



Wild News

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

Number 2024-6

November - December 2024

**Prince William Wildflower Society
Membership Meeting, November 18, 7:30 pm
Bethel Evangelical Lutheran Church, Manassas**

**“Conservation Begins with Knowledge:
The Essential Role of Grassland Plant
Identification”**

**Presenter: Natalie Izlar, Botany Technician
with Smithsonian’s Virginia Working
Landscapes**

Let’s get together for an evening with Natalie Izlar, Virginia Working Landscapes’ Botany Technician. Natalie supports the program’s annual grassland biodiversity surveys, which are primarily conducted on private working lands in the Northern Piedmont and Shenandoah Valley regions of Virginia. Natalie oversees grassland vegetation surveys, trains and recruits new program volunteers, and promotes native plant conservation through various outreach events and plant consultations. She supports plant community data analysis and interpretation, helping to inform best land management strategies and engage the local community in grassland conservation efforts.

Natalie received her Bachelors of Science in Environmental Studies-Ecology from the University of North Carolina at Asheville. She has experience working in Midwestern Prairie plant communities and the mountains of Southern Appalachia.



VWL’s Mission: Virginia Working Landscapes is a program of the Smithsonian’s National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute that promotes the conservation of native biodiversity and sustainable land management through research, education, and community engagement.

President's Column



What a fall we've been having: warm days with virtually no rain for the whole month of October into early November. Much as I enjoy these pleasant days, they take a toll on our native plants that need moisture for their roots as they prepare for what used to be a long winter nap. I lost a nearly 30-year-old Serviceberry this year as the brutal summer heat and

drought took its toll. Beyond new plantings, I like my established natives to fend for themselves as they do in nature. Sadly, these uneven rainfall patterns are here for the foreseeable future and will adversely affect our natural areas in addition to our gardens.

In happier news, we've been spreading the native plant message as PWWS participates in more tabling opportunities at community events. In mid-September I staffed a table exhibit at the Montclair Library's Art in the Garden event. Senior librarian Lena Gonzalez Berrios secured a grant that paid for a case of Plant NOVA Natives guides, and I was pleased to be asked to distribute them to happy library patrons. I thank Lois Montgomery, Valerie Neitzey, and Tim Rook for representing us at the Fall Festival at Leopold's Preserve when I was down at the VNPS annual meeting in Harrisonburg. Brigitte Hartke and I tabled at Prince William Water's Trick or Treatment event at the end of October where costumed children and their parents visited exhibits and were rewarded with candy. I don't know how much of our message was received, but the kids sure enjoyed the candy. If only there were a candy connection with Virginia's native plants.

On the evening of November 22, I'll take our display and some activities to Science Night at Saunders Middle School. Science teacher Cathy McAuley de Rodriguez said, "The plan is to set up different activities and information stations for the students (and their families) to move around the school to see what we do at Saunders and what our community has to offer to support and grow excitement for science." The school has a Manassas address but is located on Spriggs Road. I would welcome a volunteer to participate with me in engaging students in native plants. Earlier that same day, naturalist and PWWS conservation chair Claudia Thompson-Deahl will lead a walk at Leopold's Preserve in Broad Run. I plan to participate in that as well.

Our meeting on Monday, November 18, features Natalie Izlar of the Smithsonian's Virginia Working Landscapes program. I had the pleasure of attending an informative presentation by VWL Program Director Dr. Amy Johnson at the recent conference of the Virginia Bluebird Society. She showed how much grassland bird species have declined and efforts that VWL is taking to stem that decline. Natalie's program will concentrate on the grasses themselves. See you there!

~ Nancy



Look who we bumped into at the Prince William Water's Trick or Treatment event — Charlie Grymes catches up on the latest PWWS news with Nancy.



Our own PWWS Treasurer, Valerie Kenyon Gaffney, who has for a number of years served as president of the Va. Bluebird Society, was given a warm sendoff recently at the Society's Biennial Conference Meeting in Glen Allen, Va. after stepping down from the position. Here she is pictured with a presenter, Alonso Abugattas at the Conference.



VWL Program Director Dr. Amy Johnson spoke at the recent Virginia Bluebird Society's Biennial Conference. Her talk was "Bring Back the Birds"

Prince William Wildflower Society

Membership Meeting Minutes
September 16, 2024 at Bethel Church

The evening's speaker was our own Tom Attanaro, with the subject of "The Wildlife Benefits of a Naturally Untidy Winter Garden".

PWWS President Nancy Vehrs called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm. This meeting tonight is considered our Annual Meeting, but we do not have an election of officers this time, because we have two-year terms. We do need to adopt our Budget. The Treasurer, Valerie Gaffney drafted the budget and the BOD approved it. The proposed budget for 2025 is \$9,800. This year's budget is \$10,300; it's been decreased a little bit. Is there a motion to adopt the budget? Judy Gallager is moving, and Marion Lobstein is seconding. Unanimous Yays, motion passed.

A few announcements. Diane Liga left some free Butterfly Weed seeds on the table in the hallway for anyone who is interested. The Annual Statewide Meeting is this coming weekend. Leopold's Preserve is having their Fall Festival, also this weekend. Lois Montgomery offered to table it but will need volunteer help. Nancy welcomed some new faces, Ellen, Clairra, Wendy, Julian, Malinda and Al and Mika, all welcome back!

Introducing our own Tom Attanaro, Tom is a Master Naturalist and does the garden certifications for Wildlife Sanctuary Program (previously called Audubon at Home). Starting with the metaphor of a female grizzly bear going into hibernation, without any needs, and she comes out in the spring with some cubs. Like the bear, the native habitat garden doesn't need a lot of attention. It similarly goes into hibernation until spring. To have a good habitat garden is to have layers. A food soil web, from bacteria, protozoa, to insects, small mammals to larger. The layers create healthy soil, and most importantly, leave the leaves where they have fallen. Leaves are home to caterpillars, moths, butterflies, and other insects that break down the leaves, stems, logs and other dead organisms into a rich soil. Above ground, leave the flowers' seed heads, grass stems, and seeds. Some native bees and other insects nest, lay eggs, and overwinter in the stems. Many bees have a multi-year cycle, it's suggested to leave the stems for two years, because of the insects' life cycles. Birds and other small creatures feast on the seeds. Leaves left

on the ground don't affect the emergence of plants. Plants covered by leaves survive sub-freezing temperatures, the layer of leaves raises the ground temperature.

Plant a variety of shrubs and wildflowers so bugs (& bees) don't have to travel too far for food. Another layer could be wood. Leaving some logs and small branches, and some portions of fallen trees in your gardens, they will help recycle nutrients back into the ground. Fungi loves decomposing wood. Fungi create extensive mycelium networks below the ground, which improve the access to nutrients and water for the plants, also mycelium have both chemical and physical interactions with all sorts of organisms, protozoa, microbes, etc. Rocks are a great habitat for plants and for creatures to hide and hunt. Any of these natural items can be artfully placed in an eye pleasing way to make your native garden look tidy and beautiful. Thank you Tom, a wonderful talk!



Our chapter meeting ended with the giving out of door prizes!

~ Janine Lawton, Secretary

Prince William Wildflower Society

Wild News is the bi-monthly newsletter of the Prince William Wildflower Society, P.O. Box 83, Manassas, Virginia 20108, vnps.org/princewilliamwildflowersociety

Nancy Vehrs, President; Brigitte Hartke, Editor. Original Material in Wild News may be reprinted if credit is given to PWWS, to Wild News and to the author of the material, if named. Submissions of events and other information of interest to our chapter are welcome. Feel free to submit them to: brigittehartke@gmail.com with "Newsletter Editor" in the subject line.

Next submission deadline: January 1, 2025

Partridgeberry, *Mitchella repens*

Marion Lobstein, Botany Chair

Updated from Marion's article in the 1992 January-February *Wild News*



Mitchella repens, commonly called Partridgeberry, is a perennial member of the Rubiaceae or Madder Family. This showy plant with evergreen leaves and bright red berries that may remain through the winter adds color to a winter walk. It is found in virtually every county in Virginia in dry to

moist woods where it may become a groundcover. Its natural range is from eastern Canada south into Florida and Texas and into Central America and as far west as Minnesota. *Mitchella undulata*, the only other species of this genus is found in Eastern Asia.

The genus name *Mitchella* was assigned by Linnaeus to honor John Mitchell, an early Virginia botanist as well as a doctor and cartographer, who developed a treatment for yellow fever victims. The species name *repens* refers to the creeping nature of the growth form. Other common names include Twinberry, Two-eyed Berry, Checker Berry, and Tea Berry, which refer either to the appearance or uses of this species of the berry.

Partridgeberry is a creeping or trailing evergreen plant with vine-like stems rising only several inches off the ground. The opposite oval dark-green leaves are shiny and smooth with a width of up to three-quarters of an inch. The shallow fibrous root system that forms at nodes on the stem enables the plant to spread asexually. An individual plant may be up to a foot or more long.

The attractive, creamy white to delicate pink flowers of Partridgeberry are a half-inch in length. The flowers are borne in pairs and bloom from May into early July. They have a four-parted calyx, a four-parted funnel-shaped corolla, four stamens, and a pistil with an inferior ovary and a four-parted stigma. The corolla has four flaring edges and is densely

hairy inside. There are two types of flowers—in one form the stamens are longer than the stigma and in the other, the stamens are shorter. These differences ensure cross-pollination. The flowers have a sweet lilac-like fragrance and are pollinated by larger bees with long tongues and by butterflies. The ovaries of each pair of flowers are fused. A single oval-shaped fruit that develops from the fertilized ovaries of each pair of flowers is a bright red berry about one-third inch long and containing eight small seeds. The remains of the two pistils on the upper surface of the berry resemble two small eyes. The fruit is eaten by quails, partridges, other birds and mammals and the seeds are then dispersed in their scats.

The berries can be eaten by humans but are rather tasteless and a bit seedy; more likely they will be eaten by wildlife. Medicinal uses by American Indians are numerous. Tea made from the leaves and stems or extracts of the berries were used to treat female disorders, to ease the end of pregnancy and birth, to treat dysentery, to reduce fevers, to deal with insomnia, to treat hives and to treat disorders of the urinary, nervous and digestive systems including hemorrhoids and diarrhea.



Photo by Janis Stone

Extracts purportedly have diuretic, astringent, uterine relaxing, and other general tonic properties. A paste of the berries was used by Indian women to ease sore nipples during nursing. The fruits and various parts of the plant and fruits are still used in herbal medicine. In the past, this lovely plant with its evergreen leaves and bright red berries was collected as Christmas decorations. As with collecting clubmoss species for Christmas decoration, this practice should be discontinued.

When you are enjoying winter walks in the woods, look for the cheerful red berries of this handsome plant. In late spring and summer come back to see the delicate flower pairs that will form a single berry. Partridgeberry is indeed a plant to enjoy in all seasons.

Note: Partridgeberry was the 2012 VNPS Wildflower of the Year. To review this brochure on this species, visit https://vnps.org/wp-content/uploads/filebase/vnps/vnps_brochures/WOY-2012-brochure.pdf.



2012 VNPS Wildflower of the Year - Partridgeberry
<http://vnps.org/2012-partridge-berry-mitchella-repens/>

PWWS
Chapter Board of Directors

President: Nancy Vehrs
nvehrs1@yahoo.com

Vice-President/Programs:
Valerie Neitzey
invaluable2@gmail.com

Secretary: Janine Lawton
lawton.janine@gmail.com

Treasurer: Valerie Kenyon Gaffney
gaffnevk@verizon.net

Botany: Marion Lobstein
mblobstein@earthlink.net

Conservation:
Claudia Thompson-Deahl
cjtnature@yahoo.com

Education: Lois Montgomery
lomonty@yahoo.com

Membership: Diane Liga
dianeliga@gmail.com

Newsletter Editor: Brigitte Hartke
brigittehartke@gmail.com

Plant Sale: Nancy Arrington
narrington1@verizon.net

Refreshments/Hospitality:
Beverly Houston
bhouston40@yahoo.com
Carol Thompson carol8809@icloud.com

Volunteer Coordinator: Karen Waltman
waltman5313@gmail.com

Advisor: Nicky Staunton
nstaunton@earthlink.net

At-Large: Deanna High
deannahigh@gmail.com

Publicity, Registry & Webmaster: Vacant

A Special Thank-you to Mark Murphy, retired VNPS Technology Chair



Photo, Mark and Donna Murphy, by Brigitte Hartke

Since 2018 Mark Murphy has used his skills and experience from his extensive professional background in the technology field for VNPS. This involved posting information at the Society level as well as for individual chapters including expanding the VNPS website as well as VNPS Facebook and other digital media information sources. He is stepping back from the VNPS technology position as of November 1, 2024. David Gorsine will assume many of Mark's VNPS technology activities.

As PWWS Botany Chair and former Chair of the Education Committee of the Flora of Virginia Project, I would like to thank Mark Murphy for his service to VNPS, PWWS, and the Flora of Virginia Project in the Technology arena.

In 2022, issues of the PWWS newsletter *Wild News* from 2010 through current issues were available on the PWWS chapter website of VNPS. Nancy Arrington, the cofounder of PWWS and first editor of *Wild News*, had kept copies of the newsletters dating back to 1982 through 2009. In late 2022, I scanned over eighty-five copies of the *Wild News* 1982-2009 issues. Mark worked with me to post the scanned newsletters to provide a complete record of all of PWWS newsletters from the first issue in July 1982. These posted newsletter issues make available the native plant articles I had written, the native plant gardening

articles from Nancy Arrington, and Nicky Staunton's botanical illustrations, as well as chapter history. All issues of *Wild News* can be accessed at: <https://vnps.org/princewilliamwildflowersociety/wildnews/>. An index of the native plant and gardening articles in the 1982-2008 issues can be viewed at: [Index of Wild News Native Plant Profile and Gardening Articles 1982-2009](https://vnps.org/princewilliamwildflowersociety/wildnews/1982-2009)

In 2022, Mark worked with me to reactivate a VNPS website feature "Botanizing with Marion in 2022" (<https://vnps.org/botanizing-with-marion/>). This feature was made available in 2023 with assistance from Linda Wilcox and Donna Murphy. Botanizing with Marion is now a feature on the PWWS as well as the VNPS websites.

In addition, Mark also worked with the Education Committee of the Flora of Virginia Project in recording, editing, and posting seven modules relating to the history and use of the *Flora of Virginia* Manual and App. We could not have accomplished the goal of making these modules available to the public without Mark's help. This work began in 2020 and was completed in 2021. To view these modules, visit <https://vnps.org/my-journey-with-the-flora-of-virginia/>.

~ Marion Lobstein, PWWS Botany Chair and Former Chair of Flora of Virginia Project Education Committee

New Wild News Editor Sought

Prince William Wildflower Society is looking for a newsletter editor with layout and writing skills to lovingly prepare our newsletter. *Wild News* is published six times a year. If you have an interest in wildflowers and native plants, this may be just the creative outlet you have been looking for; a background in botany would be a helpful though is not a requirement. For the last seven years, your current editor has enjoyed this wonderful opportunity, but other demands necessitate stepping away from my editor's desk. I am going to miss this position greatly, but will continue to contribute articles and photographs.

UPCOMING EVENTS

PLEASE NOTE:

For events not scheduled at the time this issue went to press, please continue to visit the PWWS web page: vnps.org/princewilliamwildflowersociety/

November

Friday, November 22, 10 am to 12 noon. A Prince William Wildflower Society sponsored walk. Claudia Thompson-Deahl and Marion Lobstein will lead a late-Autumn walk at Leopold's Preserve.

December

Thursday, December 12, 8 to 10 am. Also January 15, 2025. The Clifton Institute. Join in a bird walk, led by an expert birder, around the field station! Date and time subject to change dependent on weather. Please check your email for updates on the morning of the event. RSVP: <https://cliftoninstitute.org/event/bird-walk-70/#rsvp-nowJanuary> This event is free to Friends of Clifton Institute but they do welcome those interested, and hope you will consider becoming a Friend of the Clifton Institute to continue to enjoy their interesting naturalist-led events and to support their research and other endeavors. Learn more about them here: <https://cliftoninstitute.org/about-us/> You can make a difference on their Volunteer Days in participating in their Native Habitat Restoration

For birders, consider participating in the numerous Bird Counts in the area during the month of December.

Leopold's Preserve Winter Lecture Series

The lectures will be held indoors at the Bull Run Mountains Conservancy's headquarters, just a few minutes' drive away from Leopold's Preserve — 17405 Beverley Mill Drive, Broad Run, Va. Each lecture will feature a special guest speaker who will discuss a topic relating to the natural world. Light refreshments will be provided.

Wednesday, December 4: "Managing Invasive Plant Pressure in Your Yard" presented by Steph Johnson, owner of [Green Steeze](#). Learn about the top invaders of local landscapes & the actions you can take to manage them.

Wednesday, January 8: "Virginia's Amazing Vultures", presented by Heather Shank-Givens, volunteer wildlife rehabilitator with the Blue Ridge Wildlife Center. Her presentation will explore the natural history of vultures in Virginia, the basic biology and ecology of our native vultures, and human-vulture conflict mitigation strategies.

Wednesday, February 5: "Creating a Wildlife Sanctuary" presented by Leslie Paulson, coordinator for the [Northern Virginia Bird Alliance's "Wildlife Sanctuary" program](#). Learn about NVBA's wildlife sanctuary certification program and the steps you can take to get your property certified.

Wednesday, March 5: "Bringing Back Virginia's Grassland Birds" presented by October Greenfield, co-coordinator for the [Virginia Grassland Bird Initiative](#). Over 50 species of birds rely on grassland habitats here in Virginia. But the state of our grasslands is changing with increased pressure from development and changing agricultural practices. As a result, many grassland bird species are in severe decline. The good news is that private landowners and farmers can—and are—helping bring these birds back! Join us to learn more about the decline of grassland birds and the work of the Virginia Grassland Bird Initiative.

The Leopold's Preserve Winter Lecture Series is presented through a partnership of the [White House Farm Foundation](#) and [the Bull Run Mountains Conservancy](#).

SAVE the DATES!

Friday, November 22, 10 - 12, Walk with Claudia Thomson-Deahl at Leopold's Preserve

Monday, January 20, 2025, 7:30 pm, PWWS Membership Meeting & Slideshow

Saturday, February 9, 2025, 9 - 4 pm, 7th Annual Prince William Native Plant Symposium
Early registration will begin in early December