“After Charles Darwin wrote On the Origin of Species, he became instantly famous, and could’ve chosen any subject matter he desired for his next book project. Any subject matter he desired ... and he chose orchids. In this presentation you’ll learn what makes orchids botanically unique, and more importantly, the highly evolved role they play in ecology with a focus on their indelible link to fungi. We’ll also learn about the nontrivial role they’ve played in our culture, and even learn about some of the ~35 species found in the mid-Atlantic. After listening to this presentation, you’ll better understand why Darwin chose orchids, and why he chose very well indeed.”

Tom McCoy is an autodidact amateur naturalist with a keen focus on fungi. He has given numerous presentations on his beloved fifth kingdom, which led him to his current obsession with orchids. Orchids, all orchids, have a compulsory connection to fungi, and without this link, orchids would cease to exist.

From the President

As I write this, the 5th Annual Prince William Native Plant Symposium is now history. The steering committee was ambitious in its undertaking by hosting a hybrid event, both in-person and virtual. Approximately 400 people participated, and a great number of them were first-timers! With a short video featuring Doug Tallamy; an inspiring keynote address by Nancy Lawson, author of The Humane Gardener and the just-published Wildscapes; this event was particularly ambitious with three sets of break-out sessions that offered a choice of six different sessions. After two years of virtual symposiums because of the coronavirus pandemic, it was gratifying to gather in person to socialize and network with so many like-minded conservationists. The steering committee for the event included Ashley Studholme of the Prince William Conservation Alliance, Clay Morris and Julie Flanagan of Prince William County’s Stormwater Management Division, Nancy Berlin of Virginia Cooperative Extension, Janene Cullen, president of the Master Gardeners, Jessica McCauley and Nicole Slazinski of the Prince William Soil and Water Conservation District (the EventBrite gurus!), (cont’d page 2)
Our first in-person meeting since the pandemic began

(President’s Message, cont’d)  Rob Johnson of Northern Virginia Community College who hosted the Zoom event, Greg Farley of George Mason University, our treasurer and Virginia Bluebird Society president Valerie Kenyon Gaffney, and me. We are grateful to William Smith and his GMU tech team for their assistance. Many other presenters and volunteers made this event a success.

PWWS sold nearly 50 advance copies of Nancy Lawson’s new book, which she signed for symposium participants. Sales at the PWWS table at the symposium were frenzied as copies of Wildscapes, The Human Gardener, the revised Plant Invaders of Mid-Atlantic Natural Areas, and regional native plant guides practically flew off the table. The ability to accept credit cards was such an advantage. We thank Joan Beard for volunteering with the sales as I left to present a break-out session. We also thank Brigitte Hartke who helped staff our display table.

Spring is the time for a flurry of activity. Hepatica has already begun blooming in February, and the spring ephemerals cannot be far behind. The annual Bluebell Festival at Merrimac Farm in Nokesville will be held April 8, and spring plant sales will follow. Keep in mind our chapter’s May 13 native plant sale for donations as you divide your natives this spring. We are also seeking native plant gardeners to showcase for our annual spring wildflower garden tour. Is this the year for your garden?

We hope many of you will join us on March 2 for our first in-person regular meeting in two years. Our speaker Tom McCoy comes well recommended and will present on orchids and their fungal relationships. Maybe we can meet some of our new members who have joined over the past couple of years.

Welcome, Spring!

Nancy

Violets are among our most easily recognizable and lovely native spring wildflowers. From late March into late May or early June, many species of violets bring simple but elegant beauty and color to our deciduous woods, fields, roadsides, and even lawns. Although we usually think of Violets as being shades of purple or blue, there are white, cream, and yellow violets as well as combinations of shades of purple and white. In the Flora of Virginia App, more than 30 species of Violets are covered, and roughly two-thirds of those are found in our Northern Virginia area.

As the PWWS Botany Chair, I wrote an article on violets published in the 1993 March-April issue of Wild News. Over the past 30 years, I have remained a true lover of Violets and have learned more about their ecology, life cycles, animal relationships, and the changes in their classification.

Please visit our updated website “Botanizing with Marion” to read my updated 1993 article with additional information, images, and references under the category of Native Plant Profiles. Another article on the changes in taxonomy of Violet species found in our Northern Virginia region will be posted under the Botany and Taxonomy category.

~ Marion Lobstein, Botany Chair
Save the date — May 13!!
PWWS’s Annual Native Plant Sale

This year’s plant sale will be held on our customary Saturday before Mother’s Day, May 13, on the grounds of Bethel Lutheran Church, 10 am to noon. By now our “old timers” know the drill – get your plants potted early and pot lots of them, especially shade and pollinator plants. I’ll be sending emails out to you as we get closer to the sale date. I hope we will have some “first timers” participating this year by supplying plants or helping on sale day. If so, send me your email address, and I’ll add you to the list.
narrington1@verizon.net

The plugs we sold at very reasonable prices at last year’s sale were a big hit, so we’re offering the following at this year’s sale:

- Northern Maidenhair Fern, *Adiantum pedatum*
- Swamp Milkweed, *Asclepias incarnata*
- Butterfly Weed, *Asclepias tuberosa*
- White Turtlehead, *Chelone glabra*
- Sneezeweed, *Helenium autumnale*
- Swamp Rose-mallow, *Hibiscus moscheutos*
- Spotted Beebalm, *Monarda punctata*
- Clustered Mountain Mint, *Pycanthemum muticum*
- Grass-leaved Goldenrod, *Solidago graminifolia*
- New England Aster, *Symphyotrichum novae-angliae*

Nancy Arrington, Plant Sale Chairman

Pictured right: the spring gardens of Nancy Arrington and Janet Wheatcraft

More dates to save

**Sunday, March 5, 2023, at 2 pm — 11th Annual Author Event**
Ruth Rogers Clausen, Author of *Deer-Resistant Native Plants for the Northeast* will speak at the Manassas Park Community Center
99 Adams Street, Manassas Park, VA

**Saturday, April 8, 2023, 10 am to 4 pm**
Annual Bluebell Festival at Merrimac Farm
Sponsored by The Prince William Conservation Alliance
15020 Deepwood Lane, Nokesville, VA
President Nancy Vehrs opened the Membership Meeting at 7:00 p.m. for social time. Then at 7:30 p.m. she welcomed all to the annual membership slide show. Nancy announced the upcoming February 11 Prince William Native Plant Symposium at the Manassas Campus of George Mason University. Register for either in-person or online.

On Thursday, March 2 our membership meeting will be on native orchids and fungal relationships with Tom McCoy.

The Sunday, March 5 Author Event will be held at Manassas Park Community Center and will feature Ruth Rogers Clausen, author of Deer Resistant Native Plants for the Northeast.

Program: Annual Slide Show
The following presenters were introduced and provided beautiful photographs taken of flowers, animals, scenes in nature and interesting parks in Florida.

Judy Gallagher spoke about Florida’s Lake June-in-Winter Scrub State Park, Part of the Lake Wales Ridge Ecosystem. (That was all on one sign!) She also visited nearby Highlands Hammock State Park and Lake Wales Ridge Wildlife and Environmental Area, both near Sebring, as well as Archbold Biological Station in Venice. The scrub ecosystem found at these sites has very unusual plants, which leads to other unusual organisms. In the Lake Wales Ridge area, Judy found a beautiful Florida Scrub Blue Curl, a mint. It is globally listed as rare and resembles Virginia’s native species of Blue Curl. Judy’s pictures of some of the ‘other unusual organisms’ included a Gopher Tortoise, Pyramid Ants, a Warrior Ant, Florida Scrub Trap Ant, Red Imported Fire Ants, a beautiful Bella Moth, Cow Killer Wasp, Florida Blister Beetle, Palmetto Weevil, Florida Scrub Jay and a Wild Pig, which can sometimes be aggressive. Judy said she uttered a loud obscenity when a pig was sighted, and that scared it away! But not before she got a quick picture. Thank you, Judy.

Marion Lobstein spoke from the RV in which she and her husband George are camping for a couple of months while visiting Florida. They were in Williston Crossings RV Resort in Williston, 20 miles west of Gainesville. She also showed slides of Miconopy, considered the oldest inland town in Florida. Near Miconopy, she visited Paynes Prairie State Park where William Bartram, son of John Bartram, stayed with Seminole Indians and collected plants there in the early 1800s. She also shared slides of dioramas in the park’s visitor center of the scrub habitat found in the Park including native honeysuckle and blazing star species. In February, they will stay at Sunshine RV Resort in Lake Placid near Lake-June-in-Winter State Park and the Archbold Biological Station as well as Highland Hammock State Park (HHSP) where they have camped in the past. She showed slides of wooden walkways through the cypress swamps in HHSP. Branches in the Live Oak grow almost horizontally it looks like in the pictures, and one could take a hammock-style nap on one of those big branches. Marion and George will return to Virginia in March after enjoying the warmer weather in Florida. Thank you, Marion.

Nancy Vehrs’ first destination for her 2022 Botanical Travels was Lee County, the westernmost county in Virginia. In November of 2021 Nancy purchased conservation property near Jonesville, about 350 miles from Richmond. The state will buy it from her, and the land will be included into National Heritage’s The Cedars Natural Area Preserve. In May of 2022, she and friends visited the land and found many blooming wildflowers, such as Miami Mist Phacelia, Little Brown Jug, Sedum, Phlox, Yellow Buckeye, Bearcorn, American Barberry, Yellow Stargrass, Glade Sandwort, Hoary Puccoon, Puttyroot Orchid, Blue Ash (found in only two counties in Virginia), and Running Glade Clover (Rarest wildflower in Virginia, globally rare and ‘threatened’ in Virginia). The Heritage steward, Laura Young, was with them, and she gave them permission to walk into a cave on the preserve. A vertical karst on Nancy’s property was not visited, but they did enjoy a picnic along the Powell River.

On June 1, Nancy and some friends visited Difficult Creek Natural Area Preserve in Halifax County led by Chris Ludwig. Rare plants there included Piedmont Barbara’s Buttons, and the very rare Tall Barbara’s Buttons. The Smooth Coneflower found there is globally rare and native to Virginia. It has skinny flower petals and tall stems. (The Purple Coneflower we plant in our ‘native’ gardens is not native to Virginia!) Nancy’s group visited Falkland Farm in the afternoon, and it is a major area that might become part of Difficult Creek Natural Area Preserve or a preserve of its own. Thank you, Nancy.

Janis Stone presented some surprising, fun photographs from mostly local gardens and parks. A female Northern Cardinal was eating tiny grapes on a native grape vine; Canada Geese were eating leftover corn in a harvested Delaware cornfield; a Red-shouldered Hawk was eating a garter snake, six or seven insects were on a Purple Milkweed; Carnival Candy Slime Mold was on a decaying log, a beautiful feather-edged Petrophila Moth was feeding on a milkweed; a Jack-o-lantern Mushroom was a beautiful orange in daylight, but in a picture taken at night it was glowing. The most surprising ‘find’ was of Barack Obama walking in a park! Thank you, Janis.

This was such an enjoyable Nature Show from our talented members who take great pictures and seem to love sharing them with us. The meeting adjourned at 9 p.m.

Karen Waltman,
Secretary
UPCOMING EVENTS & WALKS

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/

FEBRUARY

Sunday, Feb. 26, 8 am, Bird and Nature Walk at Merrimac Farm, last Sunday of every month. Join us! We will look for birds 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. We meet at Merrimac Farm, Stone House, 15014 Deepwood Lane, Nokesville. Dress for the weather, bring binoculars and camera. Info and RSVP, (703) 499-4954 or alliance@pwconserve.org

MARCH

Wednesday, March 1, 10 - 11 am. Winter Lecture Series - Spring Wildflowers of Northern Virginia with Nancy Vehrs. Don’t miss this fourth in a series of indoor lectures during the colder months. HOA Clubhouse: Villages of Piedmont II, 6770 Pinchot Lane, Haymarket, VA. Free. Register here: https://www.leopoldspreserve.com/events-1/winter-lecture-series-native-plants-2023-03-01-10-00

Thursday, March 2, 7 pm, PWWS Meeting, Tom McCoy presents Orchid Fever: Orchids and Their Fungal Relationships. This meeting will be held in person at Bethel Lutheran Church. Let’s get together again!

Saturday, March 4, 10 am. Tree Giveaway sponsored by Prince William Conservation Alliance and Todos Neighborhood Market. 16593 River Ridge Blvd., Woodbridge, VA. Several hundred Eastern Redbuds (Cercis canadensis) and Flowering Dogwood (Cornus florida) are looking for new homes to add beauty to your yard. Sign up to pick up two seedlings, one Dogwood and one Redbud per ticket. Register here: https://www.eventbrite.com/e/tree-giveaway-spring-2023-tickets-536235684367

APRIL

Sunday, March 5, 2 pm. Don’t miss our 11th ANNUAL AUTHOR EVENT! Ruth Rogers Clausen, Author of Deer-Resistant Native Plants for the Northeast. Manassas Park Community Center, 99 Adams Street, Manassas Park, VA.

Wednesday, March 8, at 5 pm, BRMC & Leopold’s Preserve. WOODCOCK WATCH! Join the group to watch the evening “Sky Dance” of male woodcocks as they enter the mating season. At twilight you will find a viewing spot along Meadow Loop and settle down for a magical evening! Bring a folding chair or blanket to sit on, and binoculars if you want a closer view. If you wish, bring along a warm drink to sip as you watch. 16290 Thoroughfare Road, Broad Run, VA.

Saturday, March 18, 8 am - 10 am, Free Clifton Institute Bird Walk, Free, adults & children 12 and up. 6712 Blantyre Road, Warrenton. Registration required. https://cliftoninstitute.org/event/bird-walk-36/

Wednesday, March 22, 2 pm, Nancy Vehrs will lead a walk at Conway Robinson State Forest, a 444-acre forest with wildlife, wildflowers and trails. Lee Highway, Gainesville. Email her at nvehrs1@yahoo.com

Saturday, April 8, 10 am - 4 pm, Annual Bluebell Festival at Merrimac Farm Wildlife Management Area, 15020 Deepwood Lane, Nokesville, VA., sponsored by Prince William Conservation Alliance, alliance@pwconserve.org Visitors of all ages may come to witness the awe of one of the largest patches of Virginia Bluebells in the Northern Virginia area, here blooming along Cedar Run. A sight to behold! Don’t miss naturalist-led walks through the Bluebells, tents with educational material provided by numerous conservation-oriented organizations and friendly people dispensing information. Boots are recommended if there have been recent rains. We are looking for PWWS volunteers for this event.

Thursday, April 13, 10 - Noon, Spring Wildflower Walk at Stone Bridge Trail at Manassas National Battlefield. Join Marion Lobstein for a spring wildflower walk on the Stone Bridge Trail at Manassas National Battlefield Park from 10 a.m. - 12 noon on Thursday, April 13, 2023. Contact Marion Lobstein at mlobstein@earthlink.net to register since the number of participants is limited.
This year we are celebrating the 40th anniversary of the organization of our chapter. This article (an update of one that appeared in the January 2013 Wild News) covers the chapter’s history through 1997. Prince William Wildflower Society (PWWS) became a chapter of the Virginia Wildflower Preservation Society (VWPS, the name was later changed to Virginia Native Plant Society) on January 10, 1983, and we celebrate that as our charter date. However, we had existed as PWWS for almost a year:

A small group of wildflower enthusiasts met March 20, 1982, with Marion Blois (now Lobstein) at Northern Virginia Community College (NVCC) to explore the possibility of forming a local organization. We met in May, with 48 potential members, to elect temporary officers. Simultaneously, a group in Fairfax County, led by Mary Painter, was forming the Virginia Wildflower Preservation Society, which became the state organization. The Fairfax group then named itself the Potowmack Chapter and became the first VWPS chapter. Ours was the second.

Elaine Haug was one of the first people I met during this time. She was interested in finding and identifying wildflowers and told me she was looking for people who “knew the flowers.” I said I can’t help you with that, but I have access to a printing press, and I can spread the word and help you find people. That’s how I became editor of Wild News, a job I held until January 1998 when Nancy Vehrs took over.

As I revisit our founding and early years, I am awed by the creativity and enthusiasm of our group of amateurs – the zeal of the newly converted! Our only professional, Marion, an instructor in NVCC’s biology department, worked hard to educate us and others with her college wildflower courses, field trips and newsletter articles.

In the early 1980s, residential and commercial development in Northern Virginia was proceeding at an alarming pace. Concern for the destruction of natural habitats was the main reason our group was organized and “beat the bulldozers” became our rallying cry. Rescued plants were relocated to local parks when possible, and many ended up in members’ gardens. Elaine and Marie Davis led many rescues for our chapter during the early years.

Plant propagation was an equally important activity. We collected seeds, held seed exchanges, and had programs on growing plants from seed. A two-page insert in the Jan.-Feb. 1985 newsletter listed propagation instructions for 29 species.

Choosing a wildflower logo was another early task. We held a contest over several months and chose Virginia bluebell as our chapter logo. Nicky Staunton was our resident artist, and her lovely drawings of bluebells and other natives accompanied newsletter articles and graced the printed certificates we gave to charter members. Nicky and Elaine filled in the certificates’ flower drawings with watercolors, and someone (Elaine?) hand lettered each person’s name on their certificate.

In addition to our bimonthly membership meetings, we had numerous field trips and participated in local and state activities including “Wildflower Week” each April. Jean Chitren led clean-up efforts and many plant walks at Conway Robinson Memorial State Forest. He also worked to clean up NVCC’s native plant trail, where Marion led walks.

Marie Davis planted and maintained a wildflower garden at Prince William Forest Park. Marion and Helen Walter worked to preserve the meadows at Manassas National Battlefield Park. Elaine led plant surveys at Leesylvania and Locust Shade Parks and worked with Dr. Ted Bradley to collect plants for the herbarium at George Mason University and to update the Atlas of the Virginia Flora.

In 1983, Nicky organized our first educational display at the Prince William County Fair, a tradition that continued with other leaders through 1995. Subjects included wildflower identification, medicinal plants, hedgerows, meadows, natural lawns, conservation for wildflower gardeners, and plants to attract butterflies. Our 1992 display, designed by Ken Bass, featured wetland plants and contained a small garden pond. Nicky also assembled an educational display for our chapter that was used at various events for many years.

Subjects for our monthly membership meetings included presentations on wildflower photography, natural plant dyes, species iris, mushrooms, native plants used by American Indians, wildflower meadows, and wildflowers for rock gardens. Member Toni Cripps, who called herself the Green Witch, gave a program on (appropriately) poisonous plants. Program Chairman Claudia Thompson Deahl snagged a Denali National Park naturalist for a slide show on the park’s wildflowers. (He wintered in Northern Virginia). Our first member slide show was in January 1987, a tradition that continues.

“PWWS History: The Early Years” by Nancy Arrington

Pictured left: Deanna High, Nancy Arrington, Nicky Staunton and Marion Lobstein
Nancy Arrington: PWWS History, The Early Years, continued:

We started a chapter library because there were very few wildflower-related books in the local libraries and no Borders or Barnes & Noble and certainly no Amazon. When the library became so large that it took two people to haul it to meetings, the books were sold or given away. Another interesting project was a craft sale before each November meeting in which members and friends could sell their wares. This practice lasted until 1990.

Our chapter produced several publications including three plant checklists that Marion compiled (and Marie typed). Elaine compiled checklists of county plants that had been documented and ones that we hoped to discover. I wrote brochures for woodland and butterfly gardens that I continue to update. The woodland brochure accompanied a slide program Marie and I developed. Elaine, Marion and Nicky also gave programs to other groups. Nicky’s drawings illustrated all our printed materials plus a series of note cards that served as an early fundraiser.

Early enthusiasm was at work during our first plant sale held in May 1983, organized by Marie Davis and Joyce Andrew, and held in conjunction with Manassas Mall’s Spring Bazaar over three days. The following Saturday we continued the sale at Hillendale Firehouse in Dale City. Our second sale was at Bethel Lutheran Church, our present location, and netted $700. We have had the sale every year until Covid ended our streak in 2020. Thankfully, since I am chairman, it’s now a two-hour event. Other chairmen have been Roxetta Wyer, Marie and Nancy Vehrs. Our garden tours began on a small scale with Marie Davis’s Sudley garden in 1986. However, youthful enthusiasm took over, and the next year we had a two-day event featuring the gardens of three members. We’ve had the tour (now a Sunday afternoon event) almost every spring with occasional summer tours. Marie and Helen Walter chaired the tour in the early years and now Nancy Vehrs does a wonderful job organizing our tours.

Elaine Haug and I were the organizers of our chapter. I was president for the first two years, and she was the second president. Presidents through 1997 were Nicky Staunton, Alden Bradford, Claudia Thompson-Deahl, Nancy Vehrs and Helen Walter. Others who served as officers or committee chairs include Marie, Jeanne Endrikat, Diane Flaherty, Kim Hosen, Frances Louer, Sandi Mueller (now Picarillo) and Martha Slover. Members who were active during our early years include Jeanne Fowler, Nancy Herwig, Tracy Johnson, Joanne Krumviede (long-time hospitality chair), Ed Milhous, Charles Smith and Gina Yurkonis. Some of the members mentioned in this article have moved away or are deceased. I am one of the few charter members who is still a member; others are Marie Davis, Judy Gallagher, Marion Lobstein, Ed Milhous, Nicky Staunton and Claudia Thompson-Deahl. Elaine Haug, not currently a member, lives in North Carolina.

In the early years of our chapter preserving native habitats, landscaping with native plants, and eradicating invasive species were new concepts and our mission was to educate ourselves and others about them. By the late 1980s, butterfly gardening became the hot topic, paving the way for today’s emphasis on saving all pollinators. Now all these subjects are routinely championed by conservation organizations, nurseries, garden writers, home gardeners and the general public. I am grateful to have been part of these efforts along with my fellow PWWS members mentioned here and other dedicated members who contributed creativity, enthusiasm, and a lot of hard work. Thanks to all of you.

The photo, left, was kindly provided by Nicky Staunton, taken in May 2004 while on a Southwest Virginia hike at Elk Garden Trailhead where Rt. 600 Whitetop Rd. crosses the AT. Though not an official VNPS hike, it was organized by Nicky Staunton and Nancy Arrington.

Pictured: Carrie Blair, Michael Sawyer, Sue Slack, Joann Krumvieed, Doug Ogle, Martha Slover, Sally Anderson, Toni Crouch (kneeling), Anita Cooper, Nancy Arrington.
Next Meeting: Thursday, March 2, 7 - 9 pm, In Person
Tom McCoy will present “Orchid Fever: Orchids and Their Fungal Relationships”
Bethel Evangelical Lutheran Church, Plantation Lane, Manassas

Two PWWS Spring Wildflower Walks offered

**Wednesday, March 22, 2 pm**
Nancy Vehrs will lead a walk at **Conway Robinson State Forest**, a 444-acre forest with wildlife, wildflowers and trails. Lee Highway, Gainesville. We will be seeking Hepatica, Bloodroot, Spring Beauty, Harbinger-of-Spring, Saxifrage, and maybe even Bluebells. Email her here: nvehrs1@yahoo.com

**Thursday, April 13, 10 am - Noon**
Join Marion Lobstein for a spring wildflower walk on the **Stone Bridge Trail at Manassas National Battlefield Park** from 10 am to 12 noon on Thursday, April 13, 2023. Park in the lot off Lee Hwy/Rt. 28 at the Fairfax/Prince William County line. Contact Marion Lobstein at mlobstein@earthlink.net to register since the number of participants is limited.