

NATIVE NOTES



THE WEST VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

Number 2 Volume 2

November 1994

NOW THAT THE GROWING SEASON IS OVER...

by Emily Grafton

I have been driving across I-68 from Morgantown to Frostburg since August, when I accepted a job with Frostburg State University. The long drive has been quite enjoyable despite my nagging concern over the amount of nitrous oxide my car is adding to the atmosphere. I have seen sunrises and sunsets that could evoke the Hallelujah Chorus, soaring hawks, a bevy of crows, and watched the seasons vegetation slowly turn majestic and more recently fade away.

For several days the sight of browning vegetation has made me a little melancholy. However, one bright, sunny day last week I was delighted by the site of bits of fluffy down wafting across the road, and rising up into the trees. The copious asters, goldenrods, and milkweeds that garnished the highway were still alive. I was reminded that the miracle of seed dispersal and the cycles of nature were occurring, that all of this was just a prelude to next season's renewal. Besides, things won't be dull brown for long, soon I'll be "enjoying" the snow?

Below is a passage from An Almanac For Moderns, published by Donald Culross Peattie in 1935. This charming book is filled with some beautiful philosophies and prose on the natural world. The following passage fits this time of year and provides a glimpse of earlier points of view. Happy winter botanizing!

"On a fine balmy day like this, just after rain, with a breeze blowing as steady as a Trade, silken argosies from aster and goldenrod, thistles and dandelions, drift past continuously. They seem to light, to have reached a destination, only to be borne on again by another wind.

It is worthy of note that the newest, most highly developed and successful of all plant families, the thistle family, is especially given to plumose seeds. The goats-beard has so much feathery stiff surface of down, proportioned to the weight of seed, that should it start from a high mountain altitude on a continuous current it could travel sixty miles before once touching earth or water. In this fashion the composite family has made its way around the world.....And yet the idea is nothing new. Nature has tried the winged seed experiment a score of times in many families-dogbane, milkweed, clematis and some anemones, trees like willow, poplar, sycamore, maple, linden and ash, and some grasses and sedges. It is found in the cat-tail family, one of the most ancient and primitive flowering plants still alive, and wafted it successfully round all the marshes of the world. So, in the end there seems to have been a return to the beginning, as if nothing more competent could be devised."

A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

by John Northeimer

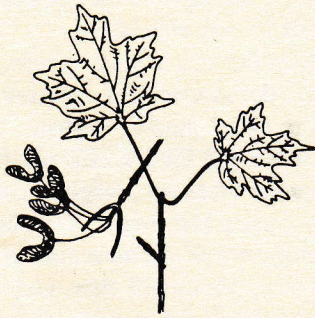
I thoroughly enjoyed the Annual Meeting at Watoga State Park. Every activity, from the bull session Friday night to the somewhat saturated trip to Cranberry Glades, was a learning experience. The old time banjo and fiddle music in the evenings topped it off! I would like to thank all who contributed time and energy to make the Annual Meeting a Success.

A new program was conceived at the meeting and given the name "Go Native!" The thrust will be to provide native plant alternatives to the exotic and potentially invasive plants that are distributed in the mail order seed mixes or from other sources. This will involve public education through printed materials, public

presentations and coordinated activities with government agencies and private native stock suppliers.

The "Native Shrubs in Wildlife Landscaping" fact sheets have been published and submitted to the West Virginia Nongame Wildlife Program, fulfilling our grant requirements. The WVNPS will examine methods for reproducing and distributing these informative flyers. The Education and Outreach and Propagation and Landscaping Committees will work with potential suppliers of nursery stock covered by the existing fact sheets and determine if additional fact sheets should be prepared for other currently available native stock.

SUGAR
MAPLE



The Brooks Arboretum, within Watoga State Park, has been selected for a Society Service Project. A plan outlining proposed quantitative studies of vegetation, development of interpretive materials and possible trail improvements will be prepared this winter. The plan will be submitted to the Park Superintendent for review and approval. Contact John Northeimer for more information.

The nominations and elections Committee will soon be soliciting nominations for candidates for positions to be filled in April of 1995. Members are encouraged to step forward and serve! Your ideas and energy have great potential to actively promote our Society goals. Contact Steve Mace, Nominations and Election Committee Chair, and provide your suggestions.

There is a place for each and every member to serve the organization. You would be surprised what a difference it can make! I invite all members to attend the next scheduled Board of Directors Meeting. It will be held on **Saturday, November 19, 10 AM, at the Western Steer Steak House in Flatwoods.**

THE 1994 INVASION OF WEST VIRGINIA

by Bill Grafton

Aliens have been invading the U.S. mainland and have infiltrated West Virginia! Aliens have replaced 37% of the native Pennsylvanians, and nearly 25 % of the native West Virginians.

The aliens are exotic plants and they are replacing our native vegetation.

Without a doubt the biggest group of aliens came as farm and landscape plants. Farmers are still fighting weeds such as Johnson grass, ragweeds, smartweeds, pigweeds, leafy spurge and stinging nettle. Hoeing, tilling, mowing, plowing and herbicides are all attempts to control weeds. Multiflora rose was touted as a "living fence" in the 1950's but now occupies many entire fields. Transport of hay, cattle and crops across state lines provides plants with many opportunities to spread further. Other exotics that plague pastures and meadows are hawkweeds, bedstraws, sowthistle, chickweeds, knapweed, musk thistle and Canada thistle.



DANDELION

Our yards are filled with aliens such as mouse-ear hawkweed, crabgrass, heal-all, ground ivy, speedwells, dandelion and sourgrass, to name a few. Many ornamentals have escaped from flower gardens, yards, cemeteries and parks. A few of these are tree-of-heaven, paper mulberry, privets, American Holly, mimosa, Siberian elm, white poplar, white willow, white mulberry, winged euonymus, Japanese barberry, oriental bittersweet, wisteria and English Ivy. The list could go on, and on, like the pink bunny on the Energizer commercial.

Many seeds have obviously hitchhiked on trains, trucks and cars. Look at the string of

phragmites, purple loosestrife, chickory, tickseed-sunflower, narrow-leaved cattail, and yellow bedstraw that lines many interstates and highways. I have seen hyssop-leaved thoroughwort three times in WV; twice along railroads and once along I-79.

Some of our native plants have also hitchhiked on automobiles and along roads. Among these plants are hairy and late flowering thoroughworts, ironweeds, sparges and the beautiful New England Aster.

Kudzu spreads prolifically along the railroads in southern WV, and there are at least three locations along roads in the Morgantown area.

Reclamation of strip mines, roadbanks, residences, malls, airports, etc. have brought what could be our worst invaders.

Large areas have been planted with kentucky 31 fescue, sericea lespedeza, love grasses, crown vetch, flat peas, sweetpea and birdsfoot trefoil. The alleged native wildflower plantings along our highways are another group of mostly introduced plants causing a lot of concern.

Add to this the numerous wildlife plantings of Japanese, Tartarian, Morrow's and Amur honeysuckle, and Chinese chestnut. What about our aquatic habitats? The farm ponds, lakes and rivers are in no better shape. Pondweeds, bulrushes, and water lilies have been spread by birds and people to numerous ponds and lakes.

Japanese knotweed, achaline, purple loosestrife and primrose-willow line the banks of the Ohio River and many of our rivers and streams. In the adjacent floodplains and forests look for two grasses (Arthraxon and Eulalia) that have overrun native plants along many areas of the Potomac and New Rivers. Garlic mustard was a rarity in the 1950's, but is now very common in most floodplains throughout West Virginia. Last, but not least, there is mile-a-minute, an extremely prickly type of Japanese smartweed that grows very fast, but not quite as fast as the name suggests.

The future for these aliens is bright. These aggressive alien species will dominate the future West Virginia landscape as surely as they have in New Zealand, Hawaii and Florida.



ASIATIC
DAY
FLOWER

We will likely import natural enemies (insects and diseases) from foreign countries where these exotics originated. Other controls will include fire, mowing, herbicides and varying water levels along streams.

Each human disturbance to the landscape gives these species a tighter grip within the local ecosystem, pushing increasing numbers of native species a little closer to the threatened, endangered or extinct status.

The WVNPS Board of Trustees at its September meeting discussed the problem of non-native, exotic species and how they impact natural areas in West Virginia. P.J. Harmon was appointed chairperson of the "Go Native" committee which is charged with the task of examining the literature regarding exotic species in West Virginia as well as the eastern U.S., examine the current situation in our state's natural areas, develop a series of recommendations regarding these issues to be reviewed and approved by the Board of Trustees, and lead the way in educating our membership and the people at large of West Virginia about exotic species. If you would like to learn more about this committee or what you can do to help, call P.J. Harmon at 304/636-6823.

WV NATURAL HERITAGE IS GROWING

by P.J. Harmon

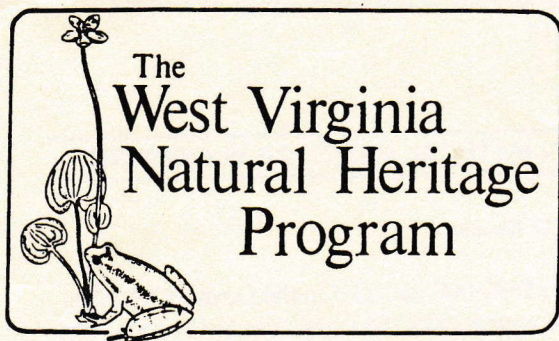
The \$400,000 included in the Governor's budget and approved by the legislature last session, plus funds from The Nature Conservancy and the US Fish and Wildlife Service are fueling some excellent conservation work by West Virginia's Nongame and Natural Heritage programs this year!

Carmen Blumberg is coordinating the Nongame's School Utilization program and

beginning to process requests from schools around the state for funding to help schools educate children about non-harvested animals and the plants and communities associated with them. Drew Jones is helping Kathy Leo with nongame newsletter stories, informative brochures, and assisting Craig Stihler and Jack Wallace in studying the endangered Virginia big-eared bat (*Plecotus townsendii virginianus*) at 11 maternity caves. They have continued to carry out radio-telemetry studies to determine more about the foraging habits and habitats of the big-eared bat.

Several streams were surveyed this summer for freshwater mussels to determine the occurrence and status of endangered species and species of special concern.

New computers were purchased to assist with the growing data storage demands and the analysis of rare species information. Lisa Menell is working on compiling names for three booklets: 1) Current Natural History Research in West Virginia, 2) A Listing of Experts on Various Fields of Natural History Within West Virginia, and 3) A Directory of Natural History Groups and Clubs Active in West Virginia. These documents will prove to be extremely valuable to anyone working on conservation within our state. **TO OBTAIN FORMS TO ADD INFORMATION TO THESE PUBLICATIONS, PLEASE WRITE OR CALL THE WV HERITAGE PROGRAM (304/637-0245).**



Donna Mitchell revisited all the state's locations of running buffalo clover (*Trifolium stoloniferum*), a federally endangered (FE) species. A few new sites were found, all within

Randolph County and most within the Monongahela National Forest.

Segments of the lower portions of the Greenbrier River were searched in vain for more populations of Virginia spiraea (*Spiraea virginiana*) (another FE species). Chris Jesse and Dana Soehn were hired as seasonal ecologists to gather community data on shale barrens throughout West Virginia and to monitor the federally endangered plant species, shale barren rockcress (*Arabis serotina*). Chris is still compiling that community data and helping us to compile a new checklist of the vascular plants of West Virginia. Similarly, John Wood and Greg Urban were hired in cooperation with The Nature Conservancy of "West Virginia (TNC) to collect community data on the DNR's wetland property along the Meradow River.



Running
Buffalo
Clover

Supported by funding from the US Fish and Wildlife Service, TNC and DNR, Dean Walton developed an efficient and effective way to monitor another federally endangered species, harperella (*Ptilimnium nodosum*) whose largest populations in the world occur along Sleepy Creek and the Cacapon River in Morgan County. This new monitoring technique will allow WVHP to monitor threats and significant changes in population size over time in an efficient and cost effective manner.

Dr. Tom Weaks of Marshall University's Department of Biological Sciences is spending some time in the field looking for new populations of a federal Category 2 (suspected of being threatened or endangered) species of moss (*Tortula ammoniana*) in Pocahontas County.

Dr. Dan Evans of Marshall University's Department of Biological Sciences and his graduate student Eric Ewing are currently gathering data on the taxonomy of a rare mint

called the heart-leaved skullcap (*Scutellaria ovata* ssp. *pseudoarguta*) in an attempt to determine if this sub-species is a valid taxon and if it is truly rare in the world.

I'm still administrating botanical projects, making a few field trips to sites such as wetlands, shale barrens, and limestone outcrops, working on the Checklist of the Vascular Flora of West Virginia, researching the global and state status of selected rare plant species for which WVHP has global and state rank responsibility, writing up plant characterization and stewardship abstracts that summarize what is known about given rare species and how to manage for them, helping with a new book on the rare plants of West Virginia, and helping Dr. John Thieret and John Baird write a book on the wetland plants of the state. It's an exciting time to be part of the conservation of West Virginia's natural heritage! If you would like to help in this adventure, contact the Natural Heritage Program (304/637-0245) and we'll tell you how!

THE GEOLOGY FACTOR FIELD TRIP - AUGUST 20TH

By John Northeimer

The group was small but the action was fast. Those of you who missed the field trip to Canaan Valley and Dolly Sods missed great weather and good fellowship.

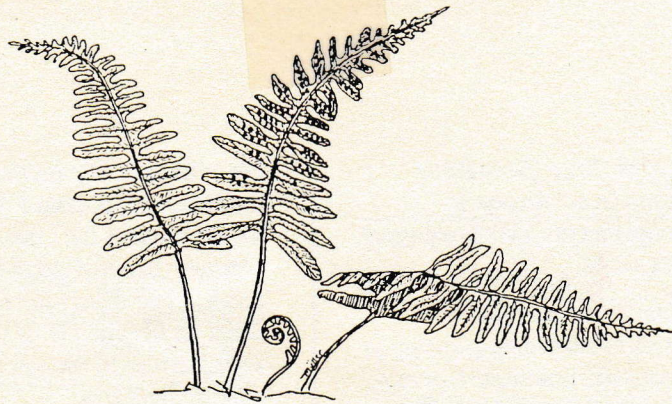
We started our adventure at the "fossil pit" for an introduction to the paleoecology of the Greenbrier limestone. Everyone found a variety of marine fossils including horn coral, brachiopods, mollusks, gastropods and bryozoa. What does all this have to do with plants? Well, as they say, you had to be there! The link between these small, 300 million year old fossils is more direct than you might think.

We visited a location for the woodland horsetail (*Equisetum sylvaticum*). A highlight of the trip was the discovery of a plant being tracked by the heritage program - Dew Drop (*Dalibarda repens*). I had been looking for this location for two years. One of our fellow field trippers, a new member from Ohio, took us right to it!

We ended our trip on the Allegheny Front at bear Rocks, elevation 3900 feet. This structural feature isolates the Ohio and Potomac River systems, thereby forming the eastern continental divide. The Allegheny Front has a pronounced effect on the amount of rainfall that reaches the shale barrens to the east. But that is a topic for a future field trip.

Note: Trip plant list on file.





COMMON POLYPODY FERN

*You will notice some changes in the format of the newsletter. We were looking at cutting costs with this issue since we are near the end of the "fiscal year." We may stay with this general layout of the newsletter unless you, the society member would like us to keep to the original format - at least as much as is possible. I will be preparing the newsletter with different software than P. J. used. If you have any strong opinions about how you would like to see the newsletter prepared please give me a call or write a letter. Thanks!

Sincerely,
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