



Botanical Society of Western Pennsylvania

Enjoy Your Wildflowers WILD INDIGO by Anne S. Bahl

For thousands of years, people in southern India and China obtained a beautiful blue dye from a plant in the Bean family. They called it “nil”. They learned how to extract the pigment from the plant and use it medicinally and how to dye cotton. The dye reached the Arabs, they called it “anil”, and it became “aniline”. Eventually, Egyptians, Greeks and Romans imported it. It was delivered in lumps and they considered it a mineral. They called it “indicum” because it came from India. They used it in similar ways and also for some cosmetics. Its botanical name is *Indigofera tinctoria*, Latin, having indigo, and used for dyeing.

In the late thirteenth century, when Marco Polo visited India, he learned how the dye was obtained. Although some indigo was being used in Europe, it was from Woad, *Isatis tinctoria*. *Isatis* is the classical Greek name for Woad. It is in the Mustard family, *Cruciferae*, classical name, *Brassicaceae*, updated name, and is inferior to that from India. It took several centuries, an increase in trade between East and West after sea routes were established, and a decrease in the cost of indigo to persuade the European dyers to give up Woad.

During this period, Europeans were crossing the Atlantic and bringing seeds with them, including Woad. In Pennsylvania they found two native plants. Wild Indigo, *Baptisia tinctoria*, *Baptisia*, Greek, *bapto*, to dye, is in most of the counties. Blue False Indigo, *B. australis*, southern, grows along the western border of the state. Both are in the Bean family, *Leguminosae*, classical name, *Fabaceae*, updated name. Woad naturalized and grows locally near the Atlantic coast from Newfoundland south. It has become established in the north central states. The dye from all of these is inferior to the dye from the species that grow in tropical and sub-tropical areas.

Wild indigo is a small, leafy plant that grows in acid, sandy soil, usually in barrens and open woods. It may reach three feet and have many branches that give it a somewhat round shape. The leaves are smooth and are divided into three wedge-shaped leaflets up to 1½" long with short or no petioles. They have a bluish tint that becomes grayish, then black when the plant dies. The bright yellow flowers have the typical bean-pea shape. They bloom in summer. The fruit is spindle-shaped with a stalk.

IN MEMORIAM

Member Bill Kotsenas died on Thursday, June 11. Bill and his wife Dorothy have been members of the Botanical Society since 1987. Bill served as president of the Botanical Society of Westmoreland County from 1988 to 1996, and associate director of the Westmoreland County Conservation District from 1993 to 2006. A tireless advocate for the botanical world, he organized one of the region's first “plant rescues” in the late 1980s. A talented wildflower photographer and traveler, he shared his wildflower slides and his love of plants with students and botanical societies. We offer sympathy to his wife Dorothy and daughters Nancy Knauss and Mary Williams. Dorothy can be reached at 6 Widgeon Drive, Pittsburgh, PA 15238. The family respectfully suggests donations be made to the St. Joseph Church Building Fund, 330 Dorseyville Rd., Pittsburgh, PA 15215.

Wildflowers, Bulletin of the Botanical Society of Western Pennsylvania, is published bimonthly by the Botanical Society of Western Pennsylvania. We welcome short articles of botanical interest, drawings, and notices of botanical events and group activities. Send to the editor at the address below. Deadline for submissions is the 16th of the previous month. *Wildflowers* is printed on recycled paper.



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The Society meets the second Monday of each month, September through June, at 7:15 p.m. sharp, at Kresge Theater, Carlow University, 3333 Fifth Avenue, Oakland. All are welcome to the informative program and business meeting.

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Annual dues are \$10 for individual and \$15 for family. Students can join at half-rate. To join, mail your name, your address, and check payable to "Botanical Society of W PA" to Judy Boyer, 211 Lee Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15237. Your membership includes a subscription to the bimonthly bulletin *Wildflowers*.



The Botanical Society was founded in 1886.

The object of the Society shall be to bring together those who are interested in Botany and to encourage the study of this science and a knowledge of plants.

July & August

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

Saturday, July 4, 10 a.m.

Pleasant Valley Park, Murrysville, PA Westmoreland County

Leader: Tom Pearson; 724- 864-1902

Contact Info: This is a Parks and Reserves Discovery Trail Walk sponsored by Friends of Murrysville Parks & the Westmoreland Conservancy.

Directions: From Pittsburgh, take I-376 east until it joins US 22 east. Heading east through Murrysville on US22, make a right onto Trafford Rd. at a traffic light and a McDonalds. Travel 2/10ths of a mile and bear left at the Y onto Pleasant Valley Rd. Note your odometer: continue on Pleasant Valley Rd. for 1.2 miles. The park entrance is on the left side of the road, lined on both sides by a wooden split-rail fence.

Notes: This is a Parks and Reserves Discovery Trail Walks sponsored by Friends of Murrysville Parks and the Westmoreland Conservancy.

Sunday, July 12, 10:30 a.m.

Sewickley Heights Borough Park, Allegheny County

Leader: Park ranger Thad Jones

Contact: In the event of severe weather, call Fern Hollow Nature Center at 412-496-8846.

Directions: Take I-79 to Mt. Nebo exit. Turn Left onto Blackburn Rd. Follow Blackburn Rd. through the countryside until you come to a stop sign. Make a right at stop sign onto Fern Hollow Rd. Pass Sewickley Boro Building on your right. The park entrance is immediately after that on right. Follow the drive all the way to the parking lot at end.

Notes: We will join Park Ranger Thad Jones for a summer nature walk.

Saturday, July 18, 1 p.m.

Rock Point Nature Area near Ellwood City, Lawrence County

Leaders: Joe and Bonnie Isaac; joeaisaac@aol.com 724-964-8770

Directions: From Pittsburgh, take I-79 north to Exit 83 / PA 528. Turn left onto PA 528 and travel a short distance to US 19. Turn right

Field Trips

on US 19 and travel 3 miles to Zelenople. Turn left onto New Castle St/ PA 288/PA 588. Continue onto PA 288, which bears to the right outside of Zelenople. Travel PA 288 about 7 miles to a Giant Eagle in the Ellwood City Plaza on the right.

Notes: Our visit in April promised an interesting and picturesque natural area at any season. According to the website www.rockpointpark.com, Rock Point Park was an amusement park from 1885 to 1911. It has not been open to the public for 98 years and has been recently purchased by the Wild Waterways Conservancy and named the Rock Point Nature Area.

Wednesday July 22, 10 a.m.

Wolf Creek Narrows

Leader: Richard Nugent, rmnugent@live.com

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 Rd. There is a Dairy Queen on the right. Turn left on West Park Rd. (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 Rd.) 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. After parking in the lot walk across the bridge and the trail is on the left just past the bridge.

Wolf Creek Narrows is a scenic portion of Wolf Creek and surrounding forest with a loop trail through it. The forest supports a mixture of hardwoods and Hemlocks, which make for a nice walk at any time of the year. Parts of the trail are not well marked and fallen trees are not always cleared quickly. Many wildflowers can be found here including magnificent Turk's Cap Lilies and a number of uncommon plants. There is also a lot of Poison Ivy.

Saturday, July 25, 10 a.m.

Butler Freeport Trail, Butler County

Leader: Dianne Machesney; diannem15237@aol.com 412-366-7869

Directions: From Pittsburgh, take PA 28 north to Exit 17 (PA356/Butler/Freeport). At the end of the ramp, head west or north on PA 356. After roughly 3.5 miles, turn right onto Sarver Rd (SR2018) at a traffic light. Continue a little over 1/2 mile, traveling down a hill. After crossing

a creek and passing a volunteer fire department on the left, turn left into the bike trail parking area, where we will meet.

Notes: This is the time for a slew of wildflowers; Turk's Cap, Bee Balm, Figwort, Bowmans Root and Culvers Root.

August 16, 9:30 a.m.

Youghiogheny River Canoe Trip

Westmoreland County Smithton to W. Newton

Contact Info: 1. Call Yough Canoe Outfitters at 1-877-799-6844 to reserve your boat or shuttle, and mention the Botanical Society/Westmoreland Bird Nature Club trip. 2. Contact Deb Bryant at 724-325-3445; debdanbryant@windstream.net to let her know you are coming.

Directions: From Pittsburgh, take PA51 south to the PA136 exit, about 5 miles from the bridge in Elizabeth. At exit ramp, turn left and travel PA 136 for 3.5 miles. Just before a bridge in West Newton (Rite Aid on left), turn left onto Collinsburg Rd. Continue 1/4 mile to the Yough Outfitters on the right.

Alternately, from the New Stanton PA Turnpike interchange, take I-70 west to Exit 51B West Newton/PA 31. Head west on PA 31, which becomes PA 136, to West Newton. Cross the bridge and turn right onto Collinsburg Rd. Continue 1/4 mile to the Yough Outfitters on the right.

Notes: Please call ASAP to reserve your boat! Canoes and kayaks and a shuttle service are available for rent at Youghiogheny Canoe Outfitters rail; call 1-877-799-6844 and reserve a boat specifically for the August 16 Botanical Society/Westmoreland Bird Club group trip. Canoes and tandem kayaks (for 2 adults) are available at \$35 a day. Single person kayaks are available at \$24 per day. A Shuttle Service is available for those bringing their own boats, at \$12 per boat.

Meet at 9:30 a.m. sharp at Youghiogheny Canoe Outfitters to pay *Continued on back cover*

Wildflowers

July–August 2009

Botanical Society of Western Pennsylvania

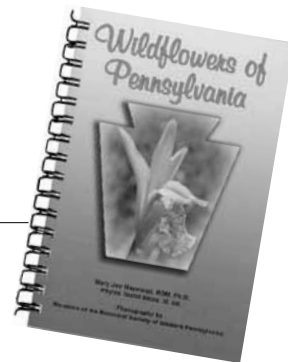
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to Botanical Society of Western PA, and your request to Dr. Mary Joy Haywood, RSM, PhD, 3333 Fifth Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15213-3165; (412) 578-6175; haywoodmj@carlow.edu



Field Trips *Continued from previous page*

for your previously reserved boat or shuttle. Those who choose not to shuttle or rent from the outfitter can meet us at Smithton launch at 10:15 a.m.

We will launch our boats at Smithton and explore the banks of the Yough to West Newton. Pack a lunch for a stop at Cedar Creek Park. The trip is a total of 6 ½ miles.

Saturday, August 29, 9 a.m.

Blair Brothers Railroad Trail, Forbes State Forest, Westmoreland Co.

Directions: From Pittsburgh, travel the PA Turnpike to Exit 91 (Donegal). Follow PA 31

east for 3 miles and turn left onto PA 381. Proceed about 0.7 miles to a Forbes State Forest trailhead parking lot on the right.

Notes: This is a Big Trek Nature Competition with the Westmoreland Bird & Nature Club and the Botanical Society of Westmoreland County. Two balanced teams of nature lovers (birders, botanists, herpetologists, entomologists, etc.) will assemble at opposite ends of the Blair Brothers Railroad Trail in Forbes State Forest and proceed to the other end counting all the species along the way in a team competition. No victor/ booby prize has been decided on for the teams at this time. Besides a day of fun, it will give us a survey list for this biologically rich area, and will be a good learning opportunity for everyone.

We will meet at the Forbes State Forest parking lot to organize balanced teams of know-it-alls and know-it-somes and those who want to learn. Car shuttles will be organized. Be sure to bring binoculars, field guides and insect repellent.