

# WILD NEWS

PRINCE WILLIAM WILDFLOWER SOCIETY, A Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

Number 99-02

March-April, 1999

## MEETING MONDAY, MARCH 15

This month's speaker for the general membership meeting will be Jim Cook, Director of Operations for the Virginia Department of Forestry. He will present an overview of the Conway Robinson Memorial State Forest in Gainesville, talk about the current plans and long-term management goals for the property, and put them in the context of how the Department of Forestry views the management of each of its 17 forests state wide.

In addition, Kathleen Kust, Conservation Chair for the Potowmack Chapter, and Elaine Haug, PWWS Registry Site Chair, will speak briefly about conservation efforts at the Lorton Reformatory site. See page four for more information on Lorton.

As usual, the meeting will be held at 7:30 p.m. at Bethel Lutheran Church at the intersection of Plantation Lane and Sudley Road in Manassas. For further information about the meeting, call President Gina Yurkonis at 540-347-1027 or Vice-President Nancy Arrington at 703-368-8431.

## FREE ORCHID WALK AT CONWAY

As a special treat to PWWS, Nicky Staunton will lead a free walk to view the orchids of Conway Robinson Memorial State Forest on May 16, 1999 at 2 p.m. Large stands of both pink and yellow ladyslippers should be in full bloom. Call Nicky at 703-368-9803 to make a reservation. Please leave a message if she is not there.

## NEARBY NATURE SPRING SCHEDULE ANNOUNCED

Kim Hosen, PWWS Education Chair, is pleased to announce exciting new Nearby Nature classes/walks this spring. These classes are jointly sponsored by PWWS, the Prince William Natural Resources Council, and Nature's Wonder World.

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| Sunday, March 21   | Mammal Skull Identification, Greg Zell         |
| Saturday, March 27 | Drawing from Nature, Nicky Staunton            |
| Sunday, March 28   | Local Native American Lore, Alonso Abugattas   |
| Sunday, April 11   | Bloomin' Bluebells, Nicky Staunton             |
| Saturday, April 24 | Birding the Spring Migration, Jim Waggener     |
| Sunday, May 2      | The Folklore of Wildflowers, Alonso Abugattas  |
| Saturday, May 8    | Tree and Shrub Communities, Dr. Tom Borokowski |
| Sunday, May 9      | Northern Virginia Orchids, Nicky Staunton      |
| Saturday, May 29   | Wetland Ecology, Bill Sipple                   |

Further information is listed inside this issue, or for a copy of the brochure and registration form, call 703-490-0455.





## From the President - Gina Yurkonis

Welcome Spring! A friend told me meteorological spring begins March 1st and I think Mental Spring does too. Not that winter has been rough, but don't you miss the foamflower, bluebells, trillium? I got a tall drink of spring February 18th at the Maymont Flower and Garden Show in Richmond and it was lovely. The impetus to get out of bed at 6 a.m. and hit I-95 was speaker Marney Hall, winner of the famous Chelsea Flower Show in England and fellow habitat garden designer. I so looked forward to her talk. How sad it was when she started by saying "there is not one square foot of England which is not man-made." That is, every bit is managed by humans in some way. There is no natural area left.

As members of the VNPS, I believe we are helping to prevent the same fate from happening to the United States. Every time you plant natives on your own property, attend a talk and tell your friends, write a letter to a government official or, just renew your membership, you are helping to preserve our natural heritage. We're fortunate to see what's coming and still have time to act.

-Gina

## HELP WANTED

Joann Krumviede, the PWWS Hospitality Chair who provides those excellent meeting goodies, needs some assistance in setting up for the evening meetings. Anyone who can lend a hand would be most appreciated. See Joann March 15.

## Protect Watersheds

Join the Friends of Prince William Watersheds and learn how to protect our local environment. Call 703-490-0455 to find out how you can help.

## Volunteer Opportunity - Canoe Guides Wanted

Leesylvania State Park is looking for a few good folks to lead canoe tours for the general public on weekends. It provides a 2-day (Sat/Sun from 9-3) training according to the American Canoe Association (ACA) standards. Guides must attend both days. After completing the training, volunteers will co-guide with one of the regular guides . . . kinda to learn to ropes! It's lots of fun and people are usually very appreciative. For further information call Susan at 703-670-0024. Let the secretary know that you are calling about the canoe guide program. Or, send an e-mail to [visitorcenter@leesylvaniastatepark.com](mailto:visitorcenter@leesylvaniastatepark.com).

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Deadline for the May-June issue is April 28, 1999. Mail information to Nancy Vehrs at 8318 Highland St., Manassas, VA 20110-3671 or e-mail to [nvehrs@ibm.net](mailto:nvehrs@ibm.net).

## Garden Tours - Old Favorites Back by Popular Demand

Once again PWWS is sponsoring three free garden tours in April and all are old favorites that were last on tour in 1994.

This will be the final chance to view the Davis garden on its suburban lot in the Sudley section of Manassas. Marie and Paul Davis will be moving elsewhere in the Manassas area later in the year.

Roberta Whitmore's nearby garden in Sudley features a large woodland garden in back and a lovely butterfly garden in the sunny side yard.

This year's large garden will be the Bass Garden on five acres in Nokesville. Ken and Fran strive to provide animal habitat on their acreage, which contains a large pond. If anyone remembers the huge columbines offered at the plant sale, this is where most of them are grown.

Tour dates are Saturday, April 24, 11 a.m. - 5 p.m. and Sunday, April 25, 12 noon - 5 p.m. Brochures will be mailed to members in April. Tours are free to the public because they serve an educational function and provide a preview for plants available at the annual plant sale.

Volunteers are needed to provide refreshments and serve as hosts. For more information, call Marie Davis at 703-361-1626.

## Y2K Garden Tours

While everyone's worried about Y2K in relation to computer problems, why not be thinking instead of offering your garden for the Garden Tours in 2000? If you don't think you're ready, you have a whole year to prepare! Call Marie Davis this spring to visit your garden to see what you have. She can offer advice if asked. Call her at 703-361-1626.

## PWWS Plant Sale May 8

Mark your calendar for the 17th Annual Wildflower Plant sale on Saturday, May 8, 1999 from 9 a.m. - 12 noon in the parking lot of Bethel Lutheran Church, Plantation Lane and Sudley Road. This event serves as the major fundraiser for our Chapter. Please consider contributing plants to the sale when you divide your wildflowers this spring. Bring labeled and priced plants to the church by 7:30 a.m. the morning of the sale. Plant labels will be available at the March meeting or from Nancy Vehrs, 703-368-2898. For horticultural or pricing guidance, or to volunteer to pot plants or assist at the sale, please call Nancy Arrington at 703-368-8431 or Marie Davis at 703-361-1626.



## Other Plant Sales

Green Spring Garden Day Plant Sale: Come to this huge event in the Alexandria area of Fairfax County from 10 a.m.-3 p.m. on May 22. The Potomack Chapter will offer a large selection of native plants for sale. Call 703-642-5173 for information.

Annual Garden Fair at Blandy, May 8-9. Call 540-837-1758, ext 26 about this full weekend event.



## EXCERPTS FROM THE LORTON RESOURCES SURVEY STATUS REPORT

The Lorton tract natural drainage system contributes to the health of the Chesapeake Bay through the Occoquan watershed. The creeks are in very good condition over the site. Erosion is only present at spots where land has been cleared and graded for prison operations over the years, or where natural drainage has been altered or manipulated.

Several striking ecological niches have presented themselves in the northern end of the site. There is every condition, from level to steep, dry to wet, and all slope aspects, each favoring a characteristic set of indigenous plants.

On a west facing slope, there is an oak barren with a new location for the fragrant goldenrod in Fairfax County, and other unique plants. And there is a particularly rich valley and ridge drainage formation, with diverse types of forest, including riparian forest and a mimic of the terrace gravel forest more common in the Arlington Ridge Formation to the north. On such a terrace gravel slope grows an American chestnut in good condition.

In one wooded valley surveyors found a luxuriant spread of spring ephemerals, and many fern and orchid species. The orchids include the large whorled pogonia, large twayblade, crane fly, and downy rattlesnake plantain. Ferns include New York, maidenhair, cinnamon, interrupted, royal, lady, and broad beech. In the northern woods at the headwaters of Pohick Creek there are large drifts of the mountain jack-in-the-pulpit, not usually found in our region. At one of the central ponds grows a naturally-occurring cross between the willow oak and the southern red oak, the John Bartram oak. Young black willow and black cherry trees, shining sumac, Canada goldenrod, and cardinal flower are commonly found around the ten farm ponds. Each pond has a distinctive plant association arising from differences in water depth, size, and surrounding

features.

Currently in the fields there is an abundance of indigenous grasses and forbs such as bidens mingling with the planted cover crops and introduced plants such as spotted knapweed. Vegetation in the area all around the dairy has been suppressed due to dairy operations and grazing cattle. Steep slopes are the exception, where surveyors have found large populations of toothwort and hepatica and specimens of unusual plants such as trailing arbutus and wild hydrangea.

Varying plant communities typical to the edge between field and forest are seen throughout the site. Some of the fields are "old fields" evolving towards the forest, while most others have only recently been left fallow. There are hedgerows between fields in the middle of the site, havens to birds, reptiles, and small mammals. Hedgerows are a feature of our disappearing agricultural landscape, and there are vestiges of this landscape in the fields and yards of houses near Route 123.

- Kathleen Kust, Conservation Chair  
Potowmack Chapter, VNPS

### SPRING SCHEDULE FOR LORTON SURVEYS

|                   |                      |
|-------------------|----------------------|
| Sunday March 14   | 12:30 p.m.-4:00 p.m. |
| Saturday April 3  | 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. |
| Sunday April 11   | 12:30 p.m.-4:00 p.m. |
| Saturday April 17 | 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. |
| Sunday April 25   | 12:30 p.m.-4:00 p.m. |
| Saturday May 1    | 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. |
| Sunday May 16     | 12:30 p.m.-4:00 p.m. |
| Saturday May 29   | 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. |

To be part of the exploration of the Lorton Reformatory tract this spring, call Kathleen Kust at 703-836-5868. To catch spring ephemerals that are blooming one week but not the next, there will be a survey every weekend in April.

Because knowledge is complementary, the more surveyors there are, the more plants we can  
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add to the inventory. A regular crew of surveyors will be able to cover more ground in less time, because they are familiar with the site. Please try to fit some botanizing walks at this fascinating site into your schedule this spring. It is a great way to increase and challenge your knowledge of our local plants and ecology, while reveling in the fresh air and open spaces!

### **SLIDE PRESENTATION ON LORTON PLANT DIVERSITY**

On Thursday, April 8 at 7:30 p.m., Kathleen Kust will present slides on the diversity of plant communities and the ecological range of the 3,200-acre Lorton site at a regular meeting of the Potowmack Chapter. Green Spring Gardens Park, 703-642-5173.

## **Invasive Species: New Task Force Created**

Diane Flaherty, PWWS Secretary, shared the news that Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt, Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman, and Commerce Undersecretary James Baker have created a new interagency task force to control invasive species (Chris Carr, *Washington Post*, 2/3). The Invasive Species Council will target all kinds of invasive animals and plants. Past efforts to control invasive species focused only on aquatic species. The task force will have a \$28.8 million budget and is charged with developing a broad management plan to minimize the economic, ecological, and human health impacts of invasive species. Biologists estimate that more than 6,000 plants and animals have been introduced to the US through accidents and "misguided intentions" (Hebert, AP/*San Francisco Chronicle/Examiner* online).

## **Request from Hemlock Overlook Regional Park**

As a vital part of its Environmental Education program, Hemlock Overlook Regional Park staff in Clifton would like to incorporate native plants into the landscape around the educational facility, as well as native colonial medicinal and herb plants in its Garden Habitat Project. They are asking members of the VNPS to help facilitate the development of the Garden Habitat Project and environmental education programs by donating plants and volunteering their time. Call Susan King at 703-993-4354 or e-mail [suzie101@hotmail.com](mailto:suzie101@hotmail.com) for more information.

## **Nearby Nature**

As evidenced by the schedule outlined on page one, this spring's Nearby Nature series has a wide variety of topics of interest to the native plant enthusiast. Call 703-790-0455.

Greg Zell, Long Branch Nature Center Manager, will present a most unusual class entitled "Mammal Skull Identification." Have you ever found animal bones during your forays into the woods and wondered about the animal's identification? Here's your chance to view sample skulls and learn keys to identification.

In addition to leading some walks, on March 27 Nicky Staunton will conduct a workshop entitled "Drawing from Nature" where participants will have the opportunity to capture on paper the spring ephemerals of the Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge.

On March 28 Alonso Abugattas, naturalist and talented storyteller, will share some of the lore and history surrounding the area's earlier residents in "Local Native American Lore." His workshop will cover customs, edible/medicinal plants, history, tools, and mannerisms. Later in the series Alonzo addresses the "Folklore of Wildflowers" on May 2 at the Thompson Wildlife Management Area in Linden.

## Spring/Summer Schedule for Marion Blois Lobstein

Marion Blois Lobstein, Associate Professor of Biology, Northern Virginia Community College-Manassas, and Adjunct Professor of Biology, Bland Experimental Farm announces the following walks, classes, and tours she will conduct this spring and summer:

### WILDFLOWER WALKS

Great Falls Park: 10:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m. on the following dates (third Sundays) during the spring months: March 21, April 18, and May 16, 1999. (Please call Marion to check on walks if weather is questionable.)

Balls Bluff, VA: 2-4 p.m., Sunday, April 18.

Thompson Wildlife Management Area: 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Thursday, April 29.

Call Marion Lobstein 703-536-7150 for reservations to participate in these wildflower walks.

**SPRING WILDFLOWER IDENTIFICATION COURSE** for Fairfax Audubon Society on March 31 and April 7 (evening lectures) and April 10 (field trip to Balls Bluff, VA). For more information contact Penny Ittner at 703-858-3818.

**SUMMER FIELD BOTANY COURSE** at Bland Experimental Farm and State Arboretum of Virginia (3 credits through the University of Virginia) 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. June 21-24, June 28-July 1, and July 5-8. This course will cover basic principles of botany with emphasis on the classification, identification, and evolution of flowering plants. This course will integrate lecture and laboratory with an emphasis on field trip experience concentrating on identification and ecology of flowering plants of the Mid-Atlantic region. For additional information call Bland at 540-837-1758, ext. 21 (Web site: <http://www.virginia.edu/~blandy>) or Marion at 703-536-7150.

### SMITHSONIAN ASSOCIATES TOURS

Teddy Roosevelt Island: 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m., March 28

National Arboretum: 9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. on April 25

Thompson Wildlife Management Area and State Arboretum of Virginia: 8:30 a.m.-6:30 p.m. on May 2

C & O Canal (Carderock Area): Two separate tours each date on April 11 and May 15.

Call 202-357-3030 for additional information on Associates tours.

### OTHER

Bland Experimental Farm and State Arboretum of Virginia: Guided tour at the Thompson Wildlife Management Area and Bland Experimental Farm for FOSA (Foundation of State Arboretum of Virginia)/Bland Experimental Farm on Friday, April 30. Call Jen at Bland Experimental Farm at 540-837-1758 extension. 0 for information and reservations.

For further information on Marion's activities and how you can join them, check out her Web page at: [www.mnsinc.com/mblobst](http://www.mnsinc.com/mblobst) or e-mail her at [mblobst@mnsinc.com](mailto:mblobst@mnsinc.com).

### OTHER EVENTS OF INTEREST

Thursday, March 18, 7:30 p.m. Mark Garland, author of *On Watching Nature* and senior naturalist for Audubon Naturalist Society, will speak on local habitats and plant and animal interactions at the Potowmack Chapter's meeting at Green Spring Gardens Park, Alexandria. 703-642-5173.

Sunday, April 25, 1-2:30 p.m. Wildflower Walk at Ellanor C. Lawrence Park, Centreville, 703-6310-0013. Reservations required. Free.

Sunday, April 18, 2 p.m. Bluebell walk at Bull Run Regional Park. 703-528-5406.



# **TROUTLILY**

**Marion Lobstein**  
**Associate Professor of Biology**  
**Northern Virginia Community**  
**College-Manassas Campus**

The bright yellow flowers and the purple mottled leaves of troutlily (*Erythronium americanum*) are some of the loveliest and surest signs of early spring. The leaves of this perennial member of the Lilaceae or lily family appear by mid to late March and all signs of the plants are gone by late May, early June--a true spring ephemeral. The habitat for the yellow troutlily is moist woodlands, floodplains, and stream bottomland where this plant often forms extensive colonies. The range of this plant is from Nova Scotia to Florida and west to Mississippi and Arkansas. The genus name *Erythronium* is Greek for "red" referring to the red-flowered species *E. dens canis* and the species name *americanum* means "America." Two other species *E. albidum*, the white troutlily, and *E. umbilicatum*, the umbilicated yellow troutlily, are also found in the Northern Virginia area but are much less common. The white troutlily, a species more common to the west, is found along the Potomac River in Fairfax and Loudoun Counties.



The solitary flowers of this wildflower develop at the top of a 6-9 inch scape or peduncle only in plants that have two leaves. The flowers of yellow troutlily are made up of a perianth of three outer yellow sepals and three inner yellow petals which are often tinged on the outside with purple. The perianth tips are recurved when the flower opens on sunny days. On cloudy days or in the evening the flowers remain closed. The six prominent stamens have yellow orange to purplish anthers. The style of the pistil is club-shaped with three short stigma segments. When the flower bud first opens, the anthers cover the stigma but within a day or so these split apart and shrivel back to expose the stigma. The troutlily flowers are good nectar producers that are pollinated primarily by bees and syrphid flies.

Following pollination and fertilization, the fruit that develops is a 1/2-1-inch-long capsule with a rounded top surface (the fruit of *E. umbilicatum* is indented on the top surface). The three-celled capsule takes 6-8 weeks to mature and will contain 3-7 crescent-shaped seeds approximately 1/8 inches long. As the fruit matures, the scape falls to the ground and the capsule splits open at maturity to release the seeds. On the surface of these russet-colored seeds is an elaiosome (fleshy, fat-filled appendage) which attracts ants that disperse the seeds. (The phenomenon of ant-dispersal by ants, "myrmecochory," has been discussed in earlier articles.) The leaves of troutlily are almost as attractive as the flower. The light-to-dark-green fleshy leaves are mottled with purple and whitish-green spots resembling the spots of a trout or those of a fawn (the two leaves also stand up like the ears of a fawn) thus the common names troutlily and fawn lily. Yellow adder's tongue is another common name referring to these spots. The leaves are oblong lance-shaped leaves 3-8 inches long. There may be one or two leaves per individual plant. The one-leaved individuals are sterile (no flower is produced). Even with two-leaved individuals there may not be a flower. In some colonies up to 99 percent of all

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individuals will be sterile. The factors that control flowering are still not well understood. The maturity of the plant, the relative amount of energy stored in the underground corm, depth of the corm, or crowding of individual corms may all be factors. By the time the overhead tree leaf canopy is complete by late May to early June, the leaves soon die back. Underground there is a well-developed corm (an underground storage stem) that is whitish, smooth, and somewhat egg-shaped core (thus the name "dog' tooth violet") with papery scales on the outside. These corms often give rise to smaller cormlets as well as rhizomes (horizontal underground stems) by which a colony of troutlilies can spread asexually over a large area. Energy generated during the brief photosynthetic life of troutlily is stored in these underground structures. This energy will be used to form new tissue for the next spring's rapid development. The buds for next spring's flowers are formed in the corm during the summer.

The edible uses of troutlily include

steamed leaves and steamed or baked corms. American Indians ate parts of this plant and also made medicinal use of this plant. (Based on concerns for conservation of our wildflowers, uses such as these should be discouraged.) American Indians used troutlily extract as an emetic to induce vomiting, as a root tea to break fevers, and as a poultice of crushed leaves to treat wounds. The Cherokees also chewed up underground parts and spit them into streams to attract fish. A modern version of Culpeper's herbal of the late 1600's recommends the use of *E. americanum* rather than the European *E. dens*. These uses also include the treatment of worms in children as well as an emetic and as part of a poultice.

This spring, enjoy the beauty of this special wildflower. Once you see the leaves of this spring ephemeral, you know spring is almost here. Soon the bright sunny yellow of these flowers will add much joy to the spring days of April.

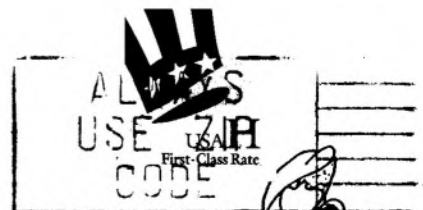


Drawing from Nature with Nicky Staunton at  
the Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge

Saturday, March 27 from 9:00 AM - 2:00 PM

Do you see a pretty flower and want to pick it to take home? Sometimes we all do. Here is your opportunity to learn a new skill to replace collecting the real thing in nature. Join this wonderful workshop and capture the first signs of spring on paper yourself!

PRINCE WILLIAM WILDFLOWER SOCIETY  
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exp. 10/99

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**March Meeting: 7:30 p.m., Monday, March 15, Bethel Lutheran Church, Manassas**

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