

BioBlitz

CITIZEN SCIENCE

IN ACTION!

By Sarah Chamberlain

COMMON NAME?
FAMILY?
LOCATION?
GENUS?
SPECIES?

In late September, the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area became the latest site in Pennsylvania to be blitzed. BioBlitzed, that is. A BioBlitz is a 24-hour field survey to find and identify as many plant and animal species as possible within a given area. Hosted by the Pocono Environmental Education Center (PEEC), the BioBlitz began at 6:00 p.m. on September 24 and ended at 6:00 p.m. on September 25.

Volunteers were assigned to one of three shifts and divided so that each team had some plant and animal expertise. My shift started at a very early 5 a.m. Saturday morning and concluded at noon. Our intrepid crew, which consisted of our driver, me, a mom with two kids and Laney, a retired volunteer and birder, was assigned three areas within the park to blitz. Of course, we put the kids in charge of bugs and anything else that crept or crawled. Laney and I tackled both plants and birds. And our guide made sure we got to each site on time and didn't stay too long.

As I write this, it occurs to me that there are two things about plants that make them ideal for field study. First they stay in one place. Plants will wait patiently minute after minute, hour after hour for you to identify them with nary a whisper. Second, unlike animals, plants aren't nocturnal. Sure you can study them at night if you want, but why? It's likely that they'll still be there in the morning.

So imagine my surprise after being dragged out of bed at 5 a.m. to be given a headlamp and told to start botanizing. If you've never botanized by the light of a headlamp, you might think you're missing out, but believe me, you're not. After stumbling around in the dark trying to identify all the leaves and flowers illuminated by the little circles of light attached to our heads, we were thrilled when day broke and we could finally see.

After six hours of blitzing our three sites, it was time to head back, have lunch, and tally our results. Although we may have missed some things during our survey, I think we accomplished our overall goal: to expose volunteers, especially kids, to science. Throughout the blitz, volunteers not only learned how to identify plants and animals, but also searched for owls using calls, trapped and identified insects, and watched as local scientists monitored bat movement using sophisticated computer programs.

Although PEEC is still tallying the results, the preliminary numbers are impressive. Over 2000 species were identified in a 24-hour period by close to 300 participants. Overall, it was a great learning experience and a true example of citizen science in action. So if you're ever asked to participate in a BioBlitz, I would highly recommend you say yes... just don't forget your headlamp!

Pristine Pines, MD

By Debra Grim

During the recent Maryland Native Plant Society Fall Conference, held this year on Maryland's eastern shore, I was fortunate to join Cris Fleming's field trip to Pristine Pines. This Nature Conservancy property includes a Carolina bay (or Maryland basin), one of thousands in the Atlantic coastal plain. These oblong pits, once believed to have been caused by meteors, are now thought to have been formed by undefined geomorphic processes. They collect surface water and rain, so are susceptible to drought. Ranging in size from less than an acre to many acres, some large ones remain as lakes.

The original wet open habitat of Carolina bays hosted unique communities, including many sedges and carnivorous plants, but most Carolina bays have been developed or overgrown. Pristine Pines was covered with forest, but under the guidance of Deborah Landau, the trees have been removed or killed, and a burn is planned for next year. These efforts are intended to sustain and increase the only Maryland population of Canby's dropwort.

Canby's dropwort (*Oxypolis canbyi*) is a globally rare plant. About 53 sites exist in Carolina bays and other wetlands, mostly in South Carolina and Georgia. A member of the carrot family, with skinny leaves, it is not particularly showy, although apparently when the white umbel of flowers is in bloom it can be spotted from some distance, which is, I'm told, how the plants at Pristine Pines were discovered. The dried umbels we found were not visually impressive, but we were most pleased to see them.



2011 Plant Cup

The Birding Cup is a much anticipated fund-raising event each year at Shaver's Creek Environmental Center. Teams of birders solicit pledges and find as many species of birds as they can in 24 hours. At the end of the day, all gather for the tally of the results, prizes and a pizza party.

We plan to hold a similar event that day—for plants! Teams will search for native plants in bloom. There could be a photo contest. We have a lot of details to work out; for instance, should this be a statewide search or restricted to the center region, to allow participants to convene in one location to report their counts? Perhaps the recent BioBlitz in the Poconos can serve as a model.

If you have suggestions that can help us plan this activity, or if you are interested in forming a team to compete, please contact us at info@pawildflower.org.

PNPS T-SHIRTS!

Buy yours at the annual meeting



Detail of t-shirt art

PNPS Notes is the quarterly publication of the
PENNSYLVANIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

PO Box 807, Boalsburg, PA 16827

www.pawildflower.org

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PNPS Annual Meeting • November 13

Please join us this year for some fine speakers and the annual elections.

Buy a t-shirt.

Pick up a DVD of Doug Tallamy's talk "Bringing Nature Home".

Mingle with fellow native plant enthusiasts.

Complete the afternoon with a guided walk on the grounds of Shaver's Creek Environmental Center. The meeting agenda follows.

11:45 Registration.

12:30 Talk: "The Deep and Tangled Roots of Pennsylvania's Ginseng Industry" by Eric Burkhart.

1:30 Refreshments and social.

2:00 Website demonstration.

2:15 Talk: "Reading the Forest" by Jim Finley.

3:15 Walk led by Eric Burkhart.

For directions to Shaver's Creek Environmental Center, see our website <http://www.pawildflower.org>.

PRESENTATIONS • SPEAKERS

The Deep and Tangled Roots of Pennsylvania's Ginseng Industry.

American ginseng (*Panax quinquefolius* L.) is a native North American forest plant whose root is harvested for the international medicinal plant trade. In this talk, Eric Burkhart, Program Director with Shaver's Creek Environmental Center, will share results from his recently concluded eight-year study of the Pennsylvania ginseng industry. The history, importance, and complexity of the industry will be discussed along with what is known about the current status of one of North America's most valuable, and vulnerable, plants.

About the speaker. Eric Burkhart is instructor and program director for Shaver's Creek Environmental Center. He provides training and outreach in botany and horticulture including teaching courses for the Penn State School of Forest Resources on agroforestry, woody and herbaceous plant identification, and nonnative invasive flora. Working with partners such as the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), Eric also conducts research on native plants of economic and conservation importance (e.g., American ginseng and goldenseal) and offers practical guidance through related workshops and publications.

Reading the Forest. How often, as you wander through the forest, do you pause and consider how it came to be? Why is this mix of trees here? Why do species shift across the landscape? What roles have people played in the plants changing we see on the landscape? How often have you found associations between and among plants? Is this association real or spurious? This presentation will explore some basic forest ecology concepts related to site, make some links to human and natural disturbances, introduce some basic forest management ideas and, perhaps, provide food for thought to expand your understanding of forest growth and development.

About the speaker. Jim Finley is Professor of Forest Resources at the Pennsylvania State University, where he teaches courses in human dimensions of natural resources and is the Pennsylvania extension forester with a focus on private forest management. Jim's research interests include ecosystem management on mixed ownerships, forest management, private forest owner issues and education, sustainable forestry, and human dimensions of natural resources. His current research focuses on the effects of decisions by harvesters, foresters, and private owners on forest sustainability.

Save the Lower Trail

PNPS and 15 Allied Organizations stop Federal Guaranteed Loan for Destructive Mine Proposal

By Dr. Stan Kotala

A PROPOSED LIMESTONE quarry adjacent to the Lower Trail in the Covedale area of Catharine Township, Blair County would have a severe adverse impact on the Lower Trail and its users, local residents, the Frankstown Branch of the Juniata River Important Bird Area (IBA), and the Heller Caves Biological Diversity Area (BDA). The BDA and its defined supporting landscape and a portion of the IBA are part of the proposed mine. Catharine Properties, which owns approximately 200 mostly-forested acres fronting the trail, is proposing to develop limestone quarry next to the trail, with its attendant blasting, bulldozing, heavy truck traffic, dust, noise, etc.

The forested area that this mine will destroy consists of dry oak-mixed hardwood forest and Virginia pine-mixed hardwood forest at the higher elevations and hemlock-mixed hardwood forest at the lower elevations. Dominant trees include black walnut, butternut, slippery elm, American elm, sugar maple, red maple, pin oak, pignut hickory, and basswood. Understory species include alternate-leaved dogwood, mountain maple, box elder, chokecherry, and smooth blackhaw. The Pennsylvania Natural Diversity Index reveals that beard tongue, spreading rock-creep, Maryland hawkweed, and low serviceberry also may be found in the project area.

Unbelievably, this destruction was to be financed by a guaranteed \$5.4 million USDA loan through American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. According to United States Department of Agriculture Press Release No. 0237.10:

“In Pennsylvania, the Recovery Act has guaranteed \$35.6 million in business loans that are expected to save or create hundreds of jobs and this is great news for rural



Hikers admire the hillside where a quarry is proposed adjacent to the Lower Trail.

communities across this state,” Vilsack said. “Supporting local economies in places like Turbotville and Richland, and now Williamsburg, is one of the many ways the Obama Administration and USDA are working to rebuild and revitalize rural America. In Williamsburg, Pa., the Gulf Trading & Transport, LLC has been selected to receive a \$5.4 million guaranteed loan to Heller limestone quarry as well as funding the equipment and machinery needed for operations.”

Thanks to strong opposition from the Pennsylvania Native Plant Society and 15 allied organizations (including the Mid State Trail Association, the John Kennedy Chapter of Trout Unlimited, the Moshannon Group of the

Sierra Club and Juniata Valley Audubon) the USDA has acknowledged that its Environmental Assessment of this proposed mine was severely flawed, and the guaranteed loan will be withheld from the developer.

The battle, however, continues to rage at the township level, where the Catharine Township board of supervisors is considering amendments to its subdivision and land development ordinance that would require a ¼ mile setback from the Heller Caves Blair County Natural Heritage Area to any mining activity and a ¼ mile setback from the Lower Trail to any mining activity. The Pennsylvania Native Plant Society and our 15 allied organizations support such an amendment.

If you are in favor of preserving the Lower Trail and the Heller Caves Biological Diversity Area, then please fill out, sign, and send the enclosed postcard to the Catharine Township board of supervisors. Please contact Juniata Valley Audubon Conservation Chair Dr. Stan Kotala at 814-946-8840 or ccwiba@keyconn.net with questions.

PNPS Revisit to the Big Hollow Prairie *By Harry Henderson*

A follow-up visit to the Big Hollow Prairie trip of May 22nd was held on August 15, 2010. The number of people attending was 11: Dave Bell, Tim Draude, Bob Gruver, Harry Henderson (leader), Andy and Barb Jones, Joan King, Larry Klotz, Mike Slater, Kevin Weir, and Marti Young. A light drizzle and then a rain shower didn't stop the group, and all the expected species were seen. These included side-oats grama (*Bouteloua curtipendula* S2), whorled rosinweed (*Silphium trifoliatum*), and stiff goldenrod (*Solidago rigida* S1). A good number of southern slender ladies'-tresses (*Spiranthes lacera* var. *gracilis*) were in early flower.

2011 Native Plant Sale

We have big changes to announce for the 2011 plant sale. The sale will be held at Shaver's Creek Environmental Center in Huntingdon County, in conjunction with their annual Birding Cup, on Saturday, May 2. It will be a full day of activities, including speakers and plant walks on the grounds. And native plants will be for sale, along with nature art. Stay tuned for more details.

Two days later (Aug 17th) Roger Latham was able to visit the prairie and reported several rare grasses — prairie brome (*Bromus kalmii* S3), Heller's rosette grass (*Dichanthelium oligosanthes* S3) and wiry panic-grass (*Panicum flexile* S2S3).

Further checking (Harry Henderson) of some open areas to the east of the main prairie on September 3rd turned up 3 more colonies of stiff goldenrod. This brings the number of known colonies of this species up to 5 for this area. It appears that the Prairie is actually a complex of prairie remnants — the Big Hollow Prairies.

Doug Tallamy DVD

The Florida Native Plant Society, with Doug Tallamy's permission, has taken on the initiative to make Dr. Tallamy's presentation "Bringing Nature Home" available to all. FNPS sent free copies of the disk to all state native plant societies, with instructions to disseminate copies. We will have copies of our DVD available at the annual meeting for all attendees. We ask only that the program be displayed far and wide. Everyone interested in native plants, sustainability, the environment and conservation should see this program and read the book.

Membership Renewal

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Address _____

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State _____ Zip _____

Date _____ Phone _____

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Membership Category
(please check one)

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Family \$20

Organization \$25

Life \$200 ★

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this year!**

Please make checks payable to: **PA Native Plant Society**, PO Box 807, Boalsburg PA 16827. As a 501c-3 non-profit educational organization, PNPS requests your contributions in addition to, or instead of, regular membership. Ongoing memberships in PNPS coincide with the calendar year.



Epigaea repens L.

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Ballot • Ballot • Ballot • Ballot • VOTE NOW!

Your vote is important. If you are not planning to attend the Annual Meeting this year, please submit your ballot by Friday, October 31st.

Via mail: PNPS, attn. Sarah Chamberlain,
PO Box 807, Boalsburg, PA 16827

Via email: Diane Albright at correspondence@pawildflower.org
See By-Laws on www.pawildflower.org for all election details.

These offices are up for election this year:

President

Debra Grim (incumbent)

Recording Secretary

Sarah Chamberlain (incumbent)

Nominating Committee (pick two)

Jean Aron

Maggie Harlan