



Shenandoah Chapter Virginia Native Plant Society October 2015

Mission Statement:

We are a conservation organization dedicated to conserve Virginia's native plants and their ecosystems through education, advocacy and activities that promote appreciation, stewardship and appropriate use.

Upcoming Events:

October 3 Birds of the Burg walk in Hillandale Park Sierra Club contact: Ralph Grove - 540-999-8734
ralph.grove@gmail.com

Sunday October 4 Wild Virginia Poison Outing.

Dr. Chris Holstege, Medical Director of the Blue Ridge Poison Center and Professor of the UVa School of Medicine, will lead a walking tour around the Upper Lake and talk about poisonous plants, mushrooms and animals (e.g., snake and spider that reside within the Virginia National Forests). He will both identify on the hike and bring samples of various poisonous plants and mushrooms found within Virginia. Dr. Holstege cares for patients poisoned in Virginia, has performed research pertaining to natural toxins, and has numerous personal anecdotal case stories of errors made in the wilderness during hikes and with foraging. Register online to join us! If you have questions please contact Bette Dzamba (bettedaveystone@gmail.com) Directions to the meeting place will be provided the week before the event.

Tuesday October 6 Sierra Club Presents film on Appalachian Trail 7:00pm Courthouse Square Contact: Ralph Groves 540 999-8734 ralph.gove@gmail.com

Wednesday October 7 Edith J Carrier Arboretum Fall Plant & Bulb Sale. Weekdays during normal business hours. Fall is a great time to plant! Temperatures moderate and soil holds warmth allowing for rapid root development. Perennials, shrubs and trees planted in the fall establish to be ready for a spring bloom that will burst into enviable color! Shop the sale with friends and family for a fun way to enhance the beauty of your home or business landscape.

October 12-15, 19-22 Edith J Carrier Arboretum Botanical Illustration in Acrylic Wash.

In the Frances Plecker Education Center, October 12th—15th & 19th—22nd, 2015, 1:30-4:30 pm each day. Students will explore color mixing for botanical subjects. Enjoy an opportunity to learn from a botanical artist who has received the tribute of being commissioned by major educational agencies, and whose work is published.

Saturday October 17 Edith J Carrier Arboretum. Remarkable Trees Trip. Day trip leaving Plecker Educational Center at 8:00 am and returning 5:00 pm. \$25 per person. We will bike along a 12 mile section of the C & O Canal from Williasport to Fort Frederick. Bicycles provided. Register on line at the Edith J. Carrier Arboretum website.

Sunday October 18 Hike along the North River Trail. Southern Shenandoah Chapter of the PATC. Explore the headwaters of the North River. Contact: slynncameron@gmail.com (540 234 6273)

Saturday October 24 Hike along the Shenandoah Mountain Trail. Hike through the proposed Shenandoah Mountain Scenic Area. Southern Shenandoah Chapter of the PATC. Contact: slynncameron@gmail.com (540 234 6273)

Friday October 30 to Sunday November 1 The Shackelford Island Trip Wild Virginia

Off the North Carolina coast is a wild and remote island only accessible by boat. It offers superb shelling, birding, day hiking and primitive camping (short backpacking). Meet at the National Seashore Visitor center on Harkers Island on

late Friday afternoon. It is a 7 hour drive (from Charlottesville), so it will be necessary to spend the night before the trip in Beaufort, North Carolina. Wild Virginia will not be coordinating the carpool for this portion of the trip. At 9:15 on Saturday morning we will take the boat shuttle (\$20 round trip). There are moderate temperatures on the Island during the Fall, with the warm sound and ocean water surrounding it. Saturday night we will camp in the dunes, a few 100 feet or yards of our drop off, up to 1/2 mile, with extensive coastal views and a very close view of the spectacular Cape Lookout lighthouse.

This is Halloween night and costumes bought secretly are encouraged! There is excellent beach and maritime forest hiking/ beachcombing on the 9 mile island. We should be visited by the many wild ponies that roam the island freely! A trip list, driving directions and other logistics will be sent out to all who sign up. Water, lightweight and compact backpacking gear is required. There is a maximum of attendees so hurry up and register now!

The trip leader is John Holden, a Master Naturalist that has guided over 40 trips to the island. John also knows the islands fascinating history and a Shackelford ghost story well.

For more information please contact: John's phone 973-9179 or e-mail runningwithantlers@gmail.com

Friday November 6 Birds of the Burg walk in Hillendale Park Sierra Club contact: Ralph Grove - 540-999-8734 ralph.grove@gmail.com

Recent Events

State Meeting Big Success!

The annual meeting of the VNPS we cohosted with the Upper James River Chapter was a big success. We had a large turnout, over 120 attended. Mark Gatewood provided an excellent venue at the Frontier Culture Museum in Staunton. Chris Bowlen organized everybody, Jerry Hopkins and Gene Bowlen carried out the crucial task tending the bar, the folks at the Upper James Chapter and many other of our chapter's members helped at setting up the tables, putting together folders, arranging the catering, leading and co-leading field trips etc.

Theme of the Conference was: 'Rescue, Reclaim, Restore: Challenges for Native Habitats in Virginia's Great Valley' Three speakers with years of experience in the Shenandoah Valley's natural world presented programs at the Annual Meeting. All focused on habitats.

On Friday evening, **Lynn Cameron**, co-chair of Friends of Shenandoah Mountain and long-time board member of numerous outdoor organizations including our VNPS chapter, explained why Shenandoah Mountain is a special place in the national forest and deserves permanent protection and the proposed 90,000-acre Shenandoah Mountain National Scenic Area.

Nancy Sorrells, Sempervirens Editor for almost 20 years, who recently spent many months working to ensure that fracking would be banned from the George Washington National Forest also spoke Friday night. She explained why so many of us including the VNPS oppose the Atlantic Coast Pipeline and discussed some of the habitats that could be affected by this natural gas pipeline project.

The keynote speaker Saturday night was retired USDA District Conservationist **Bobby Whitescarver** spoke on planting native trees and restoring prairie in a sea of invasives and ignorance.

Some of the Field Trips Our Members Led or Co-Led

Saturday

Mike Smith reports: On Sept.12 six members of the VNPS and Jack LaMonica (the leader) and myself toured the **Lesesne State Forest near Wintergreen**. We had participants from as far as the Eastern Shore and Richmond join us. Lesesne S.F. is a tract of pure American Chestnut, and pure Chinese Chestnuts plus various hybrids between the two. Lesesne is managed by the American Chestnut Foundation. Jack is past president, and is very knowledgeable about the efforts including himself, of restoring a healthy American Chestnut back into the wild. He showed the group how to identify an American from a Chinese chestnut. We harvested some Chinese chestnuts and sampled them. We even gave some of the chestnuts to a biking couple from England who were traveling to Buenos Aires, Argentina. We saw two large American chestnuts that were 24 inches in



diameter. They were being treated to keep them healthy. We had a picnic lunch along the parkway. Our last stop was at the Rockbridge Winery near Steele's Tavern. It was a very informative day.

Mike Seth reports: Retired state forest researcher Tom Dierauf led and Mike Seth co-led an all day trip along **the Blue Ridge looking a geology and plant communities**. We had 17 folks in all on the trip. We first visited Love Gap swamp and look at the very rich communities including the swamp pinks. Then we visited the Greenstone Overlook on the Parkway with its extraordinarily diverse plant community flourishing in the rich greenstone soil. Then after a lunch stop at the Humpback Picnic area walked down to explore an exceptionally rich forest including one of the largest red oaks in Virginia. We also intended to examine some ginseng and the bright red berries. But all the ones had been seen the week earlier on a scouting trip were (illegally) dug out. Our final stop was on the nutritionally impoverish soils of Chilhowee formation along the AT at Sawmill Run Overlook in the SNP. We saw the results of a recent prescribed burn.

Betty Gatewood reports on the **Downtown Staunton/Lewis Creek** field trip. We had about 8 people, who were impressed by the city's work in stormwater management. The walk followed Lewis Creek as it appeared and disappeared in downtown Staunton with Lewis Creek and local history noted along the way. Planned cameo appearances were purple stemmed cliff-brake in the stonework of Lewis Creek, the Children's Art Network student flower tiles lining sidewalk along Lewis Creek near Mill Street, and the permeable pavers in Hardy Parking Lot near Lewis Creek. Surprise cameo appearances by friends, Neshia MacRae (Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation TMDL/watershed field coordinator), and Bonnie Strassler (local urban landscape architect) helped flesh out Staunton's pro-active methods of honoring the natural and human history of the area.

Shenandoah Mountain Field Trip. The group started at Hone Quarry Picnic area and hiked up the steep and rocky Cliff Trail to the first overlook, about 1 mile round trip. Everyone took their time and looked at plants along the way. When the group reached the overlook, Friends of Shenandoah Mountain Co-Chair Lynn Cameron gave a brief overview of the proposed Shenandoah Mountain National Scenic Area and talked a little about the group's collaboration with diverse forest stakeholders. The GWNF recommendation for designation of the SMNSA in its new 2014 plan was a big step forward, but introduction of a bill is still several years away. VNPS Nancy Vehrs was in the group and several botanists, including Tom Wiebolt of Virginia Tech. After descending, everyone ate lunch in the CCC Shelter and then headed for Reddish Knob. Shenandoah Mountain was socked in so participants were unable to see the scenic views that were promised. The last stop was the old Shenandoah Mountain Picnic Area on FR 85. From there the group hiked .5 mile down North River Trail to a spring that is the headwaters source for the North River, the largest tributary of the Shenandoah River (South Fork). Witch hazel was in bloom, earlier than usual because of the dry spell Virginia has had. The spring, which had been a watering hole for cattle who grazed up on the mountain in summers, was a misty, magical place that everyone enjoyed. After hiking back out, we made our way back to Mt. Crawford and the Frontier Culture Museum. Jana Walters helped lead the hike by serving the crucial function of being the sweep.

Sunday Morning

Mark Gatewood reports: My field trip was to **Grand Caverns**. Of the thirty signed up, 12 showed up. Most toured the cavern at a group rate. Then we went up Cave Hill botanizing. Fortunately for me we had an actual botanist, Tom Wiebolt who among other duties at Virginia Tech manages the Digital Atlas of the Flora of Virginia.

I made reference to Thomas Jefferson's entry in *Notes on the State of Virginia* (which none of these people had read!!) that the terrain around the cave was so steep you could "pitch a biscuit" into the South River below. Betty provided some biscuits but no one wanted to try, so I did the honors, in homage to Jefferson. The biscuit, alas, did not reach the river, due to the heavy vegetation.

Mike Seth reports: 18 people met at **Madison Run**. Our field trip leader never showed up but that didn't cause much problem as Bea Woody and I led the other folks along the fire road to see what we could find on what was a beautiful summer morning.

Mike Smith reports: Ten members of the VNPS joined Malcolm Cameron (the leader) and myself for a geology field trip to the **Confederate Breastworks at the WVA line** on rt. 250 and Ramsey's draft. First was a brief walk along the Breastworks. We were able to locate a healthy American Chestnut 300 ft. north of the porta john. It was about 11 inches in diameter and a double tree. Malcolm explained that there were three significant mountain building events in

the Appalachians. The third event (Allegheny Orogeny) was when Gondwana (Africa) collided with N. American (Laurussia) about 300 million years ago. This formed the supercontinent, Pangea. The resulting collision caused folding, faulting, and pushing up of the land masses on top of each other. The resulting mountains were as high as the Himalayas, but have since mostly eroded away. The Blue Ridge and Alleghenies are the remnants. During the Triassic time, about 220 million years ago, Pangea began rifting apart and the modern Atlantic Ocean basin began forming. Rift basins opened up long the Va. Piedmont and scattered volcanic activity formed igneous dikes cutting up the local sedimentary rocks. These can be seen in many locations in the Shenandoah Valley and Va. Alleghenies, including parts of Shenandoah Mountain. At Ramsey's Draft we saw the Pocono Formation which included quartz sands and gravels. Also noted were various sandstones, quartz conglomerates, black shale, and some plant fragment fossils. Additionally there was the Hampshire Formation. This included various shales, sandstone, and mudrock. The cross-bedding indicated that the stream flow was in the opposite direction maybe a million years ago. Numerous flakes of shiny mica were seen. Lastly, Alkaline Igneous Rock from Volcanic Dikes are 4/5 mile upstream in Fish Hollow. These are told apart by a dark grayish green color, often with pitted surfaces, iron stains, and denser than shale and sandstone. Another fine day in the field.



Jay Shaner doing his thing at the shale barren.

Please send any articles or announcements to [Elaine Smith](#)