



WILD NEWS

Prince William Wildflower Society

A Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

2008, no. 4

July-August 2008

NEXT MEMBER MEETING

JULY 21st, 7:30 p.m.

Bethel Lutheran Church, Manassas

Program: "RAIN GARDENS,"

presented by Prince William Master Gardener Lorrie A. Andrew-Spear

Rain gardens are shallow landscaped areas built to slow down and hold rain runoff, allowing it to soak into the ground rather than running off into storm drains. Rain gardens improve drainage, reduce erosion, keep pollutants out of storm water, and can be a beautiful addition to your landscape. Lorrie Andrew-Spear is interested in environmentally friendly landscaping, including native plants, low maintenance yard care and rain gardens. Most recently, she has made short instructional spots for the Prince William channel, "Master Gardener Minutes." Make plans to join your fellow PWWS members for this informative, fascinating program. Refreshments will be served. All are welcome!

**SAVE THE DATE: SATURDAY,
OCTOBER 4, 2008**

**PRINCE WILLIAM WILDFLOWER
SOCIETY ANNUAL MEETING
and 25th ANNIVERSARY**

CELEBRATION, 1:00 p.m. Merrimac Farm. Plans are being made for our annual meeting and 25th anniversary celebration, to be held at the stone house at Merrimac Farm, near Nokesville, on

Sunday, Oct. 4 at 1 pm. There will be a potluck picnic, followed by a brief business meeting. All members will receive an anniversary gift, and there will be doorprizes and a tour of the stone house. Please plan to attend. If you need a ride, please call one of the PWWS officers listed in the newsletter. Stay tuned for details on the meeting in the September/October issue of *Wild News*; they also will be posted on the PWWS chapter page on the VNPS Web site, www.vnps.org.

Please call Karen Waltman at 703-830-5710 if you can help with the planning of this event.

Monday, May 19, 2008

Prince William Wildflower Society Meeting Minutes

Delicious refreshments were furnished by Joann Krumviede and Betty Truax and enjoyed by all prior to the program. The treats included chocolate bundt cake with chocolate icing and hot artichoke dip and crackers. Thanks to Joann and Betty.

Charles introduced the speaker for the evening, herpetologist Anthony Bulmer, who spoke on Native Reptiles and Amphibians. Tony is the Senior Interpretive Specialist/Naturalist at Ellanor C. Lawrence Park in Chantilly, and he is the go-to guy for questions about reptiles and amphibians at that park and throughout Fairfax County parks. Tony loves to hike in fields,

forests, and wetlands identifying and surveying local reptiles and amphibians. He also works for "Reptiles Alive" and presents interesting programs about reptiles from all over the world.

Tony's talk included information about and a look at the following herps (amphibians and reptiles): cricket frog, long-tailed salamander, garter snake, box turtle, and a red-spotted newt. Since some people may be startled or even frightened when they encounter herps in their garden or lawn, Tony gave tips on what to do. Many of the frogs, snakes, and lizards will eat pests like slugs, so local herps are good to have around!

Tony reminded the group that many amphibians are disappearing because of pesticides that get into the water, and the gardeners were asked to refrain from heavy use of bug spray on garden plants.

Nancy Vehrs reported that the April 27, 2008 Garden Tours had about 130 people tour each of the three gardens. We appreciate the following members who invited us into their beautiful gardens: Janet Wheatcraft, Helen and Rob Walter, Charlotte and Gary Cochard.

Nancy Vehrs reported that the May 10, 2008 Plant Sale brought in \$3,221.35. VNPS was sent \$200 of that for membership, and a portion will be returned to us.

Attending: Tony Bulmer, Deborah Hutton, Tiana Camfiord, Joann Krumviede, Deanna High, Nancy Arrington, Nancy Vehrs, Nicky Staunton, Helen Walters, Helen Rawls, Jeanne Fowler, Betty Truax, John Pauswinski, Theresa Defluri, a father with two young kids from the church, another 10 year old from the church, Charles Smith

Respectively submitted,
Karen Waltman, PWWS Secretary

PRINCE WILLIAM WILDFLOWER SOCIETY

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Secretary	Karen Waltman, (703) 830-5710 geraldwaltman@hotmail.com
Treasurer	Diane Flaherty, (703) 330-9862
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Programs	Bonnie Fulford Nahas, (703) 361-7409
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Plant Sale	Nancy Vehrs (703) 368-2898
Publicity	OPEN
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Deadline for the September-October issue of *Wild News* is September 15 2008

Please send or email information to Deanna High, 9613 Heather Green Drive, Manassas, VA 20112; deannah@agb.org.

VNPS home page: <http://www.vnps.org>

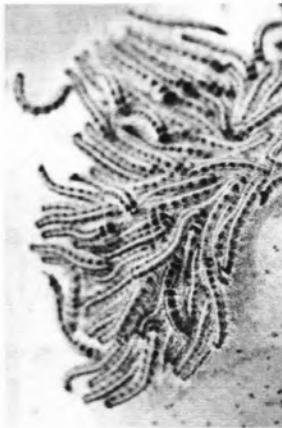
JULY IN PRINCE WILLIAM: CATERPILLARS, BUGS, and (MANY) OTHER CRITTERS

"TENTCATERS"

By Diane Flaherty, PWWS Treasurer

How are your tent caterpillars doing? Making your patio or driveway a mess of squished bodies? Eating tree limbs bare?

Who are these invaders? The eastern tent caterpillar, *Malacosoma americanum*, is a pest native to North America. Lucky us. And what is the tent caterpillars favorite meal? Wild black cherry trees, though maple, hawthorn, and cultivated fruit trees also make a happy meal.



Throughout the spring, tent caterpillars hatched, gathered together, and set about spinning their homes in your trees or bushes. Now each morning they leave to feed on their host tree, though they may return to the nest during the hottest part of the day. As twilight arrives, they head back to spend a cozy night in their tent.

So what to do? First, consider how bad the infestation is. One tent in a tree? *Laissez faire* may be the best way. Most importantly, the trees will usually send out a second set of leaves. In addition, the smaller trees and bushes in the lower canopy may have a growth spurt from the increased sunlight allowed by the now denuded branches of higher trees. And all those wriggly bodies are fair game for insect-eating birds, such as the sweet-singing warblers. Then too, to put it indelicately, the caterpillars' poop will fertilize the forest floor.

Second, how long has this been going on? A large infestation in repeated years is bad news for your trees. Smaller trees may succumb to the repeated denuding and larger trees may have a number of dead limbs. Usually these yearly infestations have an ebb and flow – the caterpillars come, the predators have a field day. Next year, they come again, but there are more predators thanks to the large food source of the previous year. The imbalance moves back and forth between caterpillars and predators.

But you are sick of these tents and crawly things. The best control method is to scrape or prune off the egg masses in the winter or early spring. Having missed that window, you can destroy the nest with a long pole. Another method is to cut off the branches. We drop them into a plastic bag and toss it in the trash.

Another suggestion is to submerge the cut branch in a large bucket of soapy water. In this case, you should wait until after the caterpillars have returned in the evening. Once you are sure all the caterpillars are dead, you can dump the water in the bushes. Please use biodegradable soap.

Some people suggest using Bt. Unfortunately, this "safe" bio-pesticide sold as Thuricide and under other names does impact other caterpillars. For instance, wild black cherry

trees also support the caterpillars of the eastern tiger swallowtail butterfly and the red-spotted purple as well. In other words, remember that Bt kills ALL caterpillars, even the good ones. (Photo courtesy of "Raddad," Randy Knauf at <http://www.flickr.com/people/raddad>)

THE PICARESQUE, THE BEAUTIFUL, AND THE SLIMY or WHAT'S EATING YOU? BUGS, SLUGS, AND SIGNIFICANT OTHERS

By Deanna High, Editor, Wild News

Whether it's because of pain (stepping on a bee,) disgust (eeyuwww-stepping barefoot on a humongous slug on the deck), Diane's tent caterpillars (above), or attributable to some "Where's Waldo"-like observations of predatory caterpillars on my tomatoes and herbs, bugs and other creatures of late have thrust themselves into my consciousness in a way that I cannot ignore. With a new critter appearing around every corner, every second, here are a few notables.



The Incredible Shrinking Caterpillar

Finding a honking great tobacco hornworm (*Manduca sexta*) on one of my tomato plants and registering the extreme damage it already had made, I decided to watch it for a while instead of plucking it off. Next day, it was gone, but in its place was another, significantly smaller hornworm, which had all of these funny

white things stuck to it. Eggs? No, other bugs! To be precise, braconid wasps! My huge hornworm, which still grows smaller and weaker every day, is a victim of tiny parasitical wasps, which according to a favorite new Web site, "What's That Bug?" (whatsthatbug.com) hatch inside the caterpillar but allow it to grow before they begin attacking and snacking. The hornworm, which otherwise would metamorphose into a large, mottled brown moth, will die when the wasps are finished sucking it dry.



Popping Cute Beetle? This appealing fellow – about 3" long – snagged my attention as he crawled noisily out of some brown, long-dead leaf litter I happened to be idly gazing at. Try to pick him up, he "pops" and makes a complete flip over – a defense mechanism surely?

What's My Bug id's him as an "Eyed Elator" click beetle, scientific name (maybe) *Alaus zuniatus*.

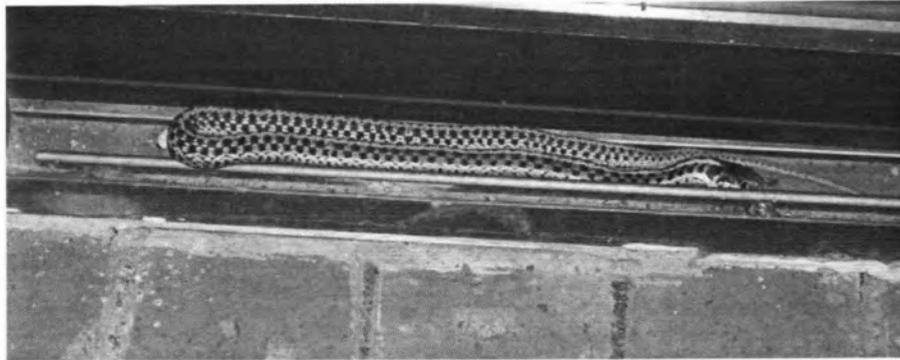


Elsewhere, feasting on both green and bronze fennel are several striking black and acid green caterpillars with yellow/orange trimmings – probably future black

swallowtails. I left them to munch on – fennel tends to get out of hand, anyway. (These two pictures from "What's My Bug" of black swallowtail larvae and butterfly were too good to pass up.)



Many small toads, one happy snake Celebrating 4th of July with a family cookout at our place, my sister-in-law spied a basement window-well full of 20-30 tiny toads. We came back to look just in time to see this fulfilled juvenile black snake lounging above the window well. You can practically count the "lumps."



Next, but best, in the slime parade:

GREAT GRAY SLUG

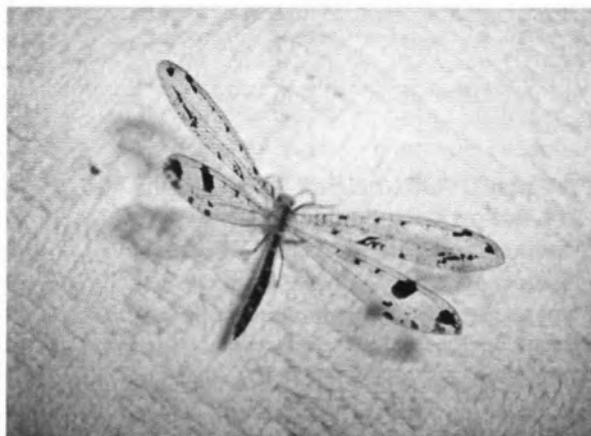
FAMILY: Limacidae | **GENUS and SPECIES:** *Limax maximus*

"This European slug is the largest slug species found in Kentucky. [Perhaps in Virginia also?] It can be 20 cm long and is an extremely destructive garden pest. Also called the 'leopard slug', the Great Gray Slug is brownish-gray with a spotted mantle and stripes or spots all over its body. This species has very elaborate courting behavior, and mating pairs will often crawl onto porches at night to breed, leaving behind trails of mucus." The specimen on my deck I measured by the first thing at hand, which happened to be a 3-inch plant label. I think I spotted this one's mate (widow, perhaps) in the aforementioned brown leaf litter! [Description is from another great "bug" Web site, All Abuzz About Bugs!, which describes itself as an "an online community of naturalists who enjoy learning about and sharing our observations of insects, spiders, and other creatures."]



And, last, picaresque *and* beautiful, discovered fluttering around in my bathroom: What is it? Is it a damselfly? Please email me at deannah@agb.org if you know or if you have your own beautiful,

ugly, slimy bugs or critter stories to share.



EVENTS

JULY/AUGUST

Sunday, July 20, "The Buzz on Bees and Wasps," 8:30 to 11am. Leaders: Cliff Fairweather and Cathy Strager. From solitary parasitic wasps to the highly social honey bee; from potter wasps to carpenter bees, these related insects form a critically important part of the natural world. After a short indoor lecture at Woodend we'll spend our time outdoors combing Woodend for wasps and bees, identifying and observing their habits. Audubon Naturalist Society. Non-members \$23. For information or to register call: 301-652-9188 x16 or visit: <http://www.audubonnaturalist.org/> for a registration form.

Saturday, July 25 from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m., Nokesville Park, 12560 Aden Road.

The Prince William Soil and Water Conservation District is hosting an evening program for families who want to discover more about nature close to home.

Prince William Conservation Alliance will be there taking a closer look at the critters who live in the the creek that winds its way through Nokesville Park. Other activities include nature walks, star gazing and more. Registration is required, please RSVP by July 18th to Nicole Either, nicoleeither@pwsxcd.org or 703-594-3621. Questions? Contact Nicole or check online at <http://www.pwsxcd.org/>.

August 2, 9:00 a.m. Merrimac Farm Cleanup
PWWS Members are welcome to help clean and do minor repairs in and around the stone house at Merrimac Farm on August 2, 2008. The fun starts at 9 am. Directions are on Google-Merrimac Farm. Click on line that says Show Map of 14710 Deepwood Lane, Nokesville, VA 20181. For more information call Kim Hosen at 703-499-4954.

Friday, August 1, 7:30 to 11pm, "How to get Moths to Land on Your Bedsheets at Night." Leader: David Adamski. Discover why moths constitute about 90 percent of all the Lepidoptera on the planet. After sunset we'll identify the moths that are attracted to the blacklight set-up at Woodend Sanctuary. Audubon Naturalist Society. Non-members \$26.50. For information or to register call: 301-652-9188 x16 or visit: <http://www.audubonnaturalist.org/> for a registration form.

Thursday, August 7, 7:30-9:30pm, and Saturday, August 9. Full day field trip. "Ferns and Fern Allies." Leader: Cris Fleming. Many ferns and fern relatives such as clubmosses, horsetails, and quillworts occur in eastern woodlands. Learn to identify local ferns with a program on Thursday at Woodend Sanctuary. Saturday's field trip will be to Turkey Run Park in Virginia where over 26 species of ferns and fern allies can be found. Audubon Naturalist Society. Non-members \$52. For information or to register call: 301-652-9188 x16 or visit: <http://www.audubonnaturalist.org/> for a registration form.

Introduction to the Master Gardener Program

Tuesday, August 19, 7:00-9:00 p.m.

McCoy Room at Sudley North Government building 7987 Ashton Avenue, Manassas 20109

OR Tuesday, August 26, 7:00-9:00 p.m.

Development Services Building (next to McCoart Government Center) Room 107, 5 County Complex, Prince William. For more specific directions, see <http://www.pwcgov.org> and search "directions to county facilities."

Find out how to become a Master Gardener Volunteer with the Virginia Cooperative Extension—Prince William. This popular program is rewarding, but involves a commitment. If you are interested in learning more about this volunteer program, please plan to attend *one* of the information sessions. This first session is free, but registration is necessary. Please call 703-792-7747 to register. —Anne M. Seiff, Virginia Cooperation Extension, Prince William Office

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER

September 12-14, 2008 VNPS Annual Meeting

Hosted by Potowmack Chapter

The 2008 VNPS Annual Meeting will focus on the diversity of plant communities along our national river, the Potomac. The Potowmack Chapter lies in the fall line region, where the Piedmont meets the Coastal Plain. Despite our area's urbanization, spectacular local and national parks line the river and protect dramatic falls, fascinating geologic features, meadows, bogs, and marshes - all along a surprisingly short section of the river. During the weekend, we've lined up a variety of field trips to some outstanding natural areas, gardens, and herbariums. On Friday evening, enjoy a dessert reception followed by a presentation. Saturday night features the annual meeting, a buffet dinner, and our keynote speaker. We hope

you will join us. Look for a registration brochure in the mail.

October, 4, 2008, Merrimac Farm, PWWS Annual Meeting and 25th Anniversary Celebration, Saturday, October 4, 1:00 p.m.

Plans are being made for our annual meeting and 25th anniversary celebration, to be held at the stone house at Merrimac Farm, near Nokesville, on Sunday, Oct. 4 at 1 pm. There will be a potluck picnic, followed by a brief business meeting. All members will receive an anniversary gift, and there will be doorprizes and a tour of the stone house. Please plan to attend. If you need a ride, please call one of the PWWS officers listed in the newsletter.

MERRIMAC FARM MASTER NATURALIST PROGRAM COMES TO MERRIMAC FARM

Are you ready to put a little wildlife in your weekend?

The Merrimac Farm Chapter of Virginia's Master Naturalist Program is a great way to learn more about local habitats, plants and animals... and get involved in stewardship activities!

The first program is scheduled for September through November 2008. The cost is \$200 per participant and class size is limited to 20 participants. You must submit an application by **Friday, August 15** to be considered for acceptance into the **Fall 2008 session**.

Questions? Contact Kim Hosen at 703.499.4954 or naturalist@pwconserve.org

— Nancy Vehrs

SUMMER SOLSTICE WALK, ELKCLICK NATURAL AREA PRESERVE AND SULLY WOODLANDS - WESTERN FAIRFAX COUNTY

The Potomack and Prince William Chapters of the Virginia Native Plant Society held a joint field trip on Sunday, June 22, 2008 to several unique plant communities in western Fairfax County. The trip was a great success with about 40 members of several chapters of the Virginia and Maryland Native Plant Societies attending, including their respective Presidents, Sally Anderson and Chris Fleming.

The two primary plant communities visited, Diabase Glade Forest/Diabase Flatwoods/Basic Oak-Hickory Forest and Basic Bald, are considered globally rare and host unusual assemblages of plants on diabase soils and parent materials. Diabase is basic igneous rock that is primarily used in our area to make gravel. The diabase intrusions under the Triassic Basin geologic region of central Maryland and northern Virginia were introduced over 200 million years ago as the African and North American tectonic plates pulled apart and the crust thinned. Because of this unique geology and the great variety of northern and southern species that converge in our region, these rare plant communities are found nowhere else in the world.

We had the great fortune in having Rod Simmons, botanist and VNPS Registry Co-Chair, as one of the trip leaders. Rod not only had great general botanical knowledge, he has worked directly with Gary Fleming of the Virginia Natural Heritage Program conducting the fieldwork several years ago to help describe these plant communities. Charles Smith, president of PWWS and naturalist for Fairfax County Park Authority, which owns the land, co-lead the trip.

The morning was spent in a large field complex and observing the Basic Bald community. The field complexes at Sully Woodlands are in relatively good condition. The dominant species in the healthier meadows include *Sorghastrum nutans* (Indian grass) and *Schizachyrium scoparium* (little bluestem) and hosted several unusual species such as *Asclepias viridiflora* (green milkweed), *A. purpurascens* (purple milkweed), possibly two species of *Ruellia*, and *Penstemon laevigatus* (smooth beardtongue). Unusual species on the bald included *Diodia teres* (poorjoe), *Hedeoma pulegioides* (American false pennyroyal), *Krigia virginica* (Virginia dwarf dandelion), *Plantago virginica* (Virginia plantain),

Plantago aristata (large-bracted plantain), and numerous species of lichens.

The Diabase Flatwoods have a unique, almost savannah-like appearance in many areas with an assemblage of oaks, hickories, and understory trees such as *Cercis canadensis* (redbud), *Amelanchier arborea* (downy serviceberry), *Vaccinium* sp. (blueberries), *Viburnum* sp. (viburnums) and *Crataegus* sp. (hawthorns) with a groundcover layer dominated by grasses such as *Muhlenbergia sobolifera* (rock muhly), and *Leersia virginica* (whitegrass). Highlights included two orchid species, *Liparis lilifolia* (large twayblade) and *Goodyera pubescens* (downy rattlesnake plantain), *Aristolochia serpentaria* (Virginia snakeroot) with



pipevine swallowtail caterpillars on them, and a newly discovered population of quillwort, which has not yet been positively identified.



The rain held off, and after more than six hours, the last of the participants made their way out of the woods of the Elklick Woodlands Natural Area Preserve. It was a good way to spend the Summer Solstice.

-Charles Smith

PRINCE WILLIAM WILDFLOWER SOCIETY
A Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society
PO Box 83, Manassas, VA 20108-0083



exp. 10/08

Nancy Arrington
8388 Briarmont Lane
Manassas, VA 20112-2755

**NEXT MEETING: MONDAY, JULY 21, Bethel Lutheran Church, Manassas, 7:30 p.m.
"RAIN GARDENS" with Lorrie A. Andrew-Spear**
