



# Wild News

The Bi-monthly newsletter of the Prince William Wildflower Society  
A Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

Number 2023-04

September-October 2023

## Annual Meeting Sunday, September 10 at 3 p.m.

In the Garden of Val Neitzey

17015 Gaines Road, Broad Run, VA 20137

Enjoy a tour of Val's lovely native plant garden. Her garden was on tour last summer and was described as follows: Located near the Bull Run Mountains Natural Area Preserve, this old farmland is being converted gradually to native plant areas and meadows. In addition to two planted meadows, there are transitional meadows where natives are encouraged and invasive plants removed, an ongoing process.



Val Neitzey's meadow

Two large meadows were established from seed, and their summer glory includes Narrowleaf Mountain Mint, Wild Senna, Wild Bergamot, Blue Mistflower, Thoroughwort, and various Asters and Goldenrods. The woodland trail section includes pioneer species such as Persimmon, Beaked Panic Grass, White Snakeroot, Dogbane, Wild Basil, and Nimbwill. Other planted gardens include a hillside garden, a hidden garden, and a pollinator garden. Two shade gardens have been managed to crowd out invasive Japanese

Stilt Grass. Invasive species management includes removal of Sericea Lespedeza, Korean Clover, and Stilt Grass.

This annual meeting includes a vote on the slate of officers for two-year terms beginning November 1 and approval of the annual budget. See the slate of officers below. If you are unable to attend the annual meeting in person, please send your proxy to chapter secretary Karen Waltman at [waltman5313@gmail.com](mailto:waltman5313@gmail.com).

### Slate of Officers:



President: Nancy Vehrs - reelection

Vice-President: Val Neitzey - reelection



Secretary: Janine Lawton

Treasurer: Valerie Kenyon Gaffney - reelection



**Prince William Wildflower Society  
Membership Meeting Minutes  
Thursday, July 6, 2023, 7 p.m.  
Manassas National Battlefield Park  
Brownsville Picnic Pavilion-Groveton Road**

PWWS President Nancy Vehrs called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. with 34 members and guests in attendance. She announced upcoming walks and events:

Friday, July 14: A botanical walk at Bull Run Mountain Natural Area Preserve, Beverly Mill Drive, Broad Run, Virginia. Leaders-Janis Stone and Joe Villari.

Sunday, July 23: A Summer Garden Tour is planned at the homes of Cheryl Hancock and the Willings.

Friday, Aug. 4: The VRE is to be free in the summer on Fridays. A free train ride into Washington DC and a U.S. Botanic Garden visit are planned.

Friday, August 25: Dr. Bert Harris will lead a botanical walk at Deep Cut Meadow in the Manassas National Battlefield Park. (He presented the program “Native Seed Collection for Meadows and Gardens” on May 4.)

September annual meeting: at Valerie Neitzey’s home, with a tour of her large garden. PWWS officers will also be elected. Date/time to be determined.



Members crowd around the picnic shelter at Manassas Battlefield.

**Program:**

Nancy introduced the speaker for “Raptor Habitat and Ecology.” Liz Dennison and her husband Tim presented an educational and entertaining program on raptors. Liz started out thanking the Prince William Wildflower Society members for growing native plants and providing natural settings for the raptors found in our forests, along streams, and even in towns. The raptors she and Tim brought to show us are not able to be released back in the wild, so they are included in her programs to educate people about the dangers raptors face from declining habitat and from cars. Most of the birds in the program had been hit by a car and injured enough that they couldn’t hunt for

themselves. Often a raptor is flying down to catch a mouse or other small animal along a roadway, and the raptor is unintentionally hit by a car. But the birds in the program were all healthy in appearance and as curious about us as we were of them.

Tim carefully removed each bird from its large cage and walked slowly around the crowd to give us a close look at the bird’s features. Liz told us the reason the bird was injured and the bird’s characteristics. Each bird was kept on a leash attached to Tim’s hand. And Tim wore gloves, as the talons are sharp!

The birds we saw were the following: a Kestrel, Red-shouldered Hawk, Barred Owl, Great Horned Owl, and the small Eastern Screech Owl. In captivity they are fed frozen (then thawed) mice, crickets, and parts of chickens, and they have plenty of space in large enclosures. Fun fact: in discussing the large eyes of the Great Horned Owl, Liz said that the eyes were 5% of the body weight. Figure what your eyes would weigh at your present weight if you were a Great Horned owl.

Liz founded Secret Garden Birds and Bees in 2016, and she is the president of the organization; Tim is the vice-president. They like to spread the word about the essential role raptors play in a healthy ecosystem.

<http://www.secretgardenbirdsandbees.com/home.html>

This was a fun and informative program! Thank you to Liz and Tim Dennison.

Karen Waltman, Secretary



Tim holds a Kestrel.



Great Horned Owl



## President's Message

If you think that this issue of *Wild News* looks a little "off," then you would be right. With editor Brigitte Hartke visiting grandchildren in the state of Washington, I offered to pull this issue together. I was editor a LONG time ago when we did not embed photos into the text—and I used WordPerfect.

We were fortunate to hold several botanical field trips this summer. Back on July 14, Janis Stone and Preserve Manager Joe Villari led a walk at Bull Run Mountain Natural Area Preserve. See the brief write-up and some photos on page six. And on August 25, we held our annual botanical walk at Deep Cut Meadow at Manassas National Battlefield Park. Marion Lobstein greeted the participants and distributed checklists, and Bert Harris of The Clifton Institute led the walk. Notes and photos from the walk can be found on pages 7-8.

For the second year in a row, we held a Summer Garden Tour, this time in the gardens of Cheryl Hancock in Manassas and Adrian Willing in Woodbridge on July 23. We thank both Cheryl and the entire Willing family for sharing their gardens with us. More than 50 people visited each garden on a perfect summer afternoon. Adrian, who owns Bee American, Plant Native LLC, distributed a free native plant to each visitor, and his wife Erica provided homemade refreshments. Thank you to our volunteer hosts: Beverly Houston, Janine Lawton, Val Neitzey, Carol Thompson, Claudia Thompson-Deahl, and Karen Waltman.



Above left: Adrian Willing shows off Shubby St. John's-wort in his garden.

Left: Cheryl Hancock, second from left, speaking with guests in her garden.



Above: Brigitte Hartke, left, with her two daughters and grandson Loki, pose with volunteer host Janine Lawton, right, at the Hancock Garden.



Above: VNPS Wildflower of the Year Hollow Joe-pye-weed blooms along the road at the Willing Garden. Below: L to R, Pat Thacker, Brigitte Hartke, John Saltiel, Kate Cohen, and summer intern at US Botanic Garden.

Only a few of us took advantage of the free VRE trains to ride to DC to visit the US Botanic Garden on the Mall August 4. We were treated to a tour of the outdoor southeastern native gardens by Plant Specialist John



Saltiel, who also showed us some rare plants growing inside the conservatory.

I look forward to seeing many of you at our chapter's annual meeting at Val Neitzey's garden on September 10. We had planned to have landscape designer John Magee discuss the garden as we toured it, but a serious illness in his family requires his travel abroad. We send our best wishes to his family.

~Nancy

## American Bluehearts Found in Manassas National Battlefield Park



Marion Lobstein  
PWS Botany Chair

In 1993, Nicky Staunton found blooming specimens of American Bluehearts (*Buchnera americana*) along the Manassas

National Battlefield Park's (MNBP) Unfinished Railroad trail off Featherbed Lane. Over the next years, Nicky, Elaine Haug, Charles Smith, Allen Belden, and others found stems along the Unfinished Railroad trail to Rt. 234. Later, Charles Smith discovered more Bluehearts fields at the end of paths from the Unfinished Railroad on Deep Cut's Featherbed Lane parking.

This summer, two MNBP interns, Clara Buchen and Virginia Belbeze, found 100s of stems in a number of meadows and old fields of the park. The keen observational skills of these young interns were important in finding these additional populations with locally abundant specimens and is an exciting find for this rare plant. I was delighted to meet both young women and had the opportunity to see some of these recently discovered populations of the rare plant. On August 18, Wayne Heideman, MNBP Biologist, took Sally Anderson and me, along with Clara and Virginia, to view some of these sites. While at one of the sites, we were delighted to see Nancy Vehrs and Janis Stone enjoying and photographing American Bluehearts.



Above: Marion Lobstein rolled up in a truck with park staff. Left to right: Sally Anderson, two park interns, Marion (still in truck), Park Biologist Wayne Heideman, and Janis Stone. Photo by Nancy Vehrs

Above right and next page: Photos of American Bluehearts by Janis Stone

## Native Plant Profile of American Bluehearts

American Bluehearts (*Buchnera americana*) is a showy native wildflower in the Orobanchaceae (Broomrape Family) [formerly in Scrophulariaceae (Snapdragon Family)]. In the past, the plant was documented in 24 US states but now is found in only 12 states in the eastern



half of the US and in a single Canadian province, Ontario. This species is considered rare in these states and Ontario. In Virginia it is listed on Natural Heritage's Rare Plant List and is considered S1-S2, which is highly imperiled to imperiled. In Virginia, this species has been documented in 15 counties throughout the state including 5 counties in the northern Virginia area.

John Clayton included this species in his *Flora Virginica* from the mid-1700s, and an image of his herbarium specimen of this plant can be seen online (see the link at the end of the article). Linnaeus assigned the binomial of *Buchnera americana*. *Buchnera* was named in honor of a German physician Andreas Elias Büchner with whom Linnaeus corresponded. The species name *americana* refers to where the plant was collected.

This species typically grows in old fields, meadows, and open wooded areas in Virginia. Plants bloom July-September and fruit set is August to October.

American Bluehearts is described as a perennial in the Flora of Virginia App but has been described as an annual or biennial in other sources. Plants are erect herbs that are 1-3 feet tall. They form rhizomes, horizontal underground stems, with roots that form haustoria or projections that penetrate the tissues of the host plant. It is a hemiparasite as a root parasite on various woody species as well as grasses such as little

bluestems. The aboveground stems are hairy with opposite basal and cauline or stem leaves. The leaves are usually lance-shaped, coarsely toothed, and scabrous or rough-surfaced. The leaves are sessile (no petiole), 3-veined, and the lower ones 2-4 inches long with the upper ones reduced in size.

Flowers are arranged in spikes that can be up to 8 inches tall at fruiting. The opposite flower buds are in the axils of the spike peduncle or flowering stem. At the base of each flower bud is a pair of leafy bracts as well as a pair of smaller bracts or bractioles. The calyx is hairy and is formed by 5 green sepals about ½ inch long and fused at their bases. The corolla is comprised of 5 petals fused at their bases to form a short tube with the limb of the petal bent outward at right angles. The shape of the corolla is bilateral or irregular with two upper and three lower petals displayed. The color varies from white to purple and has a diameter between ¾ to an inch. The inside of the corolla is hairy with nectar lines. The pollinators are thought to be butterflies. There are 4 stamens and a central pistil with a stout style. The oval black fruits that form are capsules 3/8 to ½ inch in length. These capsules split open releasing numerous small dark seeds.



Common Bluehearts is the host plant of the larval stage of the Common Buckeye butterfly. The seeds are eaten by some birds. There are no known human uses.

To learn more on the members of Orobanchaceae, see page 6, [https://vnps.org/princewilliamwildflowersociety/wp-content/uploads/sites/12/dlm\\_uploads/2020/10/Wild-News-November-December-2020.pdf](https://vnps.org/princewilliamwildflowersociety/wp-content/uploads/sites/12/dlm_uploads/2020/10/Wild-News-November-December-2020.pdf)

To learn more on breakup of Scrophulariaceae, see page 5, [https://vnps.org/princewilliamwildflowersociety/wp-content/uploads/sites/12/dlm\\_uploads/2021/06/Wild-News-July-August-2021.pdf](https://vnps.org/princewilliamwildflowersociety/wp-content/uploads/sites/12/dlm_uploads/2021/06/Wild-News-July-August-2021.pdf)

To view the John Clayton herbarium specimen of American Bluehearts, visit: <https://data.nhm.ac.uk/dataset/clayton-herbarium/resource/51e7a60c-cbda-4e88-8a68-ef93442643e6/record/1214>.

## Calendar of Events:

**Saturday, September 9**, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m., Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy Native Plant Sale, Morven Park, Leesburg. <https://loudounwildlife.org/>

**Sunday, September 10**, 3 p.m., PWWS Annual Meeting in the garden of Val Neitzey. (See details on page one.)

**Thursday, September 14**, 7:30-9 p.m., VNPS Potowmack Chapter program on Goldenrods presented by Rod Simmons on Zoom. Register at: [https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZYqf-mvpz8uEt3jP4U5fdKJNwOFgj74qA\\_d#/registration](https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZYqf-mvpz8uEt3jP4U5fdKJNwOFgj74qA_d#/registration)

**Saturday, September 16**, 10 a.m., Friends of Dyke Marsh Ecology Walk, Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve, George Washington Memorial Pkwy, Alexandria. Meet at the Haul Road trail entrance. Leader: naturalist and biologist Charles Smith. Limited to 20 participants. To register, email [info@fodm.org](mailto:info@fodm.org) and put “Ecology Walk” in the subject box.



**Saturday, September 23**, 11 a.m.-3 p.m., [Fall Festival at Leopold's Preserve](#), 16290 Thoroughfare Rd, Broad Run, presented in partnership with the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust. Fun for the whole family. PWWS will staff a table and host a children's activity. **We need volunteers**; email [nvehrs1@yahoo.com](mailto:nvehrs1@yahoo.com) if you can help.

Calendar of Events continued from page 5

**Saturday, September 23**, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m., Potowmack Chapter Fall Plant Sale at Green Spring Family Festival, Green Spring Gardens Park, Alexandria, VA

**Sundays, September 24 & October 29**, 8 a.m. Prince William Conservation Alliance Bird and Nature Walk at Merrimac Farm Wildlife Management Area, 15014 Deepwood Lane, Nokesville. Email [alliance@pwconserve.org](mailto:alliance@pwconserve.org) for more details.

**Saturday, September 30**, 9 a.m. – 2 p.m., Northern Alexandria Native Plant Sale, The Church of St. Clement, 1701 N. Quaker Lane. At least ten native plant vendors. <http://parkfairfaxnativeplantsale.org/>

**Saturday, September 30**, 6 – 8 p.m., Guided Sunset Paddle at Leesylvania State Park. Reservations required. Call the Visitor Center at 703-583-6904.

**Wednesday, October 4**, 10 a.m.-noon, Hike with a Naturalist at Leopold's Preserve, Thoroughfare Rd, Broad Run.

**Sunday, October 1**, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m., Earth Sangha's Fall Open House and Native Plant Sale, 6100 Cloud Drive, Springfield. <https://www.earthsangha.org/>

**Friday-Sunday, October 6-8**, VNPS Annual Meeting, Virginia Institute of Marine Science, Gloucester/Yorktown. See <https://vnps.org/events/2023-annual-meeting-and-program/>.

**Thursday, October 12**, 7:30-9 p.m., VNPS Potowmack Chapter program "Getting Started on iNaturalist" with Deborah Barber [via Zoom]. Register at <https://vnps.org/potowmack/events/getting-started-on-inaturalist-with-deborah-barber-via-zoom/>.

**Monday, October 23**, 1-3 p.m., Fall Colors Walk at Dyke Marsh led by Alan Ford and Margaret Chatham. To register, send an email with the subject line "Fall Colors Walk" to [info@fodm.org](mailto:info@fodm.org).

## Field Trip to Bull Run Mountains Natural Area Preserve July 16

(Ed. Note: Brigitte Hartke described this botanical walk in a Facebook post, and it has been edited for Wild News.)

Bull Run Mountain: rocky ridges, steep valleys, woodland, and many fern species. A naturalist-led walk was promised at Bull Run Mountain's Fern Hollow in the July-August issue of *Wild News*, and a group of us turned out on Friday morning to see what we might find. Janis Stone and Joe Villari lead our group, and as we slowly meandered along the trail, eyes intently searching right and left, we discovered the botanical treasures of a mid-summer walk through this relatively cool, fern-filled forest just west of Haymarket; its 800 acres and six miles of trails are open to the public on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays. The Preserve itself is 2486 acres in Fauquier and Prince William Counties.

Seeing Wild Yam (*Discoreosa*), Wild Indian Cucumber (*Medeola*), and Hog Peanut (*Amphicarpaea*) — almost makes you hungry. We were delighted to encounter four Woodland Box Turtles along our way.



Left: Wild Indian Cucumber (right) is getting ready to go dormant when it turns this dark color. Photo by Brigitte Hartke

Right: Wild Yam, Photo by Brigitte Hartke





Janis Stone, right, addresses the group. Photo by Brigitte Harke

Right: Co-leader Joe Villari photographs the photographer, Brigitte Hartke. Joe is preserve steward and works for the Virginia Outdoors Foundation, owner of the land. He is an at-large director on the VNPS board.



## Deep Cut Botanical Walk Always Popular

Participants from the Piedmont and Potowmack Chapters of the VNPS joined members of PWWS and leader Bert Harris of the Clifton Institute on August 25 for the annual foray to Deep Cut Meadow in Manassas National Battlefield Park. Despite dry conditions, many diverse wildflowers and grasses were in bloom. Some participants added species to Marion Lobstein's extensive checklist that can be found here:

[https://vnps.org/wp-content/uploads/dlm\\_uploads/2023/07/Deep-Cut-Checklist-Manassas-National-Battlefield.pdf](https://vnps.org/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/2023/07/Deep-Cut-Checklist-Manassas-National-Battlefield.pdf)



Above: Slender Bush Clover (*Lespedeza virginica*) by Janis Stone

Below: Pink Wild Bean with beans! (*Strophostyles umbellata*)



Quite a few Naked-flowered Tick-trefoil (*Hylodesmum nudiflorum*) were sighted. They get their name because the flower stem is "naked" of leaves. Photo by Janis Stone.



More photos continued on page 8

More photos from Deep Cut:



*Left: Wild Potato (Ipomoea pandurata)*

*Right: Swamp Milkweed, Asclepias incarnata*

*Below: Gaura (Oenothera gaura)*

*Photos by Janis Stone*



### Welcome New Members

- July: Melissa Korzuch – Woodbridge  
 Marie Pinto – Bristow
- May: Charla Cowley - Manassas  
 Melissa Cox - Woodbridge  
 Susan Crowther – Haymarket  
 Dina Elani – Manassas  
 Mark Goldman – Manassas  
 Dana Lowry – Bristow  
 Holly Payne – Centreville  
 Nora Storr - Manassas



Prince William Wildflower Society  
 PO Box 83  
 Manassas, VA 20108-0083

**Annual Meeting: Sunday, September 10**