



WILD NEWS

Prince William Wildflower Society

A Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

Number 2010-06

November-December 2010

**PRINCE WILLIAM WILDFLOWER SOCIETY
MEMBERSHIP MEETING
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 7:30 p.m.
Bethel Lutheran Church, Manassas, Virginia**

“The American Chestnut Story”

Once, American chestnut dominated a quarter of all hardwoods of the Virginia forest. Chestnut trees were primarily valuable as a source of timber, producing millions of board feet of lumber per year. Its rot-resistant, darkly beautiful wood made it ideal for fence posts, railroad ties, barn beams and home construction, as well as for fine furniture and musical instruments. It was also valuable as a food source, producing edible, nutritious nuts for wildlife and livestock. Roasted chestnuts were a familiar staple of the American diet.

The chestnut blight of the early 20th century changed everything, and the result was an environmental disaster, thought by many to be the worst ever. Today, scientists and volunteers continue to work to restore the tree to its former glory, work that will continue past their own lifetimes, a testament to their dedication to correcting the accident of their forebears.



Please join us the evening of November 15 as **Cathy Mayes**, president of the Virginia Chapter of the American Chestnut Foundation, tells us about the impact of the chestnut blight on the ecology and economy of Virginia and about current efforts to restore the tree to our forest.

Cathy, a Master Naturalist,

serves as a volunteer to many organizations in addition to her leadership of the Virginia Chapter of the ACF. She is treasurer of VNPS and of her Piedmont chapter, vice president of Old Rag Master Naturalists, and a volunteer for Legal Services of Northern Virginia. Cathy's work has been recognized by the Fairfax County Park Authority's 2004 Elly Doyle Award for co-founding Friends of Riverbend Park and Friends of the Friends, and the Rappahannock League for Environmental Protection's 2009 Spirit Award for organizing a junior

naturalist program at Rappahannock County Elementary School and other volunteer contributions. Her hobbies include birding, vegetable gardening, and dairy farming.

PWWS membership meetings are open to all. Bethel Lutheran Church is located at 8712 Plantation Lane in Manassas, just off Rte 234 Bus., opposite the Prince William Hospital.



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

A Psychologist's Thoughts on Wild Things

I'm a clinical psychologist and got my doctorate when clinical emphasis was on the individual. A few therapists focused on family dynamics or group work but almost no one spoke about the effect of our environment on our behavior and feelings. Some marketing researchers looked at the effect of colors or smells on our eating behavior so they could make us buy more. However, little was said about how the colors of a beautiful sunset or the smells of a fir tree affected our well-being. Fortunately this began to change in the late 1970s, and a new field, environmental psychology, began. Suddenly, what many of us intuitively knew became a focus of research. Diagnoses, such as SAD (Seasonal Affective Disorder), which acknowledged the role of long, dark winter days on our mental health, became accepted. Finally, now in the 21st century, psychology is catching up with Thoreau.

Among many observations in *Walden*, written in 1854, Thoreau said: "To insure health, a man's relation to Nature must come very near to a personal one...I cannot conceive of any life which deserves the name, unless there is a certain tender relation to Nature...the earth is not a mere fragment of dead history, stratum upon stratum...to be studied by geologists and antiquaries...but living poetry like the leaves of a tree...our city life would stagnate if it were not for the forests and meadows which surround it. We need the tonic of wildness...I am astonished at the power of endurance of my neighbors who confine themselves to shops and offices the whole day for weeks and months, aye, and years...I think they deserve some credit for not having committed suicide long ago."

So—Mountain Laurel and Mental Health—not so far apart. I believe too many in our megalopolis spend "months, aye, and years" enclosed in cars fighting traffic, in shops and offices, staring at a computer or TV screen, texting, e-mailing, or twittering. We've almost forgotten what real tweets and twittering sound like on a beautiful day. This is especially true for many of the younger generation.

The Prince William Wildflower Society is a great place to promote the idea that preserving the beauty of our natural environment is not some "tree hugger" luxury. It is critical to our well-being. Our only experience of nature should not be some lovely computer screen saver. My general goal for the next two years is to encourage a beneficial interaction between Mother Nature and ourselves. I hope many of you will share ideas about specific ways to do that.

--Dee Brown

Sunday, September 26, 2010 Prince William Wildflower Society Annual Meeting, Election of Officers, and Potluck Luncheon

It rained the morning of September 26, but the rain ended during setup of our annual meeting at Occoquan Forest Pavilion in the Occoquan Forest Community of Manassas. The sun came out, but it remained chilly, and 17 hardy people attended in jackets and enjoyed a potluck luncheon in view of the Occoquan River.

Election of Officers for November 1, 2010 to

November 1, 2012: Nancy Vehrs made a motion to accept the slate of officers, and Harry seconded the motion which passed. Newly elected officers are: president-Dee Brown, vice-president-Betty Truax, treasurer-Diane Flaherty, secretary-Karen Waltman.

Proposed Budget: Jeanne Endrikat made a motion to accept the proposed 2011 budget, and Karen Waltman seconded it. There was a discussion about the increase in printing prices for the newsletter; the motion passed.

Door prizes: Three native wildflowers from Nature by Design in Alexandria went to Jeanne Fowler, Glen Macdonald and Dee Brown. Some donated door prizes went to Nancy Vehrs, Helen Walters, Deanna High, Helen Rawls and Harry Glasgow.

Gift to Outgoing President Helen Walter: A gift certificate from Nature by Design was presented to Helen, in appreciation of the two years she served as president of PWWS. Thank You Helen!

Announcements: Tiana Camfiord announced that anyone would be welcome to pot wildflowers from her garden in preparation for the spring PWWS plant sale. Nancy Vehrs said that programs are planned by the PW Conservation Alliance for the "First Thursdays" programs at the Bull Run Unitarian Universalist Church in Manassas. For more information: www.pwconserve.org

Walk: After lunch and election of officers, Botany Chair *Marion Lobstein* led an informal ramble through the woods surrounding the Occoquan River boat landing

and encircling the woodland housing development known as Occoquan Forest. Marion first observed white-flowered (succulent) patches of Buttonweed (*Diodia teres*) literally growing under our feet amongst the grass surrounding the pavilion. Marion was a bit surprised to see it so readily in force there, since it prefers sandy soils and is a coastal plant.

Next off were successively better and better sightings of Beech Drops, *Epifagus virginiana*; the discovery of a large patch of Jewelweed (*Impatiens capensis*), still partially in bloom, with exploding seed pods; and some discussion of the possible use of jewelweed for treatment of poison ivy

(freeze the plants and flowers early in the season in ice cubes, then let them melt over the rash.) As we noted different species along the trail, Marion pointed out the differences between ironwood and beech sapling leaves and identified

several goldenrods, *Solidago caesis* and *S. altissimum*, and asters, including a small wood aster in bloom. We spotted several ferns, including Intermediate Wood fern (*Dryopteris intermedia*), Hayscented fern (*Dennstaedtia punctilobula*), and Christmas fern (*Polystichum acrostichoides*). Towards the end of our ramble, Marion pointed out tall thickets of *Aralia spinosa*, commonly known as Devils Walking Stick or Hercules Club, which sported wicked thorns and dusky clusters of berries. Marion also alerted us to the differences of non-stinging, non-poisonous False Nettle (*Boehmeria cylindrica*), with its stiff flowers growing in the axils of the leaves, and the similar looking, poisonous stinging nettle (*Urtica dioica*)—an import from Europe.

Attending were Jeanne Fowler, Stan Fowler, Denna Brown, Glen Macdonald, Jeanne Endrikat, Helen Walter, Rob Walter, Helen Rawls, Marion Lobstein, George Lobstein, Tiana

Camford, Deanna High, Nancy Vehrs, Harry Glasgow, Amy Martin (Mortensen), William Hendrickson, Karen Waltman.

Respectively submitted,
Karen Waltman, PWWS Secretary

PRINCE WILLIAM WILDFLOWER SOCIETY

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

Chartered January 10, 1983

Logo: *Mertensia virginia* (Virginia Bluebells)

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Refreshments: VACANT

Registry: VACANT

Wild News is published bimonthly; deadline for submissions for the Jan-Feb issue is January 1, 2011.

Please send submissions to Deanna High, editor, *Wild News*, deannahigh@gmail.com.

A ROSE IS A ROSE IS A...

The Board of the Prince William Wildflower Society has chosen a 4th plant family, *Rosaceae*, to sponsor in support of the Flora of Virginia project. According to the USDA Plants database, the Rose family contains 72 genera and 1,189 accepted taxa overall, and includes a variety of woody and perennial plants, including the Serviceberries, Aronia spp., Hawthorns, Crabapples, Ninebark, Bowman's root, Wild plums, blackberry, and Mountain Ash, as well as its eponymous flower. Many species of the family are native to Prince William County. PWWS is also sponsor for the Borage family (*Boraginaceae*), the Dogbane family (*Apocynaceae*), and the True Grasses (*Poaceae*).

—Deanna High



AN INVITATION TO PRINCE WILLIAM WILDFLOWER SOCIETY and the VNPS from the OCCOQUAN WATERTRAIL LEAGUE

By Joyce Wenger, Mike Wenger, and Judi Lenehan

Northern Virginia is a treasure trove of great and varied experiences—historical, cultural, and natural. But as many local naturalists know, some of the best experiences are almost secret. One example is the Occoquan Water Trail (OWT), a beautiful 40-milewide, nationally-designated water trail full of exciting river vistas, excellent birding and wildlife access, and some of the nicest forest and riparian flora you have ever seen. Yet few people in the local counties are even aware that it exists. Those in the know about wonderful resources such as the OWT are often of two minds. They love the fact that the trail is almost always a quiet wilderness experience in near solitude, yet they want to share that experience with more and more people.

Starting with the basics, what is a water trail? A water trail is simply a water version of a traditional hiking trail. It's a route along a river or across other bodies of water for people using small beach-able boats like kayaks, canoes, or rowboats. Water trails are most often associated with the land facilities supporting water travel, including launch and landing sites, campsites, rest areas, and other points of interest. On land, trails have distinct surfaces or walkways; on water it's the entire water surface, a surface that is constantly changing with flow, current, boat wakes, and wind. Certainly walking along river or lake is a great way to be in nature. But to really experience the full breadth of nature—birds, fish, the shoreline vegetation—you have to get on the water. A water trail is the way to do that.

The OWT traces a 40-mile route on two tributary waterways of the Chesapeake Bay. It offers paddling

adventures through Prince William and Fairfax counties, across a vast and changing landscape spanning 13,000 years of human history, past 10,000 acres of public lands dedicated to resource conservation, and offers interesting and often unique views of flora and fauna. There are three distinct ecologies on the OWT: Free-flowing river in the upper third, lake-like reservoir in the middle, and

tidal in the lower third. Each ecology has its own avian, aquatic, and vegetative base. The 20-mile stretch of the upper segment begins on free-flowing, tree-lined Bull Run, which widens as it joins the Occoquan River, opening to an



Pickerel weed

expansive, freshwater lake formed by the Occoquan Reservoir dam. The lower segment's brackish, open waters pass marinas and protected marshlands along the Mason Neck Peninsula, on the wide expanse of the tidal Potomac River. Access points are located at Bull Run Regional Park, Route 28 bridge, Bull Run Marina Regional Park, Fountainhead Regional Park, Lake Ridge Community Park, Occoquan Regional Park, Mason Neck State Park and Pohick Bay Regional Park.

Long-time residents of Prince William and Fairfax counties may remember the days when Bull Run was quite heavily polluted and may be thinking that a paddle along the river from Bull Run Park to the reservoir would be the last thing they would want to do. But the good news is that cleanup and pollution control efforts over the past decade have resulted in tremendous improvement and the paddle between Bull Run Park and Hemlock Park is wonderful. In spring, when the water is flowing faster, the paddle is exhilarating. Later in the season there is a gentle current with just enough riffle and foam to introduce new paddlers to some mild excitement.



Swallowtails puddling in the river mud

The history and purpose of the Occoquan Reservoir make it especially interesting. Since the reservoir is supplied mostly by ground water and is one of the largest water re-use reclamation projects in the country, its ecology is especially sensitive and unique. We are regularly pleased and surprised that they permit recreational activities on it. If we were more familiar with native plant life both in the water and along the shore we could assess erosion and the general health of the water based on the life it currently supports. Two Web sites provide information on the reservoir and the Virginia Tech Monitoring facility, www.owml.vt.edu/aboutowml.htm and www.watereuse.org/conference/symposium/25/tours. The Prince William Soil and Conservation District Web site provides solid information as well: www.pwsxcd.org, and the Prince William Conservation Alliance's Web site, www.puconserve.org, has lovely pictures of identified native plants and wildlife.



Rhexia virginica meadow

The Occoquan Watertrail League, or OWL, (www.owlva.org) is a community-based group of active paddlers and advocates of the OWT that assists in providing long-term stewardship of the trail. Its sole purpose is to support the water trail, spread the word, and invite greater participation. Its mission is to work with volunteers, government agencies, and landowners to promote resource awareness, encourage environmental stewardship, and improve access along the water trail. OWL members include people who are simply out for fun and to enjoy the peacefulness of the water, expert and casual paddlers, fitness buffs, picnickers, fresh and salt water fisherpersons, birders, and other naturalists.

Recent OWL activities have included supporting a National Park Service-sponsored assessment of the water

trail. Park staff and volunteers paddled about 40 miles of water over a period of several weeks this summer to determine where more launch and picnic facilities could be of use, where we should actively address problems such as erosion and trash dumping, and where we could

provide additional signage for water trail users about the history or the wildlife of the area. Members of OWL also participate, with other organizations, in cleanup of the waterways. It's amazing to us that in addition to the natural "trash" wash-up, there is also tire dumping into such a lovely area. Members of OWL recently participated in kayak tours sponsored by Occoquan Park and led by Occoquan Mayor **Earnie Porta**, a historian, who discussed the history along the OWT. As most readers already know, there is significant Civil War history along the watershed. But did you know that there was also activity related to the Revolutionary War?



Hibiscus moscheutos

Perhaps one of the most important was the crossings of the French and Revolutionary troops across the Occoquan in anticipation of the Yorktown campaign that resulted in the surrender of Cornwallis and the end of the war. Crossings by ferry occurred at Colchester, and by ford at Wolf Run Shoals. These sites are designated as the Washington-Rochambeau Main Route and the Washington-Rochambeau Wagon Route. Even before the Revolutionary War, there were significant Indian activities along the OWT. The Dogues, an Algonquian

tribe, occupied the Occoquan River Watershed in the early 1600s, living in villages, hunting and fishing, raising corn, beans, squash, and tobacco. They departed as the English settled the area in the 1650s.

Being fascinated by the history lesson, we thought that learning about other aspects of the OWT would also be of interest to OWL members, hence this open invitation to the Prince William Wildflower Society for a joint

activity, such as a wildflower identification field trip—via kayak. Whether we paddle for peacefulness, exercise, fishing, birding, or now history, we thought that paddling with native plant experts from PWWS would not only be interesting to us and improve our knowledge of the plants along the water trail, but might also suggest other ways for us to collaborate to enhance the experience of future paddlers. Just as an example, if there are important native plants that we could identify on plaques or on our web site, we might be able to improve paddlers' appreciation and preservation of the plants and their environment. Because the area is so diverse, going through forests, marshlands, and open meadows; because it goes from fresh water to salt water; and because it includes tremendous seasonal diversity, there are many ways to view and appreciate the natural living flora. If we could link the water trail's various habitats to specific plants, animal life (especially birds and pollinators), and geology, we might together encourage more people to use, value, and maintain the water trail. Such a joint endeavor would be easy, especially since kayaks are now for rent at the Occoquan Regional Park off Route 123, Lake Ridge Marina, and Fountainhead Regional Park, off Hampton Road in Fairfax County.

So, our invitation is issued—Let's set a date for a paddle with a flora lesson!

Of course, if anyone just wants to learn more about OWL or join any paddles in the meantime, feel free to contact Mary Zamon, our president (contact@owlva.org), or the authors at joyce@wengerandwenger.com, mike@wengerandwenger.com, and mjlenehan@gmail.com.

[Photos: Taken along the OWT in 2009 and 2010 by Joyce Wenger.]

EVENTS

Thursday, November 11, 7:30 p.m., "Bringing Native Plants and Wildlife into the Managed Landscape,"

Green Spring Gardens, Alexandria, Virginia. **Cliff Fairweather**, a naturalist for the Audubon Society of Northern Virginia, will give a presentation on bringing native plants and wildlife into the managed landscape. He will tell us about creating home wildlife habitats and deal with some of the touchy issues involved such as stinging insects, cats, and snakes.

Sunday, November 14, 2:00 p.m. Second Sunday Walk, Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve. You are invited to meet members from VNPS Piedmont Chapter and join them on an easy and free walk on Sunday, November 14 at 2 P.M. at Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve (near Leesburg). **Ron**

Circe, Manager for BRNP, will lead the walk as you explore the late fall meadows and identify grasses, native trees and shrubs, and late-blooming wildflowers. For detailed directions and to register, contact Cathy Mayes at MayesCD@aol.com or (540) 364-452.

Monday, November 15, 7:30 p.m. "The American Chestnut Story," with Cathy Mayes. Prince William Wildflower Society, Bethel Lutheran Church, Manassas. See page 1 of this newsletter for details on the program.

Friday, November 19, 9:00 a.m. to 2:15 p.m. "Revegetation of Riparian Areas." Northern Virginia Urban Forestry Quarterly Roundtable, Walker Nature Education Center, 11450 Glade Drive, Reston, Virginia. Please register with **Trees Virginia** for the Roundtable no later than November 16 at www.treesvirginia.org. There is no charge for Roundtable attendance. Lunch is brown bag or you may prepurchase a lunch from Trees Virginia for \$10 by using the PayPal toggle on the Web site. Questions? Contact Becky Woodson at (434) 220-9024 or becky.woodson@dof.virginia.gov.

Sunday, November 28, Bird Walks at Merrimac Farm, 8:00 a.m., Merrimac Farm, North Parking Lot (first entrance), 14710 Deepwood Lane, Nokesville. We'll look for birds and other wildlife as we travel through the uplands to the edge of the floodplain, covering a variety of habitats, including open fields and woodland edges. Everyone is welcome. Dress for the weather, bring binoculars and cameras. More info and RSVP (not required) to PWCA, (703) 499-4954 or www.alliance@pwconserve.org

Thursday, December 2, 10 a.m.-Noon, Blandy Experimental Farm and the Virginia Arboretum, "Virginia Birds in Winter," with Dave Carr, director, Blandy Experimental Farm. Learn about birds that arrive each winter from the arctic and northern forests to spend the winter in Virginia. We'll conclude with a walk on Blandy's grounds, so dress for the weather and bring binoculars. FOA members \$8; nonmembers \$10. Call (540) 837-1758, Ext 0 to register.

Saturday, December 4, and Sunday, December 5, 9:30 a.m. to Noon OR 1:30 to 4 Holiday Workshops Gather with friends at the State Arboretum to create a festive holiday wreath made from fresh, local materials. 12-inch Mixed Evergreen Wreath, FOA Members \$28; nonmembers \$34; 20-inch Mixed Evergreen Wreath, FOA Members, \$38; nonmembers \$44
Register early, space is limited and classes fill quickly!
Call 540-837-1758 Ext. 223 to register with a credit card.

Monday, December 27, Nokesville Christmas Bird Count. Contact Prince William Conservation Alliance at alliance@pwconserve.org for more information.

NATIVE PLANT PROFILE

Viburnum dentatum L.

Common Names: Arrowwood, Southern arrowwood, Arrowwood viburnum

Family: Caprifoliaceae (Honeysuckle family)

Leaves: Opposite, simple, elliptic, ovate; with serrate margins; shiny dark green above, pale below

Fruit: Drupe, 1/3 inch long, black, purple

Flower: Creamy white, 2-4 inches across, with yellow stamens. Blooms in May, June, and July

Native distribution:

Florida to east Texas, north to Massachusetts and Ohio; some botanists

recognize two separate species for this highly variable plant, the other being northern Arrowwood (*V. recognitum*) with smooth twigs.

Native habitat: Mesic woods, usually growing in the understory of mixed hardwood forests of oaks, magnolias, maples, hickories, and American beech. Stream banks, moist woods, dry to wet, acid soils and sands.

Characteristics:

Suckering shrub up to 10 feet, flood, insect and disease tolerant. Transplants well; adapts well to most soils.

Wildlife benefit:

Attracts Eastern Bluebird, Northern Flicker, Gray Catbird, and American Robin with its fruits. Larval host for the gossamer-winged butterfly,

Spring Azure

(*Celastrina "ladon"*); adapted host for the endangered Baltimore Checkerspot.

Propagation: Most easily propagated by taking soft wood cuttings in June or July; seeds should be collected

as soon as fruit turns a dark-blue color. If seeds are stored, they will need stratification, often up to a year.

Uses: American Indians used the shrub's strong shoots for arrows, hence its name.

Culture: Arrowwood can tolerate shade and part sun, and responds well to pruning. It can be pruned to a central leader to make a small, elegant tree.



A week or so ago, while taking a stroll on our property to admire the highly varied maple-leaf viburnum berries and foliage, I discovered a fountain-shaped, graceful shrub about 5 feet high and 3 feet wide. It seems that my eye has slid away from noting this woodland native for years, perhaps because its color, its spring bloom, and to some extent, its leaves, are similar to the maple-leaf viburnum colonies scattered loosely

throughout much of our wooded property. Or it may be that I mistook it for a dogwood sapling, for similar reasons. The distinctively satisfying leaf of Arrowwood, however, along with its graceful form and darkish blue-black berries combine with its colorful presence in the Fall to make this native a welcome addition to the landscape or cultivated garden.

Arrowwood has spawned many cultivars that seek to improve reliability of fall leaf color and/or berry production. Some widely available cultivars include 'Blue Muffin,' a dwarf form with dark green, glossy leaves and brilliant blue berries; Chicago Lustre® ('Synnesvedt'), with larger white flowers than the species and a rounded, upright habit; and 'Cardinal,' which has especially brilliant red fall color. Some sources suggest that you will need two different seedlings to encourage berries, as viburnums are often unable to self-pollinate; my woodland species doesn't seem to have berries, even though there is another, smaller arrowwood growing nearby. [Sources: *Manual of Woody Landscape Plants*, by Michael Dirr, Stipes Publishing, 1998; *National Audubon Society Field Guide to Wildflowers Eastern Region*, National Audubon Society, 2001; Ladybird John Wildflower Center Native Plant Database, www.wildflower.org; "Viburnum dentatum," by Steve Christman, accessed at www.floridata.com; "Viburnum dentatum—Arrowwood," Michigan State University Extension, Ornamental Plants, www.msue.msu.edu. Viburnum photo: Stefan Bloodworth, NPIN Image Id: 19252, www.wildflower.org. --Deanna LaValle High



TURN OVER A NEW LEAF ?

Seeking to find *just* when the leaves

of our winter woods' orchids—
Cranefly orchid and Putty root, in particular—would once again emerge from the leaf litter after the heat of summer had abated, I've been checking for them every week or two.

Even as late as mid-October, there was nothing. Then, about a week-and-a-half later, during some of our recent good rains, I spotted shinleaf, *Pyrola elliptica* most likely, in a place in the woods where I know it and Cranefly orchid (*Tipularia discolor*) to flourish, thinking, "surely, both are up by now." But Cranefly leaves were not there. A day or two passed, and I checked again, while walking the dog.



Aplectrum hyemale (Putty root)

And suddenly, there they were, in plenty, pushing through the fallen leaves, along with the *Pyrola*, as if they had popped up overnight. The quiet presence of these leaves in winter is always a pleasure; their sure quickness to emerge was a surprise, as is their steadfast persistence through the icy cold storms of winter. As of early November, still no putty root leaves have appeared, but I have only one very small patch of those. Hope lives, however, and I will check back soon.

--Deanna LaValle High

[Photo: www.missouriplants.com; Beech drops print, U. of Wisconsin-Stevens Point]



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A Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society
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Monday, November 15, 7:30 p.m., Bethel Lutheran Church, Manassas, Virginia