are an important tool not only for preserving wildlife but also for supporting and encouraging plant biodiversity.

"From the perspective of whether corridors are an important conservation tool, the big question is whether they preserve a large diversity of species," said Doug Levey, a UF professor of zoology. "The answer, for plants anyway, appears to be yes." Levey co-authored a paper on the study set to appear in the journal Science.

In recent decades, many states and communities have set aside land for wildlife corridors. They are even planned on a regional scale, with one proposed corridor, for example, stretching 1,800 miles from Yellowstone National Park to the Yukon Territory. The rationale behind the corridors is that linking natural areas allows plants and animals to spread across them, helping them to thrive, reducing localized extinctions and increasing biodiversity. But until recently, scientific evidence for that rationale was surprisingly slim, with most corridor studies conducted on very small scales.

Levey and his colleagues' massive outdoor experiment at the Savannah River Site National Environmental Research Park on the South Carolina-Georgia state line is steadily filling in the holes in scientists' knowledge. The site consists of eight sets of five roughly two-acre clearings in the forest. In each set, a corridor connects the central clearing to one peripheral clearing, with the others remaining isolated. Plants and animals thrive in the clearings, which consist of longleaf pine savannah, an endangered habitat. They do not do well in the areas of surrounding forest. The difference between the habitats is similar to the difference between the urban and natural areas, where corridors are most often used. In two earlier (Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

papers, the researchers concluded that corridors encourage the movement of plants and animals across the fragmented landscapes. They also found that bluebirds transfer more berry seeds in their droppings between connected habitats, suggesting that the corridors could help plants spread.

The latest research tackled a much broader question: Do corridors increase plant biodiversity overall? To get at the issue, researchers Ellen Damschen and Nick Haddad, of North Carolina State University, did a detailed census of evenly distributed plots in six sets of connected and unconnected patches. They started in summer 2000 and returned every year through 2005 except for 2004, when a fire burned the landscape. The site was set up in 1999, when forest service loggers carved out the plots, and there was little difference among plot covers just one year later in 2000. But a different pattern became clear in ensuing years. Not only were there more plant species in connected plots than unconnected ones, there were more native species. "They started with the same diversity and then diverged," Levey said. "Native species definitely benefited, and yet there was absolutely no evidence that exotic species benefited."

The difference arose because unconnected patches gradually lost native species, whereas the natives persisted in connected patches. Over the five years, the unconnected patches lost about 10 native species. Meanwhile, the corridors seemed to have no impact on the number of exotic or invasive species in the connected and unconnected patches. "It seems that exotic species either were already everywhere and did not rely on corridors for their spread, or they remained in one place," Damschen said. Levey said the scientists think that invasive species, which by definition are good at spreading, are little affected by corridors. Native species, by contrast, are less invasive and so assisted more by the corridors. "It may be that corridors play to the strengths of native species," he said.

ARLINGTON'S RiP PROJECT

Sat. Jan. 13 - Second Saturdays at Bluemont Park 11 am to 2 pm. 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.

Sat. Feb. 10 - Second Saturdays at Bluemont Park 11am to 2 pm (See above for details)

NOTE: Some training and tools provided. Long pants and long sleeves recommended. If you have your own clippers, loppers and/or gloves, please bring them along. For more information, please contact Jan Ferrigan at (703) 228-7636 or jferriga@vt.edu.

LOCAL EVENTS AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES:

Thurs. Jan 11 The Mid-Atlantic Chapter of the Society for Ecological Restoration International (SER) invites you to attend the annual conference at Philadelphia University on Thursday, January 11, 2007, entitled "CHALLENGES, CONTROVERSY, and CONFLICTS." This year's conference addresses the challenges, controversy, and conflicts facing today's restoration practitioners. Planners, project managers, contractors, volunteers, researchers, and educators alike will benefit from this stimulating forum for top-level information exchange. Sessions will offer varied perspectives from speakers on a range of subjects, including restoration in the age of global change, the value of research and practical knowledge, species provenance, perspectives on traditional knowledge and modern technology, the controversies surrounding deer management, and the use of synthetic and non-synthetic herbicides. Speakers will come from academic and research institutions, private practices, government agencies, and non-profits from New England to the Mid-Atlantic. The link to the conference brochure and registration is: [https://www.ser.org/midatl/pdf/SER_Mid-Atlantic_2007_\(v4\).pdf](https://www.ser.org/midatl/pdf/SER_Mid-Atlantic_2007_(v4).pdf)

Mon. Jan 15. Dyke Marsh Clean-Up/Invasives removal Alexandria, 9am to noon. For more information please call Kathy Shinal of the Northern Virginia Senior Environment Corps at 703 -549-1607 Ext. 141 (kshinal@campagnacenter.org). Register near the bathrooms in Belle Haven Park (left of the parking lot). The National Park Service will provide all trash bags and gloves. Wear long pants, sturdy shoes, bug spray, and bring sunscreen. If working with invasive plants, wear a long-sleeve shirt.

Sat. Jan 20. Roosevelt Island to Gulf Branch Hike 1-4 pm. Adults. \$4 fee. 4 mile hike. Bring a water bottle and wear hiking shoes. For information call 703-228-63403. Registration required; register on-line <https://registration.co.arlington.va.us/> or call 703-228-4747. Program # 623105D. Meet at the Gulf Branch Nature Center 3608 Military Rd. Arlington

Wed. Jan. 24 . Invasive Plants Workshop. U.S. National Arboretum 9am to 4:30pm. \$50. Information on securing funding and negotiating contracts to remove invasive plants from public and private landscapes and natural areas. Field exercise in the afternoon. Register at <http://www.usna.usda.gov/>.

Jan. 25-Mar 9 Winter Woody Plant Identification. Instructor **Cris Fleming**. Winter is an excellent time to study identification of our local woody plants. With the leaves gone on most species, students will learn to

recognize trees and shrubs by characteristics such as shape, bark, buds, and leaf scars. Classroom lessons and three field trips feature using a botanical key to identify many species. Thursdays, 7 - 9:15 pm. Field Trip Dates: Feb. 10, Feb. 24, and Mar. 10 Location: Woodend Sanctuary Tuition: \$335 For Information call: 301-652-9188 x16

Sat. Jan 27 Winter Botany (9 am - 4 pm) Leader: Dr. Stan Shetler or Saturday, February 3 (inclement weather date) The winter forest may appear bleak to the untrained eye, but to careful observers it holds many discoveries. Join Dr. Stan Shetler, Curator of Botany Emeritus at the Smithsonian's Museum of Natural History and Field Studies instructor, for an exploration of winter botany. The program will begin with a short, indoor slide presentation at the Woodend Sanctuary in Chevy Chase, MD. It will move to one or more field sites, including Great Falls Park, VA, to discuss the winter ecology of plant communities, the identification of evergreen trees and shrubs, and wildlife uses of plants in winter. **This special program is free, but registration is required. It is made possible by the generosity of an ANS member.**

Thurs. Feb. 22 Butterfly Gardening. Free. Join members of the Washington Area Butterfly Club. Registration required. . Registration required; register on-line <https://registration.co.arlington.va.us> or call 703-228-4747. Program #624603I. Meet at the Long Branch Nature Center. 625 S. Carlin Springs Rd., Arlington, VA 22204

Sat. Feb. 24 Walk with a Naturalist at Hidden Pond Nature Center from 10:30 to noon in search of signs of spring, including **skunk cabbage** and the wood frog. Free. 703-451-9588. 8155 Greeley Blvd. Springfield, VA.

Sat. Feb. 24 Evergreen Walk at Scotts Run 10am to noon. Free. Discover the rich diversity of evergreen plants on a hike through Scotts Run Nature Preserve. Meet in the west parking lot (2nd entrance to the park after the Beltway exit on Georgetown Pike) Reservations required 703-759-9018.

Sat. Feb. 24 Ecosavvy Gardening Symposium, sponsored by the Fairfax-Green Spring Master Gardeners. 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. \$45 plus an additional \$10 for a boxed lunch. The Fairfax-Green Spring Master Gardeners are hosting the third annual EcoSavvy Gardening Symposium, sponsored by the Audubon Society of Northern Virginia. You'll learn about rain gardens; how to attract wildlife to your garden, featuring Craig Tufts of the National Wildlife Federation; how to use environmentally sound landscape design practices; why native plants are so important to our ecosystems (Dr. Doug Tallamy, U. of Delaware), and more. Register now....last year was a sellout! Complete program details can be found at www.greenspring.org under "Events". To register, please call 703 642 5173.

Sun. Feb. 25. Winter Lecture Series, Green SpringGardens, Sunday afternoon from 1:30 to 3:00 p.m. \$11. Call for reservations, 703 642 5173. Native plant lovers and conservationists won't want to miss **Dr. Doug Tallamy** who has been researching the important link between native plants and the wildlife that evolved with them. He has been examining the **impact of invasive plants on insect populations** and how that affects the entire food chain. Dr. Tallamy, a behavioral ecologist, is currently professor and chair of the Department of Entomology & Wildlife Ecology at the University of Delaware.

Sat. Mar 3 Winter Tree Identification (9 am - 3 pm) **Leader: Cris Fleming** Using the clues of bark, fruit, buds, and twigs, we'll practice identifying trees in winter on the grounds of our Woodend Sanctuary in Chevy Chase, MD. We'll begin inside with a look at techniques of winter tree identification, then move outside to use our skills to identify the many species of woody plants that grow on our grounds. Audubon Naturalist Society \$39 for non-members. For Information call: 301-652-9188 x16

Sun. Mar. 4 Winter Lecture Series, Green SpringGardens, Sunday afternoon at 1:30 p.m. \$11. Call for reservations, 703 642 5173. **Dr. Elizabeth Wells** will talk about her **historical research on the early folk uses of plants in Virginia.** Dr. Wells has done extensive research at Mt. Vernon on the history of colonial uses of plants---why the colonists brought certain plants here and how they used them. She has studied early floristics records in eighteenth century Virginia and has a deep knowledge of botanical history. Dr. Wells specializes in native and naturalized plants in eastern America and also in endangered plant species and habitats in the Mid-Atlantic States. She is an associate professor of botany at George Washington University and a longtime VNPS member.

FAIRFAX COUNTY'S INVASIVE MANAGEMENT AREA PROGRAM

Fairfax County will have its training for new IMA Leaders and people interested in learning more about the IMA program (which is also open to the returning IMA Leaders), in January and February. Most importantly, an information session for everyone who is interested will be held Tuesday, January

30th, at the Visitor Center at Frying Pan Farm Park from 7-8pm (2709 West Ox Road, Herndon, VA 20171)
The new IMA website should be up and running by January, so people should check it out to find more information about the program, the latest schedule of events, and activities at the sites at:

www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/resources/nrp-ima.htm

Contact: Katherine.Frederick@fairfaxcounty.gov or call 703 324 8681.

Invasives Control Work Parties at Turkey Run Park along the Potomac!

The Potowmack chapter continues its work 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. You are always welcome to bring friends. Our schedule for January and February is below. Come out and look for skunk cabbage in bloom.

Saturday, Jan. 20th 10am-1pm

Saturday, Feb. 17th 10am-1pm

For information: Alan Ford; cell: 202-213-6196; email: amford@acm.org



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

Chapter Events Calendar

Jan	11	Board Meeting 6:45
		Botanic Garden Program 7:30 Green Spring
Febr.	8	Board Meeting 6:45
		Geologic History of Virginia 7:30 Green Spring
Febr.	10	Hemlock Overlook Walk 10 to 2

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