



Wild News

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

Number 2024-03

May-June 2024

May 20 Meeting:
Light Pollution & Responsible Outdoor
Light at Night:
Protecting the Night and Talking with
Neighbors

7:30 p.m., Bethel Lutheran Church
8712 Plantation Lane, Manassas

With the recent visibility of the *Aurora borealis* dipping into the southern US (but not into our cloud-covered area), interest in the night sky has skyrocketed. **Eileen Kragie**, Founder of Dark Sky Friends, and **Tom Reinert**, President of DarkSky International, are our speakers this month. In their presentations, they will cover the impact of disrupted circadian rhythms on plants along with the impact on insects and the nocturnal pollinators among other impacts. DarkSky has been spreading the word about light pollution since 1988.



Tom Reinert is a retired Washington, D.C., lawyer who spent most of his career representing airlines and railroads in labor and employment matters, including extensive experience translating scientific experts for lay decision-makers. He is a graduate of [Harvard College](#) and the [Harvard Law School](#). His environmental activism included a decade fighting water pollution with local riverkeeper organizations on the Chesapeake Bay in Maryland. In 2013, seeing the [Andromeda Galaxy](#) for the first time with his naked eyes from atop [Kitt Peak](#) rekindled an interest in astronomy and a desire to eliminate light pollution.

Currently residing in Northern Virginia, he and his wife Chris travel extensively in the Western United States seeking dark sky locations. For several years he has assisted DarkSky as a volunteer on legal and public policy issues at the national level.



As founder of Dark Sky Friends, a new non-profit, and a DarkSky International advocate, **Eileen Kragie** is committed to educating people about responsible outdoor light at night. Eileen has been aware of light trespass for decades. The summer before Eileen moved back to Northern Virginia, the Comet Hale-Bopp was passing through. Eileen spent the summer sleeping on the deck of her home watching the comet cross the night sky along with the billions of stars rotating above her.

Moving back to Vienna, VA in 1998, Eileen read that you could still see the Milky Way from Turner Farm Park. That is no longer possible with the current light pollution. The growth of light trespass and the blinding glare from lights brought Eileen to the dark skies movement, nocturnal conservation. She joined DarkSky International, became an advocate, and founded Dark Sky Friends to focus on legislation to protect health and the night environment.

Eileen's work includes securing proclamations recognizing the problem of light pollution from state and local jurisdictions, exhibiting, hosting events for light pollution education, and working with local government to enact, improve, and enforce lighting ordinances. Eileen has worked in both private industry and government. She holds a BS from George Mason University and an MS from the State University of New York at Stony Brook, in Policy Analysis and Public Mgt.

Prince William Wildflower Society Membership Meeting Minutes March 7, 2024, at Bethel Lutheran Church

President Nancy Vehrs called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. and welcomed everyone to the first indoor meeting in a year.

Nancy took the opportunity to recognize Karen Waltman for her long service as PWWS secretary. She finished her term last October and has now taken the role of volunteer coordinator. Nancy presented her with a card as well as gifts of a set of VNPS native plant lapel pins and a Panera Bread gift card.

Nancy made the following event announcements as noted in the current issue of *Wild News*:

- Annual Bluebell Festival hosted by the Prince William Conservation Alliance on Sunday, April 7
- Spring Wildflower Garden Tour, Sunday afternoon, April 28. The gardens of Diane Liga and Lois Montgomery will be on tour and a third garden is still being sought.
- Plant Sale, Saturday, May 11 from 10 a.m. – Noon on the grounds of the church.

Field Trips:

- Conway Robinson State Forest: March 27 with Nancy Vehrs
- Manassas Battlefield Stone Bridge: April 3 led by Marion Lobstein.

Nancy raised the issue of a permanent meeting night for PWWS meetings. The church secretary recommended changing it to a Monday night. PWWS met on the third Monday of “odd” months for many years. By unanimous consent, the group agreed to change the meeting night to **third Mondays**.

Valerie Neitzey announced that she had native seeds that she had collected and was willing to distribute to members.

Nancy introduced speaker Valerie Kenyon Gaffney, president of the Virginia Bluebird Society (VBS) and PWWS treasurer, who presented “Eastern Bluebirds: Getting them started, helping them stay.” She explained how bluebird populations declined from loss of habitat and competition from nonnative species such as House Sparrows and European Starlings. She described the origins of the North American Bluebird Society and VBS.

Wooden nestboxes were developed for bluebirds and other native



cavity nesters such as Carolina Chickadees and Tree Swallows and include a metal pole, a metal predator guard on the pole, and a wire mesh “Noel” guard around the opening. Valerie shared a compelling video of the lifecycle of a clutch of Eastern Bluebirds from nest building to chick fledging. It was prepared from snippets of videos from a camera in her home nestbox. Eastern Bluebirds feed insects to their young, and those insects are dependent upon native plants.

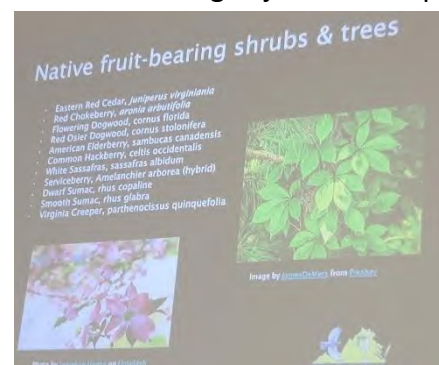
For more information on bluebirds, visit the VBS website at <https://www.virginiabluebirds.org/>.

Following the program, VKG and Nancy randomly selected door prize recipients for one of four native plant lapel pins, a VNPS trivet, and a Plant NOVA Natives guide as follows: Natalie Green, Patti Slaughter, John Spencer, Janis Stone, Karen Waltman, and Janet Wheatcraft.

Members and guests in attendance: Valerie Kenyon Gaffney, Karen Waltman, Ann Cain, Brigitte Hartke, Janis Stone, Natalie Green, Beverly Houston, Patti Slaughter, Jeanne Endrikat, Rick Stafford, Gary Myers, Janet Wheatcraft, Theresa Heartney, Valerie Neitzey, Judy Gallagher, Greg and Gina Clivak (sp?), Lois Montgomery, Kate Cohen, John Spencer, Carol Thompson, Wendy Pierce, Janice Beaverson, Terri Anderson, Elena Ortiz, Harry Glasgow, and Nancy Vehrs.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:45 p.m.

Submitted by
Nancy Vehrs





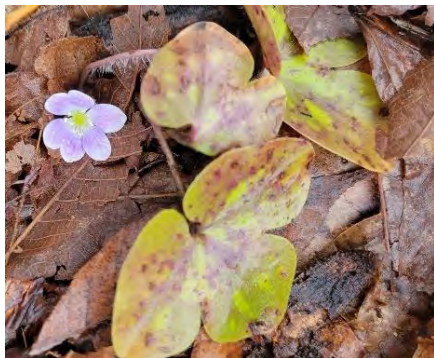
President's Message

Spring is always a busy time for our organization, and this year was no exception. We held a few botanical walks, learned about

Bluebirds at our March meeting, participated in the annual Bluebell Festival at Merrimac Farm, hosted our 34th Spring Wildflower Garden Tour, and held our annual native plant sale. It has been an especially busy time for our regular newsletter editor Brigitte Bégue Hartke, who moved locally last month. I volunteered to produce this month's edition of *Wild News*, but I have decided to print only an electronic edition because of time constraints and to show off color photos.



Light rain fell on March 27, but it did not deter an intrepid group of seven who participated in our early spring walk at Conway Robinson State Forest in Gainesville. This year Rue Anemones were the most prolific flowers. Spring Beauties, Yellow Trout Lilies, and



Round-lobed Hepatica closed up for the rain, but we did capture one Hepatica in bloom.

We walked all the way down to Little Bull Run and were richly rewarded with carpets of Virginia

Bluebells on both sides of the creek.

The Bluebell Festival at Merrimac Farm was another grand success, so much so that parking was an issue! Both Claudia Thompson-Deahl and I led tours to the Bluebells; my walk had more than 40 participants. We take the long route to the Bluebells, allowing us to

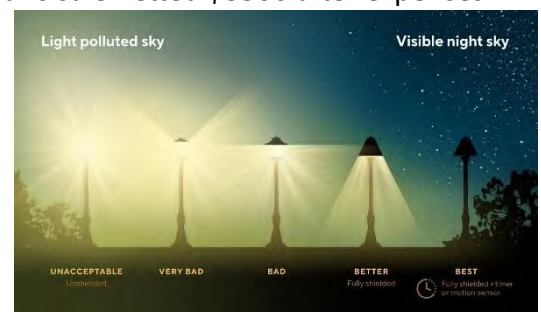
point out specific plants or elements of interest. Once the group reaches the Bluebells, they are enchanted by the flowers and lose focus on the leader. We were very fortunate to have both good weather and peak Bluebell blooms. Many thanks to our volunteers who staffed our display table and sold the 34 Bluebells dug from my garden: Joyce Andrew, Harry Glasgow, Janine Lawton, Diane Liga, Marion Lobstein, Val Neitzey, Tim Rook, and Karen Waltman. Prince William Conservation Alliance Executive Director Ashley Studholme did an excellent job organizing this big event.

On April 28 we held our annual Spring Wildflower Garden Tour where we featured two new gardens and one previously on tour. Unlike many other April weekend days, we enjoyed favorable weather. We thank our members who welcomed the public to their gardens: Diane and Steve Liga, Ellen Miles, and Lois Montgomery. The gardens attracted approximately 60 visitors each and provided inspiring landscape solutions.

Our plant sale on Saturday, May 11, attracted the usual crowd for the "opening countdown" to race to their favorite plants. With numerous new signs and instructions to our patrons, lines were reduced and sales proceeded seamlessly. So many members volunteered their time and donated plants. Thank you, all! However, some of our past contributors have moved into senior living residences, and new donors are needed to keep up our plant supply for future years. This year's sale netted \$3500 after expenses.

Our May meeting features a program on light pollution and its effects on

flora and fauna. No longer can most of us see the Milky Way from our back yards. It's hard to find a local area to view comets, Northern Lights, or constellations. Let's learn how we can take steps to reduce light pollution and bring back the dark.



~ Nancy

Highlights of the Spring Wildflower Walk at Stone Bridge on April 10



Marion Lobstein
PWWS Botany Chair
Clouds of Virginia Bluebells and other spring wildflowers along the Bull Run Trail delighted Marion Lobstein and her enthusiastic participants on the April 10 walk.

This walk was originally scheduled for April 3 but was rescheduled due to inclement weather. The participants met Marion Lobstein, PWWS Botany Chair, at the Stone Bridge parking lot and explored the beautiful flowers and colors of spring.

Once again, the group of participants were enthusiastic, asked questions, added additional observations and information, and interacted with Marion and with the other participants. PWWS members Janis Stone, Claudia Thompson-Deahl Brigitte Hartke, Tom Attanaro, and Harriet Carter as well as Kathy Bilton took pictures and shared them with Marion to share with the group.

As the group followed the trail to the Stone Bridge, the nonnative species dominated with countless Dandelions, patches of Purple Dead-nettle, Ivy-leaved Speedwells, and Yellow-rocket Mustard. A patch of a nonnative not spotted on previous walk, was Knawel (*Scleranthus annuus*), a member of the chickweed family. German moss is another name for this plant, and it does resemble a moss at first glance. On the edges of the sides of Stone Bridge were a number of nonnative European Corn Salad plants in bloom.

Once the group crossed the Stone Bridge and started down the path paralleling Bull Run, native spring wildflower species dominated. The Virginia Bluebells were the most prolific species on both sides of the path. These were just at or slightly past their peak. Spring Beauty, the Common Blue Violets, and Golden Ragwort or Groundsel were in abundance. Yellow Trout Lilies, Dutchman's Breeches, and Cutleaf Toothwort were also found in various stages of blooming or fruiting. Other natives observed were the Smooth Yellow Violet, the Cream Violet, Wild Stonecrop, the Sessile-leaved Bellwort, and the Kidney-leaved Buttercup.

Marion also talked about the ephemeral nature of these plants that will soon die back after their burst of blooming,

attracting pollinators, setting fruit, and having their seeds disperse. The seeds of many of these species are dispersed by ants. The underground storage structures such as rhizomes, corms, and bulbs were also highlighted. Insect pollinators were also discussed and some, such as the Spring Beauty bee, were seen by some of the participants. The checklist of spring-blooming species is now posted in the Botanizing with Marion menu choice under the Checklists category. In the checklist you will have the scientific names and plant family information for these species listed in this article. Also, links to her articles in past *Wild News* issues on additional information on spring wildflower life cycle information are in the Botanizing with Marion site [Botanizing with Marion - Virginia Native Plant Society \(vnps.org\)](https://vnps.org/Botanizing-with-Marion-Virginia-Native-Plant-Society).

Plant checklist for Stone Bridge at Manassas National Battlefield Park: [Plant-Checklist-Stone-Bridge-Manassas-Battlefield-National-Park-Marion-Lobstein-Updated-2023.pdf \(vnps.org\)](https://vnps.org/Plant-Checklist-Stone-Bridge-Manassas-Battlefield-National-Park-Marion-Lobstein-Updated-2023.pdf)

Spring Wildflower Life Cycle Information-Ecological Factors: see page 6 [2018 Jan-Feb PWWS Wild News Newsletter.pages \(vnps.org\)](https://vnps.org/2018-Jan-Feb-PWWS-Wild-News-Newsletter.pages)

[Spring Wildflowers - Underground Storage Structures, Pollination, Myrmecochory-Seed Dispersal by Ants](https://vnps.org/Spring-Wildflowers-Underground-Storage-Structures-Pollination-Myrmecochory-Seed-Dispersal-by-Ants): see pages 4-6 [2018-05-06 WILD NEWS Newsletter PWWS.pages \(vnps.org\)](https://vnps.org/2018-05-06-WILD-NEWS-Newsletter-PWWS.pages)

Native Violet species: [Native-Plant-Profile-Violets-Marion-Lobstein-5-8-2023-with-large-photos.pdf \(vnps.org\)](https://vnps.org/Native-Plant-Profile-Violets-Marion-Lobstein-5-8-2023-with-large-photos.pdf)

Virginia Bluebells, *Mertensia virginica*: see pages 5-7 [2020 MA-in-the-pRCH-APRIL Wild News for website.pages \(vnps.org\)](https://vnps.org/2020-MA-in-the-pRCH-APRIL-Wild-News-for-website.pages)

Spring Beauty, *Claytonia virginica*: see page 8 [WILD-NEWS-March-April-2013.pdf \(vnps.org\)](https://vnps.org/WILD-NEWS-March-April-2013.pdf)

Dutchman's Breeches, *Dicentra cucullata*: see pages 6-8 [Wild-News-1986-March-April-Squirrel-Corn-Dutchman's-Breeches-Bleeding-Hearts-ML-and-NA-Marion-Lobstein.pdf \(vnps.org\)](https://vnps.org/Wild-News-1986-March-April-Squirrel-Corn-Dutchman-s-Breeches-Bleeding-Hearts-ML-and-NA-Marion-Lobstein.pdf)



Left, Yellow Trout Lily; Right, Dutchman's Breeches



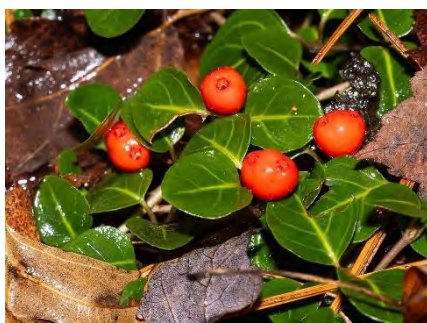
Photos from the Stone Bridge Walk



Photo credits: Janis Stone, Claudia Thompson-Deahl, Harriet Carter, and Tom Attanaro.

Photos from the Conway Robinson State Forest Hike

Photos by Janis Stone



Clockwise from top left: Rue Anemone, Underside of Ebony Spleenwort showing fertile spore-bearing parts, Pennywort, Yellow Trout Lily, Spicebush flower caught in a raindrop, Partridge-berry, Mayapple umbrellas, and Bloodroot

Calendar of Events:

Watch your emails or follow the PWWS Facebook page for notice of additional walks or activities.

Saturday, May 18, 9 a.m. – 12 noon, Volunteer Garden Workday at the Wildlife Garden at the Merrimac Farm Stone House. 15020 Deepwood Lane, Nokesville.
Email alliance@pwconserve.org.

Saturday, May 18, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m., Spring Garden Day, Green Spring Gardens Park, 4603 Green Spring Road, Alexandria. Several native plant nurseries as well as the Potowmack Chapter will be among the wide variety of vendors selling countless varieties of plants. Info: <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/green-spring/garden-day-plant-sale/051824>

Sunday, May 26, 8 a.m., Last Sunday of the Month Bird and Nature Walk sponsored by the Prince William Conservation Alliance. Meet at the Stone House, 15020 Deepwood Lane, Nokesville. nvehrs1@yahoo.com.

Wednesday, June 5, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m., VNPS Potowmack Chapter Plant Sale, Green Spring Gardens Park, 4603 Green Spring Road, Alexandria.

Wednesday, June 5, 10 a.m. – 12 Noon, “Hike with a Naturalist,” Leopold’s Preserve, 16290 Thoroughfare Road, Broad Run. Register [here](#).

Saturday, June 22, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m., 4th Annual Manassas Bee Festival, Liberia House & Grounds, 8601 Portner Avenue. PWWS will have a table exhibit and activity. Volunteers needed, contact Karen Waltman at waltman5313@gmail.com.

Sunday, June 30, 8 a.m., Last Sunday of the Month Bird and Nature Walk sponsored by the Prince William Conservation Alliance. Meet at the Stone House, 15020 Deepwood Lane, Nokesville. nvehrs1@yahoo.com.

Wednesday, July 3, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m., VNPS Potowmack Chapter Plant Sale, Green Spring Gardens Park, 4603 Green Spring Road, Alexandria.

Monday, July 15, 7:30 p.m. PWWS Meeting TBA.

Friday, September 20-22, VNPS Annual Meeting, Massanetta Springs, Harrisonburg, Details TBA.

Welcome New Members for 2024

(Through May 9)

January:	Tracy & Tommy Chittenden, Manassas Wendy Pierce, Gainesville
February:	Nicole Berg, Woodbridge James Dabin, Woodbridge Susana Struve, Middleburg Thomas Stevenson, Gainesville
March:	Amber Miller, Haymarket Joyce Skoglund, Fairfax
April:	Wendy Taylor & Andre Looney, Triangle Brianna Swartwout, Triangle Judith Rojas, Woodbridge Juan Gonzalez, Gainesville Al Alborn, Manassas Christine Chan, Woodbridge
May:	Grant West, Woodbridge David Mathers, Manassas Sonja Anderson, Woodbridge

We hope to see many of you at our next meeting.



Manage your VNPS/PWWS Membership Online

Need to update your address or telephone number or renew your membership? It's easy to do it online!

1. Go to <https://vnps.z2systems.com/>
2. Enter your VNPS member username. This is usually your email address.
3. If you don't know or have forgotten your password, click on "Forgot Password?"
4. Once logged in, you can manage your account and preferences by clicking on "What would you like to do?" in the upper right-hand corner.
5. Select "Update My Profile Information."
6. To request a paper newsletter, at the bottom of your Profile Information, set "Electronic Distribution" to "No." 7. Update any other profile information, then click "Submit."



Tom Attanaro, center, visits the garden of Diane Liga, right.



Lois Montgomery in her Lake Jackson garden

Spring Wildflower Garden Tour



Marion Lobstein, Steve Liga, Kathy Dawson, Nancy Arrington, and Shirley Attanaro at the Liga Garden.

We thank our gardeners as well as our volunteer greeters: Nancy Arrington, Marion Lobstein, Jeanne Endrikat, Janine Lawton, Valerie Neitzey, Carol Thompson, and Nancy Vehrs.



Ellen Miles in her garden

Thank You, Plant Sale Volunteers!

It takes a village to produce a successful plant sale. We thank all of our volunteers (and apologize if we missed any of you):

Nancy Arrington, Chair
Joyce Andrew
Tom Attanaro
Janice Beaverson
Marie Davis & daughter Julie
Kathy Dawson
Jeanne Endrikat
Valerie Kenyon Gaffney
Linda & Mike George
Deanna High
Bill Holbrook
Sandy Jeter
Janine Lawton
Diane Liga
Val Neitzey
Janet Martinet
Lois Montgomery
Ellen Miles
David Saar
John Sunda & Baldur
Carol Thompson
Nancy Vehrs
Karen Waltman
Janet Wheatcraft

And thank you to Steve Bodolay for bringing chocolate for the volunteers!

A few snapshots by Nancy Vehrs:



So much work goes into the sale before the event with all the digging and potting of plants. Sale day brings a frenzy of activity to transport and set up the plants, tents, and supplies. Plants must be labeled and priced. Thank you, volunteers, and loyal customers!