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# WILDFLOWERS

The Bulletin of the Botanical Society of Western Pennsylvania • August 2004

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## Next Meeting is September 13

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There will be no monthly meeting in August; the next meeting will be Monday, September 13, at 7:15 p.m. Look for meeting and speaker details in the September newsletter.

Thanks to our speakers for the 2003-2004 season, and many thanks to program chair Robert Coxe!

Howard McIlvried	Melissa Melan
Bonnie Isaac	Mary Joy Haywood
Terri Davin	Kierstin Carlson
Ed Divers	Eric Burkhart
Steve Grund	

If you have a suggestion, a speaker contact information, or if you would like to present a program, please contact Robert Coxe at (412) 531-0137, or [rcoxe@paconserve.org](mailto:rcoxe@paconserve.org).

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## Sympathy

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President Mary Joy Haywood's mother passed away on Friday, June 11, 2004 at Saint Mary's Convent in Pittsburgh. Blanche D. (Dodds) Haywood, 94, was born in Dry Tavern and lived most of her life in the Jefferson, Mather and Lippencott areas.

She is survived by two daughters and four sons.; nine grandchildren; six great grandchildren; 10 great-great grandchildren; and a sister.

Many of us have fond memories of Mrs. Haywood inviting us in for a wonderful lunch before we ventured out on a Ten Mile Creek field trip with her daughter Mary Joy. If you would like to send a card to Mary Joy, her address is 3333 Fifth Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA

Our sympathy is also extended to member Joseph Kinney of West Alexander upon the death of his mother Josephine Kinney on July 22, 2004. Josephine was the wife of deceased member Bill Kinney. Joseph's address is PO Box 165, West Alexander, PA 15376.

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## Pennsylvania Native Plant Listserv

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A listserv that allows people to share notes about native plants in Pennsylvania has formed. The group is [PA\\_wildflowers@yahoo.com](mailto:PA_wildflowers@yahoo.com). Sign up directly by going to the website [http://groups.yahoo.com/group/PA\\_wildflowers/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/PA_wildflowers/)

This listserv is intended to link the botanical community in Pennsylvania together to discuss all aspects of plant life. Topics may include, but are not limited to rare plants, plant findings, plant identification, plant phenology, backyard natives, trip reports, plant surveys, and club information.

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## Environmental Discussion Group

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The Environmental Discussion Group meets to explore books related to natural history, nature writing, and environmental issues. The group meets at 7:30 pm at the Borders store in Northway Mall. On September 13, the group will discuss *Guns, Germs and Steel* by Jared Diamond, who argues that environmental factors and geography shaped the course of the modern world. For information please contact: Chriss O'Lare (412) 369-4574.

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## Have You Seen *Desmodium cuspidatum*?

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*Desmodium cuspidatum*, the large bracted tick-trefoil (Fabaceae), has experienced population declines in New England in recent years.

Attempts are being made to relocate populations of this species in New England and elsewhere in the species range (eastern half of the United States) for use in research and conservation projects. This species is distinguished from other *Desmodium* species by the following characteristics: large, lanceolate stipules (8-17mm long); large, sharply acuminate, ovate leaflets; tall, erect habit (to 2 meters in height); flowering period: July - September.

This species occurs on basalt talus slopes in power line rights of way and rich, rocky open oak woodlands in New England though may be located in other habitats elsewhere in its range. If you come across any populations of *Desmodium cuspidatum* during summer botanizing excursions, please forward locality information and general site descriptions as well as how to relocate populations to either of the following addresses:

(Principal Investigator) Krissa Skogen, 75 North Eagleville Rd., Unit 3043, University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT 06268; phone: 860.833.4922. email: krissa.skogen@uconn.edu.

(Local Contact) Christopher Tracey, 1125 Winterton Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15206; phone: 412.362.6750. email: ctracey@chatham.edu.

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## Rare plants popping up all over Presque Isle after dry spell

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*Reprinted with permission from the Summer/Fall 2002 issue of Keystone WILD Notes!.*

As Jim Bissell walked through the sandy plains of Presque Isle State Park in the past few years, he felt as if he had hit the wild plant bonanza. Emerging from the sand were hundreds of plants that were usually rare to find. One species had never been spotted before at the park; another

hadn't been reported in decades. In 2001 alone, Bissell and his colleagues found 52 new locations with rare plants at Presque Isle.

The record sightings for rare plants were directly related to Lake Erie's recent near-record low water levels, which dramatically affect the park's palustrine sand plain community — one of the rarest types of plant communities in Pennsylvania.

The lake levels continue to rise and fall today. As this happens, the texture of the sand plains behind the ridge changes too. The shallow groundwater rises and falls with the lake level, changing the moisture of the sand. Ponds in the sand plain fill with water as the lake rises, then nearly dry up in years when the lake level is low.

While the palustrine sand plain community is always present, the types of plants change with the water level. When Lake Erie is low, a number of plant species that survive through their ability to "seed bank" begin to pop up in the ponds.

These plants compete poorly with other, more aggressive species. But when the ponds begin to dry, seeds that have been dormant for decades burst forth. For a year or two, they can rule the site until other plants move in, or the pond water rises. During that time, they will germinate a new crop of seeds which will be deposited in the moist sand and will survive while those of other plants die.

"If you could somehow stabilize Lake Erie, you would destroy that system," Bissell said. "It is driven by the rise and fall of the lake.

In 2001, Bissell and colleagues discovered the first western Pennsylvania occurrence of the long-lobed arrowhead (*Sagittaria calycina*), an endangered plant in the state, which was discovered in a small, dry inlet on Presque Isle's west side. In recent years, the inlet had been covered by Lake Erie's high water levels. But in 2001, the bottom of the inlet was gradually

exposed as the lake dropped to its lowest level in decades. As the water receded, the “seed-banked” plants sprang to life; by August, more than 1,000 long-lobed arrowhead plants covered a quarter-acre of the inlet’s moist bottom.

Other rare plants were found as well. Altogether, Bissell reported that rare plants were discovered at 52 previously unreported sites at Presque Isle, a number he called “astounding.”

Presque Isle has been studied intensively for more than a century. Botanist Otto Jennings published the first analysis of its vegetation in 1909. Since then, there have been only a few periods where water levels have dipped as low as in recent years, which left great potential for new plant discoveries — but only a short window of opportunity to make them.

“These are ephemeral community species,” Bissell said. “They don’t compete well, so they don’t last. Once those flats are exposed, if the lake continues to drop, in a few years it is taken over by more aggressive perennials.”

Water levels are back on the rise, but Bissell plans to be ready the next time Lake Erie takes a dip. “I love these dry years,” he said. It’s great for us.”

*Keystone WILD Notes! is the official publication of the Pennsylvania Wild Resource Conservation Fund. If you would like to be added to the mailing list, please contact WRCF, P.O. Box 8764, Harrisburg, PA 17105, or visit [www.dcnr.state.pa.us/wrcf/](http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/wrcf/).*

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## Field Trip Schedule

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Registration is not required. Everyone is welcome, including non-members. For questions, call Loree at (724) 872-5232. **Note varying dates and times!**

**Saturday, August 7, 2004**  
**The Glades, Somerset County**  
**Leader: Rita Hawrot**  
**Time: 10:00 a.m.**

**Directions:** From Pittsburgh, take the PA Turnpike to Exit 110 – Somerset. After exiting the tollbooth, look for the Radisson Hotel parking lot to the right, where we will meet at 10 a.m.

We will join ecologist Rita Hawrot, who is preparing the Natural Heritage County Inventory for Somerset County, in a trip to a shrub swamp and streamside wetlands. The site will be wet, but can be done along secondary roads for those who do not want to get their feet wet.

**Saturday, August 14, 2004**  
**Presque Isle State Park, Erie County**  
**Leader: Jim Bissell**  
**Time: 9 a.m.**

**Directions:** Take I-79 North to Exit 183B (Rte 5 West/12th St.). The exit makes a long, sharp curl to the right and merges with Route 5 West. Go 0.6 mile and make a right turn at the light onto Route 832 North, marked by a sign for Presque Isle. Proceed into the park on Peninsula Drive to the parking lot at the Administration Building on the right side of the road, for 9 a.m. meeting time.

Jim Bissell, curator at Cleveland Museum of Natural History, has studied the flora of Presque Isle extensively. See previous article.

**Saturday, August 28, 2004**  
**Yellow Creek State Park, Indiana County**  
**Leader: Scott Speedy, (724) 639-3517**  
**Time: 1 p.m.**

**Directions:** From Pittsburgh, take Route 22 East to Route 286 (Golden Mile Highway). Continue east on Route 286 until you reach Route 422 just before the town of Indiana.

Travel Route 422 east 12 miles, and turn right onto Route 259 South. Meet at the park office on the right, a short distance ahead on Route 259.

**Scheduled for September**  
Sunday, September 19: Buffalo Creek Valley, Washington County

## Botanical Society of Western Pennsylvania – August 2004

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West Newton, PA 15089

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### **WILDFLOWERS - Bulletin of the Botanical Society of Western Pennsylvania**

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**President:** Dr. Mary Joy Haywood, (412) 578-6175, E-mail mjhaywood@carlow.edu; **Vice-President:** Phyllis Monk, (412) 831-2724 E-mail: uscmonk@ieee.org; **Treasurer:** Kimberly Metheny; **Recording Secretary:** Bonnie Isaac

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. WILDFLOWERS is printed on recycled paper.

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### **The Botanical Society of Western Pennsylvania - Membership Information**

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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, 279 Orr Road, West Newton, PA 15089. Your membership includes a subscription to the monthly bulletin WILDFLOWERS.

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

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### **Wildflowers of Pennsylvania – Ordering Information – 400 pages of text and 612 color photographs**

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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