
WILDFLOWERS

The Bulletin of the Botanical Society of Western Pennsylvania • September 2001

The Next Meeting is September 10th

The next meeting will be Monday, September 10, 8:00 p.m., at Kresge Theater, Carlow College, 3333 Fifth Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA (Oakland). Kresge Theater is on the top floor of the Grace Library and is accessed from the upper campus.

Suzanne Seppi of the Group Against Smog and Pollution (GASP) will present “**An Alternative to the Lawn Landscape,**” a slide show discussing the problems of the American lawn and proposals for alternative landscapes.

Individually, a lawn may not seem like a problem, but our lawns combine to cover 20 million acres. The lawn takes water, pesticides, herbicides and fungicides, to say nothing of hours of human and machine effort, to keep it looking like the local golf course. Shouldn't we rethink this landscape concept?

Virginia Althea Phelps: 1936 - 2001

From Mary Joy Haywood, President

One of our long-time members, Virginia A. Phelps, died unexpectedly on August 5, 2001. We all extend our sympathy and prayers to her family and friends.

Virginia had been a member of the Society since 1952. All of us can attest to the fact that, although she referred to herself as an “amateur botanist,” Virginia had a knowledge of plants that far surpassed many professionals in the field.

Virginia, in her own, was a free spirit. She did not hesitate to take her cat, load up her van, and

take off to study and photograph plants. Her ventures led her far and wide throughout the United States and Canada. One never knew where she would venture, but she always returned with beautiful slides and a willingness to share her new finds with members.

One cannot speak of Virginia without, in the same breath, discussing her seventeen years of research on the Monument Plant (*Frasera caroliniensis*) found at the Jennings Prairie. She traveled to Jennings frequently, and meticulously recorded data on these plants. I hope, as a tribute to her, these data can be compiled into a publication, and some other member will continue her research.

The Society's *Wildflowers of Pennsylvania* has been out since June 9, 2001. I recount that date specifically. After the meeting, Virginia came to me with tears in her eyes, fondly clutching the book, and said, “I never thought I would live to see this day!” Virginia did see this day. She also saw 142 of her pictures, including the cover photo, incorporated into the book.

I cannot imagine what the September meeting will be like without Virginia in the front row!

From Gail Phelps Smith, Virginia's niece

Virginia was a volunteer botanist and wildflower photographer for Shenandoah National Park. Her wildflower photographs are included in the permanent collection of the library of Byrd Visitor Center at Shenandoah National Park.

She was awarded the 2001 Photographer of the Year award by the Natural Color Camera Club in Pittsburgh. She was an active member for 34

years and served as a club officer and Judge in the International Salon.

Virginia also belonged to the Wissahickon Nature Club, Carnegie Museum, Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania and the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy. She frequently presented slide photographs and lectures on botany and wildflowers for local nature clubs.

She served as a volunteer proctor for 19 years at the national and international Chemistry Olympics at the University of Pittsburgh. Virginia majored in chemistry at Oberlin College (B.S., 1947) and worked as a research chemist.

She is survived by her brother Stuart Phelps and sister-in-law Ruth Phelps of Rochester; her cousins Miriam Pratt and Velma Kentfield; two nieces and five nephews.

Memorial contributions may be sent to the Botanical Society of Western Pennsylvania c/o Dr. Mary Joy Haywood, Carlow College, 3333 Fifth Avenue, Pittsburgh PA 15213.

From Phyllis Monk, Vice President

I have known Virginia since I joined the Botanical Society in 1969. She was one of those who awed me by recognizing both the scientific name as well as the common name of every plant shown in every program.

I shared many field trips with her and relied on her identification of plants that I photographed.

Virginia and I shared a great fondness for our cats, and we often compared notes about their latest antics. I believe that one who keeps a cat has a special personality, and—of necessity—has learned humility, tolerance, and patience.

The last time Virginia and I had spent time together was April 21 when we shared a table at an Earth Day observance. We represented the Botanical Society and distributed order forms for our book. We talked about our cats, as usual.

and about places where we had been or where we planned to go in the coming summer.

One incident she shared with me was of particular excitement for her. While visiting Wayne Harpster near State College, he called her over to see an unusual plant he had found. She was so amazed! She could scarcely believe her eyes! There were several specimens of the Lesser Whorled Pogonia (*Isotria medeoloides*), one of the most rare native orchids found in the eastern United States! Of course she photographed the plants, and her best picture may be found on page 369 of our wildflower book.

I feel very privileged to have known Virginia, and to be one of her friends. I will always treasure my memories of her.

From Wildflowers, July 1982

Botanizing in the Rockies – Virginia Phelps is off on another trip to Colorado. This time she is determined to find the elusive Brownie Ladyslipper, *Cypripedium fasciculatum*.

From Wildflowers, July 1986

Bring along your best singing voice. Virginia Phelps will again lead us in singing Christmas carols.

From Wildflowers, August 1981

Even the best of them pull a boner once in a while. The March issue [1981] of Audubon Magazine has an article on that rarest of wild orchids, *Isotria medeoloides*, but it was accompanied by a photograph of the not-so-rare *Isotria verticillata*.

Our member, Virginia Phelps, was quick to spot the error. She supplied the magazine with a slide of the correct species, and her color photograph of the Small Whorled Pogonia was printed in the May issue.

Eastern Forests, Nature Reserves, Watersheds and Outdoor Classrooms

- Member Walter Carson will present “**Can We Save the Eastern Deciduous Forests?**” on Thursday, September 20, at 7:00 p.m. This class will focus on the effect of large herds of deer and fire suppression policies on the sustainability of eastern forests. It is being offered through the Center for Lifetime Learning at the University of Pittsburgh. For information, call (412) 648-2560; web address is www.pitt.edu/~cgs/lifetime.
- Attend the **Murrysville Nature Reserves Bioblitz II**. Wildflower enthusiasts will meet at 10 a.m. on **Sunday, September 9** at Sloan Elementary School parking lot. Enter Murrysville on Route 22 and turn north at the first traffic light (McDonald’s on the corner). Go straight through the next traffic light (about 100 yards) and drive about 3 miles. When you see the Municipal Building on your left, Sloan Elementary is on your right across a bridge. Park in the upper right hand parking lot. E-mail Dick Byers at otusasio@lhtc.net or call him at (724) 593-3543 for more information.
- Participate in the **Nine Mile Run Watershed Association Community Meeting** on September 10 at 7:00 p.m. at the Frick Environmental Center. Topics include project updates on Nine Mile Run stream restoration, revegetation, and watershed study. Come participate and help create a healthy ecosystem. For information and directions, call the PA Environmental Council at (412) 481-7400 or e-mail sraig@stargate.net.
- Become a **volunteer naturalist** at Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve. “Pittsburgh Outdoors Classroom” needs volunteer naturalists to lead small groups of school students through Beechwood’s trails. You will receive training in natural history and trailside educational activities.

Fall training begins Monday, September 10, 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., and continues 5 more Mondays. For information, call Scott Detwiler at (412) 963-6100.

Field Trip Schedule

Registration is not required. Everyone is welcome, including non-members. For questions, call the trip leader or Loree at (412) 521-9425.

Saturday, September 15, 2001
North Park, Allegheny County
Time: 1:00 p.m.
Leaders: Luc Berger (412) 683-3131

We will visit the Old Arboretum with interesting fall flowers. Then, to the Latodami Nature Center and the adjacent pond and wetlands.

Directions: From Pittsburgh, take Route 8 North. About 7 miles beyond Etna, you see a Boston Market restaurant on the right. At this intersection, turn left onto Wildwood Road. After 3 miles, park on the left side of Wildwood Road, across from a Tastee Freeze. This is just before the big intersection with Babcock Blvd.

Saturday, September 29, 2001
Independence Marsh, Beaver County
Time: 1:00 p.m.
Leader: Esther Allen (412) 366-0786

Directions: From Pittsburgh, take the Parkway West (I-376) to Route 60 north. Pass the Airport. Pass the exit for Business Route 60. Exit at the Hopewell exit. Go west (left) on Rte. 151. Shortly after you cross an iron bridge, you will see Columbia Propane on the corner. Turn right here onto Cowpath Road. Go about 1/2 mile to a sign for Independence Marsh and follow the driveway to parking area.

Botanical Society of Western Pennsylvania – September 2001

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WILDFLOWERS - Bulletin of the Botanical Society of Western Pennsylvania

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WILDFLOWERS is published monthly 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 above address. Deadline for submissions is the 23th of the previous month.

The Botanical Society of Western Pennsylvania - Membership Information

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. Annual dues are \$10.00 for individual and \$15.00 for family. Students can join at half-rate. To join, mail your name, your address, and check payable to "Botanical Soc. of W PA" to Loree Speedy, 5837 Nicholson Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15217. Your membership includes a subscription to the monthly bulletin WILDFLOWERS.

The Society meets the second Monday of each month, September through June, at 8 p.m. sharp, at Kresge Theater, Carlow College, 3333 Fifth Avenue, Oakland. All are welcome to the informative program and business meeting.

Wildflowers of Pennsylvania – Ordering Information

Wildflowers of Pennsylvania can be purchased for \$20.00 (plus \$1.40 sales tax for PA residents). Forward your check, made payable to Botanical Society of Western PA, to Dr. Haywood at the address below. If you order by mail, add \$2 postage and handling for one book, \$3.00 for two, \$4.00 for three, \$4.50 for four. Send your request to *Dr. Mary Joy Haywood, RSM, Ph.D., 3333 Fifth Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15213-3165 (412) 578-6175; mjhaywood@carlow.edu*