



WILD NEWS

Prince William Wildflower Society

A Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

Number 2017-02

March-April 2017

Danielle Wynne: Stormwater and Watershed Management in Fairfax County, VA.

Monday, March 20, 2017, 7:30 p.m.
Bethel Lutheran Church
8712 Plantation Lane, Manassas, Va

Ever wonder how a county with more than 1.1 million people in 400-square-miles manages their stormwater? Welcome to Fairfax County, Va. Come learn about the trials and tribulations of monitoring more than 860 miles of perennial stream within 30 major watersheds, and managing 1,300 miles of stormwater drainage pipes, 3,800 private and 1,700 public stormwater management facilities.

Danielle Wynne has been an ecologist with the Fairfax County Stormwater Planning Division since 2002. Ms. Wynne has an undergraduate degree in Biology and Master's degree in Environmental



Science and Public Policy from George Mason University. Her duties include stream insect and fish surveys, bacteria sampling and field assessments of habitat and water quality. Ms. Wynne has a passion for working with students and teachers to help promote the importance of stormwater management and clean water. Ms. Wynne has worked with thousands of students and looks forward to educating many thousands more.

President's Corner

With this issue of *Wild News*, we welcome our new editor, Brigitte Hartke. Brigitte has experience producing newsletters for garden clubs and became a native plant promoter after she heard a talk by Doug Tallamy, author of *Bringing Nature Home*. She loves nature, and is a talented amateur photographer. The daughter of a French father and an English mother, Brigitte grew up in Northern Virginia, but spent summers in France and England. Please introduce yourselves to her at our next meeting.

The warmest February on record is now behind us, so what can we expect for spring? Our beloved Virginia bluebells were beginning to bloom in February; will they last until April? Will summer be upon us before May? Take time now to hit the trail and visit our spring ephemerals in their natural habitat before they all fade away. We have lined up many spring walks for you this season.

We also have our annual spring wildflower garden tours at the end of April, and I am very pleased with our lineup. PWWS founder Nancy Arrington will have her large woodland garden on tour again after many years. Charter member Marie Davis agreed to put her third garden on tour. Longtime members may remember her previous gardens, a suburban lot in the Sudley neighborhood, then her eight-acre woodland wonderland on Moor Green Drive. These days she gardens on another suburban lot near the City of Manassas. Our third garden is the Master Gardeners' Teaching Garden at the Benedictine Monastery in Bristow.

Did you make it to author Barbara Ellis's presentation on "Greener Gardens: One Step at a Time" last month? We had an impressive turnout with more than 100 attendees. We thank all of the master gardeners and PWWs members who provided refreshments, with special thanks to Brenda Hallam and Beverly Houston for coordinating the effort. Many thanks to Janet Wheatcraft for assisting Ms. Ellis with her book sales, and thanks you, Tamie Boone, for staffing the PWWs table and selling NoVA Natives guides. We also thank Nancy Berlin and Charles Smith for their technical support. Because of sound issues we have experienced, the PWWs board recently voted to purchase a sound system for use at future presentations.

Our March meeting will feature ecologist Danielle Wynne on "Stormwater and Watershed Management in Fairfax County." We can see how Prince William compares with our next door neighbor. At this meeting we will also discuss our upcoming events and recruit volunteers to staff them. We need you!

~Nancy

**Prince William Wildflower Society
Membership Meeting Minutes
Jan. 16, 2017, 7:30 p.m., Bethel Lutheran Church**

The meeting was called to order by President Nancy Vehrs at 7:35 p.m.

Nancy thanked Deanna High in absentia for her 11 years of editing *Wild News*, our chapter newsletter, and showed the group a gift book that she had planned to present to her. Nancy welcomed two new members, Cathy Hindman and Brigitte Hartke. Nancy noted that secretary Karen Waltman was not present because she was recovering from knee surgery.

The evening program consisted of the following members sharing their slides:

Nancy Vehrs showed slides from VNPS's April 2016 trip to Southwest Virginia. Her pictures of an amazing variety of many common and some rare plants were taken in several parks and Natural Heritage sites including White Top Mountain, The Pinnacle Natural Area Preserve, New River State Park, Natural Tunnel State Park, Falls Ridge Preserve, and the Virginia Creeper Trail.

Charles Smith showed slides from several spots along the Blue Ridge Parkway including Mt. Mitchell and Mt. Pisgah in North Carolina and Buffalo Mtn. in Floyd County, Virginia. Some of his pictures were taken on a 45-degree, extremely windy day in July near Asheville. Charles also showed slides from several walks at Manassas National Battlefield Park over the summer.

Rick and Diane Flaherty's slides were from a November birding trip to Cuba. They showed pictures of flowers, shrubs and trees along with pictures of Cuba's many beautiful birds. We were also treated to pictures of city streets and rural areas that gave us a sense of what life in Cuba is like today.

Refreshments were provided by Dee Brown, Kathy Burch, Jeanne Endrikat, Brenda Hallam, Beverly Houston, and Carol Thompson. Door prizes awarded included Nancy Hugo's *Trees Up Close*, Susan Leopold's *Isabella's Peppermint Flowers*, a scented Yankee candle, and *Monarch Matters: A Close Look at the Life Cycles within a Food Chain* (a new children's book by Lisa Connors).

Attendance:

Tamie Boone, Jeanne Endrikat, Brenda Hallam, Beverly Houston, Marlies Smith, Peggy Martin, Dee Brown, Glen Macdonald, Brigitte Hartke, Cathy Hindman, Jim & Judy Gallagher, Kathy Burch, Jeanne Fowler, Carol Thompson, Nancy Arrington, Frank Hollifield and his daughter Mary, Diane and Rick Flaherty, Tim & Teresa Rook, Janis Stone, Janet Wheatcraft, Barbara Deegan, Rita Romano, Charles Smith, Nancy Vehrs.

Submitted by Nancy Arrington and Nancy Vehrs

EVENTS

PWWS Spring Walks

Tuesday, March 28, 10 a.m. – 12 noon, Stone Bridge, Manassas National Battlefield Park, led by botanist Marion Lobstein. Contact Marion to confirm, mblobstein@earthlink.net.

Explore our local natural areas and search for wildflowers! Please contact Nancy Vehrs (nvehrs1@yahoo.com or 703-434-0009) to confirm the conditions and meeting location for the following walks. Walks will average about 2 - 2 ½ hours.

Friday, March 31, 10 a.m., Doves Landing Park, Manassas.

Thursday, April 6, 10 a.m., Leopold's Preserve, Haymarket. Nancy Vehrs, leader.

Friday, April 14, 9:30 a.m., Bull Run Mountain Natural Area Preserve, Janis Stone, leader.

Wednesday, April 19, 10 a.m., Conway Robinson Memorial State Forest, Nancy Vehrs, leader

Tuesday, May 2, 10 a.m., Prince William Forest Park, Triangle. Nancy Vehrs, leader.

MARCH

Hello All. Celebrate St. Patrick's Day with us at [Leopold's Preserve](#) as we take a nature walk! On Friday, March 17 (4:00 - 6:00 pm) we will look for color in branches, expanding/opening flower and leaf buds and early emerging weeds and early spring ephemeral wildflowers.

Master Naturalist and tree expert Carrie Blair will lead the walk. [Leopold's Preserve](#) is a 380 acre nature preserve in Haymarket with numerous habitats and seven miles of maintained trails - a great place to get outside and enjoy nature. Feel free to wear green!

There is no charge for this walk but please RSVP.

Chris Anderson, Executive Director
White House Farm Foundation
1917 Kauffmans Mill Rd., Luray, VA 22835
(540) 860-1988

www.whfarmfoundation.org

<https://www.facebook.com/whfarmfoundation/>

APRIL

Bluebell Festival Sunday, April 9, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Join us for the annual Bluebell Festival at Merrimac Farm Wildlife Management Area in Nokesville. Themed walks, children's activities, environmental organization booths (including PWWS), food, photography, art, raffle, and more! Sponsored by the Prince William Conservation Alliance. See www.pwconserve.org for more information.

Workshop on How to Use the *Flora of Virginia*:

Tuesday/Thursday, April 11 and 13, 9 a.m. – 2 p.m., Blandy Experimental Farm, Boyce, VA. Join Marion Lobstein and Sally Anderson for a 2-day workshop on how to use the *Flora of Virginia* to identify wildflowers. Members \$35, non-members \$40. For more information and to register, http://www.virginia.edu/blandy/blandy_web/all_blandy/2017SpringPrograms.pdf

PWWS Spring Wildflower Garden Tour Sunday, April 30

This year's wildflower garden tour will feature the gardens of two of our charter members, Nancy Arrington and Marie Davis. Both are major contributors of plants for our annual native plant sale, so you can see the source of all those great wildflowers. Nancy gardens on a three-acre lot, and Marie, now in her third home in the area, tends a more conventional suburban lot. Both are located just south of the City of Manassas. The Teaching Garden at the Benedictine Monastery on Linton Hall Road in Bristow is our third featured garden. It is run by the Master Gardeners of Prince

William and includes a large native plant section. Watch your mailbox in April for a special brochure with descriptions and addresses for the gardens.



MAY

PWWS Plant Sale

Saturday, May 13, 9:00 a.m. to Noon
PWWS Annual Native Plant Sale
Grounds of Bethel Lutheran Church
8712 Plantation Lane, Manassas, Va.



Sun- and shade-loving native wildflowers, shrubs, and trees; great prices, lots of variety!

PWWS members: We need your plants! It's time to start potting-up and planning for our **May 13** plant sale. Think about what natives you can contribute as your plants begin emerging this spring. I have compiled some suggestions and instructions for potting, which I can mail to you. We have name labels and the plastic pricing labels, and, as in years past, they will be available for pickup from Nancy Vehrs. We also have pots for you if you need them to pot up your plants. Let me know if you have any questions. Thanks in advance for helping with the sale. Even if you don't have plants to contribute, there are many ways you can help out, and we need all the help we can get! Please let me know if you'll be contributing plants or helping on sale day:

(703) 408-7446 or narrington1@verizon.net.

~ Nancy Arrington

SAVE the DATES

Sunday, April 9, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m., Merrimac Bluebell Festival at Merrimac Farm
Sunday, April 30, PWWS Spring Wildflower Garden Tour
Saturday, May 13, 9 to noon, PWWS Plant Sale on Grounds of Bethel Lutheran Church

PRINCE WILLIAM WILDFLOWER SOCIETY

P.O. Box 83 - Manassas, VA 20108-0083

Chartered: January 10, 1983

Logo: *Mertensia virginica* - Virginia Bluebells

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DWARF CRESTED IRIS

By Marion Lobstein, PWWS Botany Chair

One of the loveliest spring wildflowers found growing in rich woodlands and along streams is the delicate dwarf crested iris, *Iris cristata*. This diminutive member of the iris family, Iridaceae, is the most common species of iris in northern Virginia. It ranges from Maryland west to Ohio and Indiana, and south to Tennessee, Georgia, and Missouri. It is primarily found in piedmont and mountain areas in Virginia.

The genus name or epithet, *Iris*, is from the Greek word for "rainbow," referring to the range of colors of the various iris species and the species epithet *cristata* means "crested," and refers to the raised projections on the upper surface of the petaloid sepals. Other names for *Iris cristata* are crested iris and dwarf iris. In Virginia, this species is our only native crested iris.

(*Iris cristata* artwork of P. J. Redoute)

The lance-shaped leaves are two-ranked as in other irises and are longer than the flowering stem - up to eight inches long. There is no stem above ground below the leaves but the flowering stem or peduncle is terete or round. The underground storage structure is a slender, branched rhizome, a horizontal underground stem, with fibrous roots.



Dwarf crested iris flowers are relatively small for an iris species - about 2½ to 3 inches wide. One to two flowers are borne on each flowering stem which are one to three inches tall. The three blue to violet petaloid (petal-like) sepals are 1½ to 3 inches long which project downward with a prominent white to orange ridge forming a crest in the center of each sepal. The three petals are approximately the same length and the same color as the sepals but are narrower and stand upward. The three stamens arch under the three petaloid styles. (The pistil, the female part of the flower, consists of the top stigma where pollen adheres on the top of the style and the ovary is at the base of the pistil.) In irises, the ovary position is described as inferior - that is, the other flower parts attach above

the ovary rather than under the ovary. The flowers have a slight scent and are pollinated primarily by bees and bumblebees and perhaps even hummingbirds. The fruits are three-sided capsules that contain a number of yellowish brown seeds, each 1/16 to 1/8 inch long, and each with an appendage called an aril or elaiosome. These seeds may be dispersed by ants that are attracted to this appendage that contains energy-rich fats.

Dwarf crested iris blooms from April into May with fruit set in the early summer. The habitat of this beautiful native iris is from woodlands to stream banks.

Even though *I. cristata* is our most common native iris, there are six other species of irises found in our area, including four other native species and two introduced species. The native species are *I. virginica* (Virginia blue flag), *I. versicolor* (larger blue flag), *I. prismatica* (narrow blue flag), and *I. verna* (spring iris). All of these native species are blue to lavender in color, while one introduced species, *I. pseudacorus* (yellow iris), is yellow. The second introduced species is *Iris domestica* (formerly the *Belamcanda chinensis*), the blackberry lily which is orange with red to purple spots. (In the next issue of *Wild News*, learn about the taxonomy and history of the Iris family including the reason for scientific name change of the blackberry lily.)

The rhizomes of all irises are poisonous, containing the compound irisin. The rhizome and flower parts may cause skin irritation; the rhizomes may cause diarrhea and vomiting when ingested. Like many "poisons," extracts or other preparations of the rhizomes of irises have been used to treat various ailments such as liver problems, ulcers, earache, toothache, colds, cholera, and as a laxative. American Indians used iris rhizome in many of these ways; they also pulverized it to make a poultice to treat burns, wounds, and rheumatic joints.

The native irises bloom in early spring until late April into May; the two introduced species into the summer. This spring, look for dwarf crested iris in flower as well as other native wild irises in the woods and wetlands - they are just as colorful as cultivated iris species.

Upcoming Events From Virginia Master Naturalist, Fairfax Chapter, and others:

VMN 2017 Potomac Watershed Cleanup: Accotink Creek Watershed

Weekends April 1-29

Join Friends of Accotink Creek in partnership with the Alice Ferguson Foundation and Project Clean Stream to get trash out of our waterways during the Annual Potomac Watershed Cleanup.

For more information:

<http://www.accotink.org/2017/PotomacWatershedCleanuppre-event2017.htm>

VMN Virginia Bluebird Society Nestbox Monitoring Training

March 18th | 2-4:00 pm | Walker Nature Ctr.
11450 State Rte 4721, Reston, VA

Training by Stephen Johnson, Fairfax County
Coordinator for Va. Bluebird Society.

VMN National Arboretum Symposium: Native Plants Enriching Our Communities

Learn from leading ecologists, landscape designers, plant and wildlife experts as they show how their work helps create sustainable neighborhoods. Use their approaches to inform your own landscape choices. Registration \$95, includes all sessions and box lunch. Symposium proceeds support the Lahr Internship in the Arboretum's Fern Valley Native Plant Collection.

For complete information, [Click here](#).

Fee: \$95 (\$76 FONA) [Registration required](#).

Walker Nature Center Screening in Reston

In case you've missed it, Walker Center will have a screening of the documentary, **Hometown Habitat - Stories of Bringing Nature Home**.

Directed by Catherine Zimmerman, it features noted entomologist, Doug Tallamy.

As of March 12 tickets to this free event were still available.

Go here to see the trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UXbDWTfcK2s>

Nat'l Arboretum Native Plant Sale

March 25, 8:30 am – 2:00 pm

Adjacent to Administration Building

Get a jump-start on spring by shopping at this annual sale featuring a collection of local nurseries offering an extensive collection of high quality, locally grown native plants. Growers will be on hand to provide expert gardening information. Held in conjunction with the *Lahr Native Plant Symposium*. Sponsored by Friends of the National Arboretum. Free admission.



A Note from the New Editor

Greetings! I am looking forward to serving as your newsletter editor, with the help of Deanna and Nancy — your two former editors. Thanks to Nancy for her kind words of introduction. Yes, my passion has always been with, and being a voice for, the wild things, especially those belonging to the local 'family'. I think I may have found my niche, and have already met many wonderful, welcoming people in the PWWS. I am pleased to have the opportunity to serve as your editor; feedback is always welcome.

~ Brigitte Hartke



Good Friends in Wild Places

In our search for spring and summer wildflowers, most of us are avid hikers. Hiking is soul-replenishing — a nearly perfect way to find exercise, stay fit, and inhale fresh air while exploring the woods and fields. There are some risks involved, and one of them is the possibility of being bitten by a Lyme-carrying tick. (This editor has had Lyme twice and had the site of a tick bite become infected with a staph infection; many hikers have similar stories.)

Based on recent study results, we can claim an ally in a little pink-nosed marsupial that migrated from South to North America during the Great American Interchange that followed the connection of the two continents: the opossum. These small, cat-sized mammals have extended their habitat as far north as Canada, though the farther north they are found, the more likely they will be living in warmer niches alongside humans — they have little subcutaneous fat stores to help them survive temperatures much below 19 degrees. Of the approximately 70 species of opossums, the one that became known as the Virginia opossum is the only one capable of storing fat under the skin and in its tail.

As generalists, their diet is varied, and they will eat all sorts of things: insects, slugs, carrion, berries and other fruit (and maybe your tomatoes). Scientists at Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies in Millbrook, New York have learned that during late summer an opossum may be moving around with up to 200 ticks on its body. The fastidious opossum will kill the ticks while grooming by scratching, licking and chewing the ticks in its fur. Their studies showed that a single possum may be killing as many as 4,000 ticks in a week. That is welcome news to the hiker.

For my part, I've always loved opossums; from their pointed, pink-tipped noses, dark eyes, rounded ears and chubby bodies to their long tails that function as a fifth appendage, they fascinate me. Sadly, I usually encounter them as roadkill—most of them only survive for about a year, becoming victims of cars, owls, coyotes and low

temperatures for which they are ill-equipped to survive. Yet, sometimes I will meet one: I have a ground feeder at my kitchen window here at Bull Run where I try to get closeup photographs of birds. Lately, in the morning I have been finding the feeder upended, and one night my grandson and I looked out to see the face of an opossum scarfing up any remaining birdseed, just inches away from the window pane. I love such close encounters, though I know that interactions with humans are not always beneficial to wildlife.

For more information on this fascinating little mammal with many surprising characteristics, you can read an excellent article here:

<https://www.nwf.org/News-and-Magazines/National-Wildlife/Animals/Archives/2015/Opossums.aspx>

~ Brigitte Hartke



photos made available by Wallpapersin4K.net

A Look Back at Barbara W. Ellis,
Author of “Chesapeake Gardening &
Landscaping — The Essential Green Guide”

A good speaker can leave one full of enthusiasm and hope — for changes in people’s perceptions of what a beautiful garden looks like, and changes in harmful gardening practices, so crucial to the survival of wildlife.

Barbara W. Ellis and her *Greener Garden: One Step at a Time* February lecture for the Prince William Wildflower Society was excellent. Her themes were: Reduce Lawn, Build Plant Diversity, Grow Native Plants, Welcome Wildlife and Garden Wisely. Her slide show illustrated her topics, with photos of a number of gardens — many in Maryland near the water, but also some from Mt. Cuba and others.

She stated with enthusiasm, “More Plants are Always Better”, and explained how to eliminate

lawn in order to make space for diverse and productive plantings. If you have to have lawn, she suggested, let the grass grow tall, with a swath of mown grass curving through it. What a great idea!

In Barbara’s talk were echoes of the message of everyone’s favorite garden-for-nature guru, entomologist Doug Tallamy, of his neighbor and fellow author, Rick Darke, and of Arlington resident and author, Thomas Rainer. Barbara, seen here signing her latest book, is the author of many other titles.



Barbara’s talk called to mind how delightful it is to look across the yard, driveway or adjacent field and watch the tall grasses swaying, in winter blasts, March winds and summer breezes. The movement of the grass is mesmerizing and captivating. It is also much more interesting to walk through an area left to grow this way than to gaze out on static, nothing-going-on-here, LAWN.

(photo credit below goes to Betty Hall — Cardinal on Eastern Wahoo - *Euonymus atropurpureus*)



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A Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society
P.O. Box 83, Manassas, Virginia, 20108-0083



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