



WILD NEWS

Prince William Wildflower Society

A Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

Number 2009-04

July-August 2009

MONDAY, JULY 20 PWWS

Membership Meeting

Bethel Lutheran Church Fellowship Hall, 7:30 p.m. Refreshments will be served.

Join us as **Bull Run Mountains Conservancy Executive Director Michael Kieffer** talks about the work of the Conservancy and its many educational programs for both adults and children. A native of Amherst, New York, Michael is a veteran naturalist, biologist, and educator. He spent five years as a naturalist for the Piedmont Environmental Center in High Point, N.C., where he and others led more than 12,000 students, K-12, each year through cultural and natural history interpretation, environmental awareness and issue education, and conservation education field experiences. Michael specialized in targeting environmental education programs toward high school A.P. students and special education students of all ages, and initiated adult programming for special interest groups including the mentally retarded and the hearing and visually impaired. Michael's program will give us an exciting foretaste of the PWWS Annual Meeting, which will take place September 19 at the Conservancy's headquarters on Bull Run Mountain. Details of the meeting are below.

Please plan to attend this fascinating program. PWWS members, guests, and all interested are welcome. Bethel Lutheran Church is located at 8712 Plantation Lane,

in Manassas, just off Rte 234 Bus. opposite the Prince William Hospital. If you need a ride to the meeting, please call PWWS President Helen Walter at 703-330-9614.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

At noon on Saturday September 19, the weekend before the big VNPS annual meeting, PWWS will have our own annual meeting and picnic at the Bull Run Mountains Conservancy. We met there a few years ago, but whether you came to that or not, the place has more trails to explore than most of us can do in an afternoon, so I hope this will make you want to go back. It's also a short walk to the Chapman/Beverly Mill, so people who want to linger can go down there before heading home. To get us in the mood, the Conservancy's executive director Michael Kieffer is our speaker for this month's meeting.

The Bull Run Mountains Conservancy is also close to Silver Lake, the county's newest acquisition, which I'm looking forward to exploring to see what's growing there. I'm not sure what facilities they have, so it may not work for an annual meeting, but we can at least plan a nature walk to see what they have. Maybe we'll turn up some thing that should be on the registry or needs protection.

Your president, **Helen Walter**

SAVE THE DATE!

Prince William Wildflower Society 2009 Annual Meeting

When: Saturday, September 19, 2009

Where: Bull Run Mountains Conservancy

Schedule:

12: 00 p.m. Potluck picnic

1:30 p.m. Chapter business meeting

President's report

Vote on proposed 2010 budget

Approval of slate for Nominating Committee

2:30 p.m. Plant and Seed Swap and Nature Walk to Silver Lake

For the picnic: Please bring a salad, vegetable, main dish, or dessert. Also bring a lawn chair if you can. PWWS will provide beverages, plates, cups, and utensils.



View of Blue Ridge with Masanutten Sandstone in Foreground 2008 (Photo courtesy of Charles Smith)

Election: Voting for the slate of candidates for Nominating Committee will take place at the Annual Meeting. Absentee ballots (2 for family memberships) will be sent in mid-August for members who are unable to attend. Mail-in ballots should be returned to Prince William

Wildflower Society, P.O. Box 83, Manassas, VA 20108. Ballots will be provided to members voting at the Annual Meeting.

Setting: Bull Run Mountains Conservancy, 17405 Beverley Mill Drive, Broad Run, VA 20137.

Directions: From Manassas, take I66 West to Exit 40, towards Haymarket. Turn left onto Rte 15 and immediately right on Rte. 55. From 55, turn onto Turner Road – it will be on your right. Cross over I-66 and make an immediate left onto Beverley Mill Road. BRMC is at the end of the street on the left.

Monday, May 18, 2009 Prince William Wildflower Society Meeting Minutes

Kim Hosen, Director, Prince William Conservation Alliance, was introduced as the guest speaker. The benefits of preserving publicly owned properties for passive recreation were discussed, and a presentation showed maps and included beautiful pictures of flora and fauna found at the following three sites.

Dove's Landing is a 235-acre undeveloped property located along the Occoquan River upstream from Lake Jackson, and approximately one mile from the intersection of Prince William Parkway and Route 234. Prince William County purchased the property in 1996 to protect the site from development, citing needs to protect the Occoquan Reservoir. Since that time, the property has remained vacant, with a "Public Land - Keep Out" sign posted at the boundary.

Silver Lake is also owned by the County and includes about 230 acres. For two-plus years, community input has helped develop plans for Silver Lake--with a focus on passive recreation and horseback riding. However, the PWC Park Authority, which has asked Supervisors to transfer Silver Lake to their agency, proposes to reevaluate the plan and says their process will consider all recreational uses. Kim said the PW Conservation Alliance is supporting deed restrictions that limit the range of recreation uses at Silver Lake to those previously supported by both citizens and the PWC Park

Authority. A new public hearing date (originally June 2nd) for Silver Lake was set for June 23 at Board Chambers, McCoart Government Center, Prince William Pkwy. Kim encouraged people to voice their concerns. [Update: the PWCA proposed restrictions were defeated, unfortunately; we now must rely on the PWC Park Authority to manage the site in such as way as to serve the community best.]

It took five years and three agencies to raise three million dollars to purchase **Merrimac Farm** near Nokesville. It opened to the public on January 16, 2008. The Stone House is the focal point, and hopefully it can be staffed by volunteers and remain open on the weekends. The Prince William Conservation Alliance, Virginia Game and Inland Fisheries, and Marine Corps Base Quantico all contribute to ongoing operations at Merrimac Farm. Some of the activities include a 4th of July Butterfly Count, a spring Bluebell Festival, a Christmas Bird Count, youth education classes, monitoring an eastern bluebird trail (21 bluebird eggs were found recently.) and bird, plant, and butterfly identification walks.

How to get involved: Write to the Board of PW County Supervisors at BOCS@pwcgov.org about Dove's Landing and Silver Lake- PW County properties.

The **Featherstone National Wildlife Refuge** is another publicly owned property that is currently closed to the public. Located along Prince William's Potomac River shoreline, the Featherstone Refuge was created in the 1970s when the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service acquired 146 acres of bottomland forest and

wetlands from the District of Columbia to "protect the features of a contiguous wetland area." In 1992, the refuge nearly doubled in size when Prince William County donated an additional 161 acres. The Featherstone Refuge is a great place to watch wildlife and should be opened to the public for passive recreation uses.

How to get involved: Write to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at FW5RW_MSNNEWS@FWS.gov to support the opening of the Featherstone National Wildlife Refuge to the public.

Announcements: Marion Lobstein reported that the "Flora of Virginia" is on track for publication in 2012. The last flora was published in 1762. The Web site is www.floraofvirginia.com. PWWS will be sponsoring two families of plants as we have donated \$2,000 twice.

Helen Walter reported on the plant sale and all were invited to enjoy more refreshments.

Those in attendance included:

Kim Hosen-guest speaker and PWWS member, Helen Walter, Marion Lobstein, Sue Coulson, Debbie Hutton, Betty Truax, Joann Krumviede, Jeanne Fowler, Charlotte Cochard, Nell Benton, Brenda Hallam, Joyce and Tom Andrew, June Najjum, Phyllis Putnam, Frances and Phil Louer, William Hendrickson, Charles Smith, Rosemary Luckett, Diane Flaherty, Trish Freed, Karen Waltman.

Respectively submitted,
Karen Waltman, PWWS Secretary

EVENTS

Saturday, July 18, beginning at 7:30 a.m.

Birding Tour at Merrimac Farm

Merrimac Farm Wildlife Management Area, 15020 Deepwood Lane, Nokesville. Tour Leader: Harry Glasgow. Birders will depart from the Stone House Nature Center and travel through a variety of habitats, including open fields, woodland edges and bottomland forest. Everyone is welcome! This is a great opportunity for beginning birders to learn more. Dress for the outdoors - long pants, long socks, sturdy shoes and a hat. Bring binoculars, cameras and water to drink. In case of rain (not

a drizzle), the count will be rescheduled. This program is open to the public and free of charge. For more information please email the Prince William Conservation Alliance at alliance@pwconserve.org or call 703-499-4954. **August 11-12**, University of Pittsburgh, Johnstown, Pa. Mid-Atlantic Exotic Pest Plant Council annual conference. Topics include "The Three R's of Why Invasive Species Control is Restoration," "Establishing and Enforcing a "Do-Not-Plant List" within a Homeowners Associated-governed Community," "White-tailed Deer Interactions," and much more of interest. Complete program and online registration is at www.morrisarboretum.org. One- or two-day registration is available.

Saturday, September 19, PWWS Annual Meeting, Bull Run Mountains Conservancy, Noon – 3:30. See page 2 for details.

VNPS ANNUAL MEETING: SEPTEMBER 25-27

This year's Virginia Native Plant Society annual meeting promises to be an exciting one: Below is an announcement from **VNPS President Sally Anderson** that details of the meeting and reservation information. You can also check for updates on the meeting at www.vnps.org.

The 2009 VNPS Annual Meeting will focus on the late summer and early autumn flora of the Blue Ridge and Allegheny Mountains in Southwest Virginia. The Blue Ridge Wildflower Society and New River Chapters will host the event at the Salem Civic Center in Salem. This area is rich in geologic and plant diversity and field trips feature the Blue Ridge Parkway, Jefferson National Forest and several Nature Conservancy Preserves to see wetlands, meadows, waterfalls and forested areas. Friday evening starts with a reception and is followed by a slide presentation by **Peter Heus** on native plant propagation for our home landscapes. Saturday features a variety of field trips, a silent auction for the "Flora of Virginia" project, and then culminates with the annual meeting, a

buffet dinner and our keynote speaker, **Douglas Tallamy**, author of *Bringing Nature Home: How Native Plants Sustain Wildlife in Our Gardens* (Timber Press 2007, rev. ed. 2009). Please come and enjoy a weekend meeting new and old friends and witnessing some outdoor splendor.

Accommodations: There is a block of 40 rooms being held until Tuesday, August 25 at the La Quinta Inn 140 Sheraton Drive Salem, VA 24153: \$89 + tax. Call (540) 562-2717 and mention the VNPS Annual Meeting. The La Quinta e-mail is lq6269gm@laquinta.com. All rooms include a full breakfast, pool, microwave, refrigerator and laundry. Other local hotels include the Hampton Inn 540-776-0743 and Comfort Suites 540-375 4800. ***

Note: There is a VA Tech football game in Blacksburg on 9/26 so make your reservations early.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Prince William Forest Park is seeking public comment on an upcoming project that will resurface the public roads and parking lots in the park. Please see the announcement below. You can also find out more information at www.nps.gov/prwi/parkmgmt/publicinvolvement.htm

Public Comment Period Opens for Recovery Act Project

Friday, June 26, 2009 marked the beginning of a 30-day public comment period open for an Environmental Assessment on the "Resurface Public Roads and Parking Lots" project at Prince William Forest Park. The proposed project at Prince William Forest Park will resurface, restore, rehabilitate, and reconstruct park roadways and parking lots. It will replace signs, guardrails, and culverts, and recondition stone and asphalt paved waterways. It will also potentially expand two parking lots, D and E, and reconfigure the nine-mile Scenic Drive intersection at mile marker two. The National Park Service encourages the public to comment on the project until the public comment period closes on August 15, 2009. Public comment will aid the park in avoiding adverse effects on park resources and visitors.

PRINCE WILLIAM WILDFLOWER SOCIETY
P.O. Box 83, Manassas, Virginia 20108-0083
Chartered January 10, 1983
Logo: *Mertensia virginia* (Virginia Bluebells)

President & Programs, Helen Walter, helenwalt43@verizon.net (Tel: 703-330-9614)

Vice-President, Betty Truax, emtruax@comcast.net (Tel: 703-794-8272)

Secretary, Karen Waltman, geraldwaltman@hotmail.com (Tel: 703-830-5710)

Treasurer, Diane Flaherty, talltrees@verizon.net or dflaherty@tnc.org (Tel: 703-330-9862 or 703-247-3732)

Botany, Marion Lobstein, mblobstein@earthlink.net (Tel: 703-536-7150 or 703-257-6643)

Conservation & Education, Charles Smith, chrssmith@msn.com (Tel: 703-361-5125 or 703-324-8555)

Membership & Plant Sale Co-chair, Nancy Vehrs, nvehrs1@yahoo.com or

nancy.vehrs@fairfaxcounty.gov (Tel: 703-368-2898 or 703-324-2351)

Editor, Wild News, Deanna High, deannahigh@gmail.com (Tel: 703-392-3505 or 703-606-9988)

Plant Sale Co-Chair, Nancy Arrington, narrington1@verizon.net (Tel: 703-368-8431 or 703-368-9711 or 703-408-7446)

Publicity, VACANT

Refreshments, Joann Krumviede, dkdk1@verizon.net (Tel: 703-938-4378)

Registry, VACANT

Advisor/VNPS2-VP, Nicky Staunton, nstaunton@earthlink.net (Tel: 5400-547-2813)

Midsummer in the middle of the road

Picking up on my rambles from earlier this spring, it's been a seasonal journey of sorts to see how the waste spaces of my street have evolved. A week or so ago, the county came by unexpectedly and mowed the easements, so most is only a memory, although the verges of the dozen or so properties on the street remain sharply divided between monoculture (grass/lawns) and a tangle of native trees, flowers, and forbs with a host of alien invasive species of the same categories. Even with the abundance of stiltgrass, porcelain berry, Japanese honeysuckle, and other unlovelies, I still find the tangle preferable – it's like the half-glass of water. Is it half-full or half-empty? Because along with the horrors, there are still a lot of natives to admire and to stimulate interest from both pollinators and people. I'm especially gratified to see a lot of redbud seedlings thriving in the ditches, since it's one of my absolute favorite trees ever. Of course, there are also saplings of tulip poplars galore, some sycamore and ironwood, and many of maple, sassafras, oak, and hickory. There are also some nice little Virginia pines growing where it's wettest.



Around the middle of June, I was happy to discover *Lobelia spicata* – a very small clump of only 2 or 3 spikes – blooming in a dampish spot where sun crosses into shade's edge by our property – its delicate blue flowers a lesson in lovely daintiness. We saved it from our own trimming efforts, but it fell victim to the indiscriminate mowing by the county. The *Flora of Missouri* (accessed at www.missouriplants.com) states that *L. spicata* "is a highly variable species. The flowers can be bluish to white, the stems can be glabrous to hispid, and the calyx lobes can have variable auricles at their bases. The anthers of the plant can also be variable in color sometimes. The flowers are inverted (resupinate) on this plant so what looks like the top of the flower is actually the bottom and vice-versa." My specimens were definitely off to the blue side of things, which is how they caught my eye.

Some of the prettiest flowers growing by the road now are the descendants of plants brought here by European settlers of the North American continent: tiny, lovely Deptford pinks, cheerful oxeye daisies, and, perhaps brought as a food crop, the beautiful chalky blue wild chicory (blue sailors) that blooms so



prodigiously over much of the U.S. Some of these transplants, of course, are not benign: Spotted Knapweed (*Centaurea maculosa*), although pretty in drifts along Rte 234 and elsewhere, is

alleopathic, producing a toxin that retards the growth of plants around it, so native species have a difficult time competing. (Thanks to Nicky Staunton for pointing this out.) A single plant of Knapweed can produce over 1,000 seeds to be wind-dispersed or





spread through birds and other animals. On the half-full side of things, however, our abundant spring and early summer rains are probably the reason why some old friends reappeared this season, both flora and fauna. One such was Indian pipe – absent for several years now – popping up in new places with its ghostly cool presence. The evening magic of fireflies twinkling their mysterious semaphore at the tops of dark hollies is another plus of the wet season. On the herbaceous side of things along the street are many more milkweeds (or so it seems to me) than in years past, whorled loosestrife (*Lysimachia quadrifolia*) is markedly plentiful, poison ivy flourishes, and a ten-foot wild lettuce (*Lactuca canadensis*) – the tallest in its clump of three or four on my neighbors' side of the street – catches my eye at last. This striking member of the Aster family (*Asteraceae*) has a milky sap, and its root system consists of a thick deep taproot.

Leaves are edible, although said to be quite bitter. According to its profile at www.illinoiswildflowers.com, wild lettuce “varies considerably in size depending on growing conditions.” The small yellow to orange flowers of *L. canadensis* “attract bees primarily...[but] Goldfinches occasionally eat the seeds. Notwithstanding the bitter white latex in the foliage, mammalian herbivores occasionally eat this plant,” including cottontail rabbits, white-tailed deer, and horses. A plant that looks similar in many respects is the nonnative *Lactuca serriola* (Prickly Lettuce). Its leaves are bluer and there are prickly hairs along the mid-vein on the underside of its leaves. Another native wild lettuce, *Lactuca floridana*, is also common along roadsides, but blooms slightly later (August-October) and is hairy rather than smooth. Its flowers are blue instead of yellow, and it greatly resembles *L. canadensis* before bloom, although the sap of the latter is said to have a “salmon color to it.” *Lactuca* derives from the Latin for “milk-giving,” as the milky white sap is common to all lettuces, even Iceberg! Lore has it that the milky latex of wild lettuce was used by Native Americans as a remedy for poison ivy.

–Deanna High, Editor

Photos and Images: *Lactuca canadensis*, USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database / Britton, N.L., and A. Brown. 1913. An illustrated flora of the northern United States, Canada and the British Possessions. Vol. 3: 320. *Lobelia spicata*, Larry Allain @ USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database; *Lactuca floridana* leaves and flowers, Steve Baskauf, www.cas.vanderbilt.edu/bioimages, 2003; Common Milkweed, Deanna LaValle High, July 5, 2009. **Sources:** Wildflowers of Tennessee and the Ohio Valley and the Southern Appalachians, Lone Pine Press, 2005; Strausbaugh and Core, *Flora of West Virginia* 2nd. ed., Seneca Books, n.d.; *Field Guide to Wildflowers*, Eastern Region, National Audubon Society, 2001; www.missouriplants.com; www.illinoiswildflowers.info; Burrell, *Native Alternatives to Invasive Plants*, Brooklyn Botanic Garden, 2006.

And...ITEMS OF NOTE

Speaking of glasses half-full or half-empty, a March 18 essay from New England Wildflower Society's **Bill Cullina**, “**The Biodiversity All Stars**,” offers a insightful look at the “what is native” issue and a stellar list of the “Top Ten” native species that are most highly “biopositive.” His list is geared towards New England, of course, but has much resonance for us in the mid-Atlantic region as well. A must-read for most of us! The essay may be accessed at www.newfs.org/publications0and-media/articles/the-biodiversity-all-stars.html.

More Biodiversity... The Virginia Biodiversity Assessment (VBA) provides the most comprehensive summary of Va. Biodiversity to date

according to Virginia Natural Heritage E-News (Spring 2009). See www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural_heritage/documents/enewsspr09.pdf for more info.

WHITE NOSE SYNDROME, disease devastating bat populations in Vermont and New England, has spread to Virginia.

Below are links for information on the disease that is now killing Virginia bats:

- www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife/bats/white-nose-syndrome/
- www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural_heritage/documents/final_wns_recommendations_for_vaw
- <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/pdf/white-nosefaqs.pdf>

The Sunflower

Bring me the sunflower to plant in my garden here
Where the salt of the flung spray has parched a space,
And all day long to the blue and mirroring air
Let it turn the ardor of its yellow face.

These dark things to the source of brightness turn,
In a flow of colors into music flowing, spend
Themselves forever. Thus to burn
Is consummation, of all ends the end.

Bring me within your hands that flower which yearns
Up to the ultimate transparent white
Where all of life into its essence burns:
Bring me that flower impassioned of the light.

--Eugenio Montale

*"Portami il girasole" translated from the Italian by Maurice English
From Eugenio Montale Selected Poems, New Directions Books (New York: 1965)*

Photo: *Helianthus giganteus*, Deanna High, July 10, 2009, with thanks to Bruce Jones and Nicky Staunton



**PRINCE WILLIAM WILDFLOWER SOCIETY
A Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society
P.O. Box 83, Manassas, Virginia, 20108-0083**

**NEXT MEETING: MONDAY, July 20, Bethel Lutheran Church, Manassas, Virginia
7:30 p.m.**

"Bull Run Mountains Conservancy" with Michael Kieffer