

BSWP Field Trips & Meetings

May – June 2012 • BOTANICAL SOCIETY OF WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA • www.botsocwpa.org

Registration for Botanical Society field trips is not required. Everyone is welcome, including non-members. Trips last 3 to 4 hours but one can leave at any time. For questions, call the field trip leader or Loree Speedy at 724-872-5232. Wear shoes that can get wet or muddy. Water and a hat are recommended.

Saturday, May 5, 10 a.m.

Wolf Creek Narrows near Slippery Rock, Butler County

Leader: Dick Nugent; rmnugent@live.com 412-487-5549

Directions: From Pittsburgh take I-79 north to Exit 105. At the end of the ramp turn left on PA 108. Travel east on PA 108 for about 0.7 miles to West Park Road (Dairy Queen on the right). Turn left onto West Park Road (SR 1015) and drive north about 1.8 miles to SR 1020 (you can see some large silos on the right). Turn right on SR 1020 (Miller Road) and drive about 1.7 miles to the small parking lot on the right. (SR 1020 is a winding road and at an almost T intersection, turn right to stay on SR 1020.) If you reach the bridge, you have gone too far. The parking lot is just before you reach the bridge over Wolf Creek.

Notes: Wolf Creek Narrows is known for its spectacular display of spring wildflowers — Virginia bluebells and golden saxifrage in the hemlock hardwood forest and white trillium in the mature stands of sugar maple, all along a high-quality stream meandering through towering cliffs.

Saturday, May 12, 10 a.m.

Hillside to Chestnut Ridge, Westmoreland County

Leader: Tom Metzgar

Directions: PA 217 can be reached from the Pittsburgh area by traveling east on US 22 or US 30. From US 30 about 3 miles east of Latrobe airport, turn left (north) onto PA 217 and continue on PA 217 (wind through Derry) 6.6 miles to Ridgeview Road on the right. Alternatively, from US 22, pick up PA 217 south in Blairsville and continue south about 5.9 miles to Ridgeview Road on the left. On Ridgeview Road, cross the railroad tracks and bear left at the Y. Continue slowly 0.3 mile from the Y. We will meet at Metzgars' cabin on the right hand side of road, fronted by a small parking lot.

Tom Metzgar will take us to unique forested limestone and sandstone outcrops on Chestnut Ridge. We will replicate a trip taken dozens of times by the early members of the Botanical Society. An early field trip report from May 13, 1911 gives "an enthusiastic account of the trip up the mountain side past Bear's Cave and back....The Columbine was in flow-

er on rocks at the top of Chestnut Ridge, the Showy Orchis was found near Bear's Cave...while on the alluvial flat along the stream below the town the Blue Phlox was quite abundant, but particularly beautiful was the Creeping Phlox with its reddish-purple flowers."

Saturday, May 19, 10 a.m. and 1 p.m.

Rambles through Raccoon, Raccoon Creek State Park and Hillman Beaver and Washington Counties

Leader: James Nusser

Contact Info: birdmanjen@verizon.net; 412-728-0935 cell

Directions to 10 a.m. meeting place: We will meet at the Park Office for Raccoon Creek State Park. From Pittsburgh, travel Parkway West (I-376, formerly I-279) and exit the Parkway at Exit 60 to continue on US 22 for 14 miles to the exit for PA 18. Turn left on PA 18 north and travel 7 miles to the Park office on the left.

Directions to 2 p.m. meeting place: We will meet at the Bavington Inn. From Pittsburgh, travel Parkway West (I-376, formerly I-279) and exit the Parkway at Exit 60 to continue on US 22 for 10 miles to the Bavington exit. Turn right at the end of the ramp, then left onto Steubenville Pike, and travel one mile to Bavington Inn on the left.

Notes: This all day trip with two meeting times continues a celebration of the meandering and zigzag course of Raccoon Creek. Join us all day (bring a picnic lunch) or meet us at 2 p.m.

Sunday, May 20, 1 p.m.

McConnells Mills State Park, Alpha Pass Falls, Lawrence County

Leaders: Joe and Bonnie Isaac

Contact Info: isaacb@carnegiemnh.org; 724-944-8770 (cell)

Directions: Travel I-79 north to Exit 99/US 422. Turn left onto US 422 toward New Castle and travel 2 miles to the park's north entrance on the left. Travel about 1/2 mile on McConnells Mill Road and park at the large Point Parking Lot after the intersection with Johnson Road.

Notes: Alpha Pass Trail is a moderately rugged 1.5 mile hiking trail that runs along the east bank of Slippery Rock Creek to the Old Mill, through the scenic Slippery Rock Gorge, which was designated a National Natural Landmark by the U.S. Department of the Interior in 1974. The steep-sided gorge contains rock outcrops, old growth forest, waterfalls and rare plants.

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Saturday, June 2

BioBlitz at King's Gap Environmental Education Center

Register for the field bioblitz by May 24 by calling 717-486-3799.

Registration not required for mini-blitz programs throughout the day.

King's Gap Environmental Education Center and The Western PA Conservancy are pleased to sponsor a BioBlitz at King's Gap on Saturday, June 2 from 9 a.m. and ending on Sunday, June 3 at 11 a.m.

This BioBlitz will bring together educators, volunteers and scientists from various organizations and agencies to record local plant, insect and animal species found in a 24-hour biological survey period. The general public, private citizens, teachers, local students and university faculty members are invited to observe, interact and participate in the sampling activities.

Park staff will also offer "mini-blitz" programs during the day. No registration is required for these free programs which will meet at the King's Gap Hollow Day Use area. The times for these events are as follows:

10:30 a.m. "What Bird Do I Hear?" It's more likely to hear, rather than see, birds of the forest. This easy walk will focus on learning some techniques to identify birds by their calls.

1 p.m. "Aquatic Macros". Many insects and other creatures live at least part of their lives in water. A short walk to the pond will be followed by collection and identification of what we find.

2:30 p.m. "Trees and Wildflowers". Use a basic field guide to identify these plants, based on habitat awareness.

Directions to King's Gap Environmental Education Center:

Take I-76 PA Turnpike east to Exit 161 to pick US30 East. Travel US30 east for 39 miles to I-81. Travel I-81 north for 21 miles to Exit 37/PA 233. Travel south on PA 233 about 2.3 miles. Turn left onto Pine Road and continue 2.2 miles to Kings Gap Road. Turn right onto Kings Gap Road. Proceed 3.5 miles on the winding, paved road to the Mansion Area at top of the mountain.

Saturday, June 23, 10 a.m.

Mingo Creek County Park, Washington County

Birds, Butterflies, Wildflowers and Creek Critters

Monica Miller of the Wissahickon Nature Club has arranged a day of nature walks and picnicking at Shelter 2 in the park. Bring a chair. Meet at Shelter 4, Mingo Creek County Park, 12 miles east of Washington PA.

There will be three scheduled nature walks. Expect to see the delicate beadwork of Sensitive Ferns and a display of Christmas Ferns, Jewelweed and Trout Lily. Last year we discovered a Scarlet Cup Fungus. A few insects such as Six-spotted Green Tiger Beetle may be there. Birders may find a Yellow-throated Warbler, Louisiana Waterthrush, and a variety of woodpeckers and vireos.

10 a.m. Bird Walk by Bob Mulvihill and Bob Machesney.

11:30 a.m. Picnic Lunch — Wissahickon Nature Club will supply hot dogs, plates, and condiments. Bring your own beverage, a side dish to share, and your own chair. Please RSVP to Dianne at diannem15237@aol.com or 412-366-7869 before June 2 so the group knows how many hot dogs to buy.

1:30 p.m. Butterfly/Wildflower Walk by Monica Miller and Dianne Machesney.

2:30 p.m. Creek Critters Hunt. We will provide some nets, pans and a few hand lenses but participants are urged to bring their own hand lenses.

Directions: From Pittsburgh via I-79: Take I-79 South to Exit 43. Turn right and follow to stop sign. Turn right on Route 519 South and follow to Route 136 East. Follow signs for Mingo Creek Park (left turn into park) and the Park Office. Just past the Park Office (office on right), make a left to Shelter 4, through the Ebenezer Covered Bridge.

Alternatively, take Route 51 South to PA Toll Route 43 South. Pay \$1 toll and take Exit 44. Turn right on Route 136 West. Follow signs for Mingo Creek Park (right turn into park) and the Park Office. Just past the Park Office (office on right), make a left to Shelter 4, through the Ebenezer Covered Bridge. Or visit www.co.washington.pa.us/downloads/167.pdf.

May 14 Meeting

Dr. Stephen Tonsor will present a talk titled “The Limits to Species Geographic Ranges: Ecological and Evolutionary Perspectives”.

Dr. Tonsor received his PhD in 1983 at the University of Chicago, obtained assistant professorships at West Virginia University and then at the Michigan State University Kellogg Biological Station. He joined the Department of Biological Sciences at the University of Pittsburgh in 1995.

The Tonsor Laboratory of Plant Evolution and Ecology is focused on understanding adaptation to changing environments in plants. Understanding the causes of biodiversity is a central goal of evolutionary biology and adaptation to new environments is an important generator of biodiversity. Just as importantly, human activities are driving unprecedented rates of global change. Our ability to produce sufficient food fiber and renewable energy to meet increasing world demand, as well as our ability to manage natural biodiversity, depends on understanding the when and how of adaptation to changing environments.

June 11 Meeting

Dr. Harlan Patch will present a talk titled “Plants and Their Pollinators”.

Dr. Harlan Patch is a research scientist and lecturer in the Department of Entomology at Penn State University. He has a longstanding interest in the biology of pollinators. His Master’s research focused on the host plant choice of black swallowtail butterflies.

Dr. Patch continued his work in insect olfaction for his doctoral thesis, discovering the first olfactory genes involved in the molecular detection of lepidopteron female pheromones. After coming to Penn State in 2010, his projects include understanding the mechanisms underlying patterns of pollinator-plant interactions in complex environments. Dr. Patch is involved in a large project to understand the impacts of honey bee declines in East Africa and is also engaged in a detailed genetic analysis of honey bee populations, disease vectors and viral evolution. Closer to home, as chair of the Center for Pollinator Research’s Arboretum committee he has been working to develop scientifically informed pollinator gardens at the Arboretum at Penn State.