Field Trips Revisited

Lefleur's Bluff State Park
Ron Wieland

On the morning of April 13, Jackson was recovering from a rain storm that blanketed the area the previous night. The sun played peek-a-boo as fresh northerly breezes, sauntering along in the wake of the storm, swept billowy clouds along their way. For the 'brave' not scared away by the storm, the field trip to Lefleur's Bluff State Park Nature Trail proved especially rewarding on this cool, fresh morning. Some spring ephemeral like little sweet betsy (Trillium cuneatum), mayapple (Podophyllum peltatum), perfoliate bellwort (Uvularia perfoliata), and birdfoot violet (Viola pedata), were already waving goodbye after a rough spring.

The hail storm that raked the area a few weeks before shredded the leaves and broke the stems of many sweet betsy and the mayapple didn't recover from the scathing late frosts. But spotted geranium (Geranium maculatum), with its large purple bloom, and wild blue phlox (Phlox divaricata) held on for dear life. Feathery false Solomon's seal (Maianthemum racemosum), and king Solomon's seal (Polygonatum biflorum var. commutatum), came charging in like gangbusters. The clan of deciduous trees figured it was about time to shed their leafy shadows. As the sap worked its way up the tree, the leaves formed along the way with the lower onesfilling out before the upper.

The pressure was there to get on with life. These creatures made my Saturday more fulfilling than the normal cup of tea and bowl of cereal. Ron is a Plant Community Ecologist for the MS Museum of Natural Sciences and the Secr/ Tres of the MNPS.

Camp Wrenwoode
Travis Salley

Saturday, April 20, 1996. 5:00 A.M. - The alarm goes off. I get up and check the weather report and map. It does not look good. 6:35 A.M. - It is sprinkling and thundering in the southwest. I believe I can stay ahead of the heavy rain. Stopped in Houston, MS for gasoline and the rain came. I missed the connection with the group at Blue Bluff and went on to Camp Wrenwoode (Aberdeen, MS) with the former caretakers. They are a real nice couple. I regret that I did not see the yellow lady's slipper orchid (Cypripedium calceolus) at Blue Bluff.

I have been on a lot of field trips and have always seen something on each trip that I had never seen before. This trip was no exception. This time it was cancer-root (Orobanche uniflora), a first cousin to squaw-root (Conopholis americana). Both are in the Broom rape family (Orobanchaceae) all members of which are parasitic. Cancer-root does not have any chlorophyll and attaches itself underground to the roots of other plants, from which it draws its nourishment. It was stated that Dr. Sidney McDaniel had never seen this plant before in MS, so that would suggest it is quite rare.

Another new for me was bladder nut (Staphylea trifolia). I may have seen the plant before, but this one was flowering and had some of last years fruit on it. The inflated fruit was somewhat smaller than a golf ball and had three pea-size seeds in it. Red buckeye (Aesculus pavia) is an old friend, but this particular plant had exceptionally large leaves and flowers. The flowers were also very bright.

Wrenwoode Camp has the tallest bluff in Ms. It also has some of the steepest hills or my legs are getting older.

Travis Salley, a native plant enthusiasts and photographer, is a life member of the society and resides in Cleveland.
Blue Bluff State Park - Vic Rudis

I was asked what stood out about this trip. My reply is the following:

1. Yellow lady slipper orchid (Cypripedium calceolus). Foliage only - no flowers. Suspect winter injury and animal damage as several stalks were eaten to the ground. 2. Dwarf pawpaw (Asimina parviflora). A diminutive form of the well-known common pawpaw (Asimina triloba). 3. Dedicated members who braved the downpour and bad weather just to see the plants.

At Camp Wrenwood the Blue Bluff State Park group was joined by Travis Salley (Cleveland, MS) and Mary and Ferrell Cunningham. The weather was overcast, but no rain. The view from the bluff and the stories told by the former caretakers, the Cunninghams, about what the area was like many decades ago made for an informative trip. Especially notable were: 1. Hemlock (Tsuga canadensis). This tree, planted many years ago, is the state record for this species. It is grown in a sheltered location. We could find no visible signs of seedling reproduction. 2. Hound's tongue (Cynoglossum sp) with its hairy leaves and delicate, small flowers. 3. Rattle-snake fern (Botrychium virginianum). Interesting reproductive structures.

At Camp Wrenwood in a cedar glade and mown area near the house, several participants were lucky enough to spot: 1. Hoary puccoon (Lithospermum canescens). A very showy species with electric yellow flowers. 2. Carex (Carex flaccosperma). I'm glad Charles Bryson was along to provide answers about Carex species. 3. Geranium (Geranium carolinianum) and wild chervil (Chaerophyllum tainturier). It's nice to have names attached to what I constantly abhor - somehow it makes the spring task of ridding these common weeds from my garden much easier.

Vic Rudis is the past president of the society, works for the U.S. Forestry Service and makes his home in Starkville.

Plants and thoughts from the Monroe County Trip - Robert A. Stewart

On Saturday, April 20, I drove with Jess Ellard, a geologist friend from high school and college days, to Blue Bluff Park near Aberdeen (Monroe County) where we joined the MNPS trip led by John MacDonald. Setting out in a light rain, we soon found the promised yellow ladieslipper orchid (Cypripedium calceolus), minus the not yet formed slipper. However, the plant of most interest to me was the Dwarf Pawpaw (Asimina parviflora). This smaller relative of the common pawpaw (Asimina triloba) is usually less than two meters tall with proportionately smaller leaves and flowers. The flowers have very short talks. It interested me for several reasons. Firstly, it is a pawpaw, a member of the Annonaceae or soursop family. It serves as a reminder that we live in a region where plants of the continental temperate zone grow along side those with tropical affinities (the breadfruit trees that formed the major cargo of the Bounty under the command of Captain Bligh were members of this family). I did not know that the dwarf pawpaw occurred in northern Mississippi. Finally, several years have passed since I last saw a dwarf pawpaw, a reminder that I have not been often enough in the field.

From Blue Bluff we drove northward in the county to Wrenwood on the top of the west valley wall of the Tombigbee River at the eastern edge of the Black Belt Prairie. Here on the crest of a steep wooded slope on the edge of a nearly vertical stream cut bluff, I saw for the first time the small parasitic herb Orobanche uniflora with its waxy white stems and nodding solitary flowers. There was only one clump of about three stems found by Charles Bryson. The plant is far more appealing than the common names broom-rape and cancer-root imply.

Also standing out in my visual memory is a single clump of Lithospermum canescens or puccoon with orange flowers arranged in the typical coil of the borage family. The plant was growing on the bank of the road leading into the camp on calcium rich soil beneath eastern red cedars. It provided for me a link to the very similar habitat of the prairie openings or glades of the western edge of the Black Belt Prairie 20 miles to the west in Chickasaw County where I recall first seeing the species at least 30 years ago.

There were many other familiar plants seen on the mesic slopes of Wrenwood. I hope that the "friends of Wrenwood" put together a successful plan for its protection.

Robert Stewart teaches in the Department of Biological Sciences at Delta State University in Cleveland, MS. He is a charter member of the MNPS, a life member, and has served twice as president of the society.
Changes in Editorship - Lynn Libous-Bailey

I have been working for the last several weeks on the 'bones' of the Summer issue (June-July-Aug) of Mississippi Native Plants. I thought quite a bit before volunteering to take over the editorship beginning with that issue. With current editors Becky Gillette and Roger Danley doing more than their fair share of addressing the environmental issues on the Mississippi coast (kudos to them both) they felt as though they were ready for a break.

The last Monday in April brought a call from Ron Wieland (MNPS Secretary/Treasurer) inquiring about the possibility of my getting out the Spring issue of the newsletter. Since this would no doubt be the first of many challenges I accepted. The result is the publication you have before you that provides you with a taste of things to come.

As editor I would like the newsletter to provide a place where the field botanist, ecologist, environmentalist, taxonomist, and other technical and field oriented individuals can provide members with specific information about the Mississippi flora. Ideally it would also be a place where this information can be presented in such a manner that gardeners, backyard habitat enthusiasts, educators, etc. finish reading the newsletter feeling as though they have a working concept of a technical aspect (basic information) yet can utilize most of what they’ve read (applied information) in their day to day routine.

Many of you come into daily contact with information that would be of interest to MNPS members. Those of you in technical and field oriented professions need to write articles and send in general points of interest just as those members who garden or landscape with Mississippi native plants need to send in articles dealing with that aspect. This should not be a single person publication containing articles written by myself simply to fill the pages. It should be reflective of the society, its members and their interests.

MNPS members are interested in knowing about upcoming events, meetings, talks, and other points of interest which involve native plants. Should you become aware of such activities let me as soon as possible. Mississippi Native Plants provides an ideal place to publicize such events. With nearly 300 members receiving the quarterly publication and several hundred copies placed in museums, nature centers and other educational facilities across the state, it becomes a cost effective way to spread the word about activities which include native plants.

While many consider me slightly odd with the grasses, asters, vines and sunflowers nearly taking over the house, I know that there are other native plant enthusiasts and gardeners that make me seem as 'normal' as Martha Stewart. On one hand I have calluses coupled with a technical background. On the other hand more calluses! It is with both held open to receive input from MNPS members that I hope to bring to the newsletter a blending and balancing of the two factions that seem to make up many a native plant society - the basic and the applied.

Carolus Linneaus is often quoted by those taking a new path for the first time: "If you have remarked errors in me, your superior wisdom must pardon them. Who errs not while perambulating the domain of nature? Who can observe everything with accuracy? Correct me as a friend, and I as a friend will requite with kindness." I only ask the same.

Lynn Libous-Bailey was born and raised in Binghamton, NY, received an undergraduate degree in Biology from SUNY Oswego and a graduate degree Botany/Plant Anatomy from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio before traveling further south. She is currently employed by the USDA-ARS Southern Weed Science Lab in Stoneville, MS and makes her home in Leland.
Calendar of Events

Fifth Annual Gardening Extravaganza
June 11, 1996
Wister Gardens
Belzoni, Mississippi

Free to the public, registration begins at 9:00 with talks (tentative times) on herbs (10:00), daylilies (11:00) and a Brown Bag Lunch (12:00). The afternoon begins with MNPS member Lynn Libous-Bailey speaking on Native Plants in the Mississippi Landscape (1:00), followed by roses (2:00), and a plant swap (3:00). A 1 year membership to the MNPS attached to a pot of blazing star (Liatris spicata) has been donated for inclusion into the bevy of door prizes. For more information contact:

Don Golden
Wister Gardens
500 Henry Rd.
Belzoni, MS 39038
601-247-3025

First Annual Fragrance Garden Plant Swap
June 8, 1996
MCC Fragrance Garden (West of Ivy Hall)
Sponsored by: East MS Master Gardeners
MS Cooperative Extension Service
MCC Horticulture Department

From 10:00-12:00 noon. Here’s your chance to bone up on those native plants that shift your olfactory sense into overdrive. Take I-20 to Exit 19 and follow the signs to MCC.
For more information contact:

Stephen Strong - Lauderdale County Agent
601-482-9764
OR
Gail Barton - MCC Hort Instructor
601-483-8241

Contacting the Neighbors

Often it seems that we have less contact with our next door neighbors than with acquaintances several hundred miles away. For those MNPS members who are wondering what our neighboring states are up to the following are addresses for information about their Native Plant Societies:

Alabama Wildflower Society
C/O Mr. George Wood, Jr.
11120 Ben Clements Road
Northport, AL 35476

Arkansas Native Plant Society
P.O. Box 250250
Little Rock, Arkansas 72225

The Georgia Native Plant Society
P.O. Box 422085
Atlanta, GA 30342-2085

Louisiana Native Plant Society
P.O. Box 126
Collinston, LA 71229-0126

Tennessee Native Plant Society
Department of Botany
University of Tennessee
Knoxville, TN 37996-1100

Native Plant Society of Texas
P.O. Box 981
Georgetown, TX 78627

Although not bordering our state, Georgia and Texas are included because many Georgia native plants can be found throughout northeastern MS with the same holding true for some Texas natives and the Mississippi coastal counties.

Seasonal Favorites - Lynn Libous-Bailey

A department in which all members of the MNPS are invited to participate. We all have our favorites and this is the place to let others know which plants tug a little harder at your heart strings. Send in one or two paragraphs describing a seasonally favorite plant and you too can become ‘published’. The following is an example:

‘During March I look forward on Saturday mornings to a walk down to Deer Creek, coffee cup in hand, to a spot which is covered with spring beauty (Claytonia virginiana). I enjoy seeing the subtle differences among the flowers. There are those that are almost solid white, some a light pink with deeper pink veins, and still...”

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others a medium rose pink throughout. They look like thousands of stars sprinkled in the grassy bank and quickly help make me forget about the forty hour week I have left behind.’ It could be a favorite native plant that draws the first butterflies to your yard or a shrub whose berries entice the migrating cedar waxwings. Perhaps its the lush growth of native ferns and trilliums signaling a healthy habitat in the wild. Or is it the first sunflower that opens near the trail in the state park? It’s your call. Input keeps this department open and as I have yet to meet a member without an opinion I will be expecting to hear from you.

Begin in your own backyard - Lynn Libous-Bailey

The Mississippi Delta has experienced vast change. In many areas the once flourishing wetland has been drained and punctuated with the sterile, hard blacktop and concrete of roads and cities. Contractors seldom seemed to have built in tandem with the architecture of the land. Clear cut, fill in, level off, and build is more often than not the rule. Today far to little remains of virgin woodlands, meadows, and lowlands containing specimens of the native plants that make up the rich diverse flora in the Delta.

Plants and animals in these relatively undisturbed areas are continually catalogued and their relationship to the areas in which they live are extensively studied. Invaluable information from such studies provide a data base from which to choose plants for reforestation and reclamation projects. Re-introducing native species into areas where they were once prevalent can be done once we understand the relationship between plants and environmental conditions of their natural range. Most people think in terms of a large scale reclamation of thousands of acres managed by third parties. However an area as small as an urban backyard can house a successful native planting

Picture the bright yellow lanceleaf coreopsis (Coreopsis lanceolata) and the deep blue spiderwort (Tradescantia virginiana) teamed with white flowering beard-tongue (Penstemon tenuis), a fall blooming annual gerardia (Agalinis tenuifolia), several clumps of broom sedge (Andropogon virginicus) and lots of bright yellow/orange of the ever popular black-eyed susan (Rudbeckia hirta). Now picture this combination along the west side of the garage where 210 square feet of bermuda grass currently reside. Certainly in a backyard one cannot expect to reproduce in its entirety the beauty that a natural area filled with these plants displays but many people find a comfort in replanting what may have been removed by the bulldozer years earlier.

A carefully chosen, well placed native shrub can provide shelter, a nesting site and food for numerous bird species. Perennials, like those mentioned above, provide nectar and pollen for bees, hummingbirds, butterflies and other insects. The plant chosen for a particular site is important. Plants and animals are found naturally occurring in areas which provide optimal conditions for their growth. The ecologist refers to this as a habitat, the sum total of the environment of a particular species. Within a habitat there may be some areas that are slightly different than the habitat as a whole. Parts may be shady, wet and sandy while other areas are sunny with dry clay. These 'microhabitats' are also referred to as niches, the conditions in a habitat that are produced by the existence of different environmental conditions.

Try viewing your yard as a habitat with various niches. While perhaps not a habitat in the purest sense, it could easily become a functional small scale re-creation of a part of natures grand scheme of things.

View your yard as a self contained habitat with various niches. Begin by:

* Mapping out the areas of the yard that you are interested in developing.

* Observing the amount and intensity of the sun during the year. Seasonal changes in the canopy and as well as the position of the sun may cause some areas show considerable variation throughout the year.

* Observing the soil conditions. Are the areas heavy clay or sandy loam? Wet, damp or dry? Do these conditions change dramatically with the winter rains or summer droughts?

* Doing your homework. Each niche is able to support a wide variety of native plant life but success largely depends on using plants that are found naturally occurring in those same conditions in their native habitat.

In future issues of Mississippi Native Plants you'll learn which plants are found in the different habitats throughout the state and which ones are adaptable enough to grow in your backyard habitat.
Coming to terms with…. - Lynn Libous-Bailey

The bylaws of the Mississippi Native Plant Society state in part "...to promote the preservation of native and naturalized plants..." Native vs. Naturalized. A touchy subject with botanists, native plant purists, horticulturists, and gardeners alike, as each has a slightly different view of the definition. In general the following definitions hold true:

Native is most often used when referring to plants that were found occurring naturally in a given region before European settlement in America.

Naturalized is the term used when describing plants which are not native to an area, but grow and reproduce there without aid.

But native to where? Herein lies the problem. Some people use physiographic regions (land area differences) as their boundaries; examples being 'Black Belt Prairie' native plants or 'Longleaf Pine Belt' native plants. Others only consider plants within a fifty mile radius of a central point to be native. Some feel comfortable with manmade boundaries such as 'Mississippi' or 'Southeastern' native plants. Many companies include naturalized plants and the whole of North America in their 'native plant' seed mixes.

While some interpretations may seem so narrow they're splitting hairs and others so broad they border on ridiculous, all should be viewed with an open mind. Landscape Architect Robert Poore pointed out that a physiographic definition of native becomes essential in the planning and landscaping of the new Mississippi Museum of Natural Science facility. Plants, after all, don't conform to human imposed boundaries or time tables. Prior to man's intervention they grew in physiographic regions in habitats that provided them with optimal conditions for growth and reproduction.

To the gardener in the Delta the physiographic definition is sometimes too restrictive. It would mean doing without garden phlox (Phlox paniculata), columbine (Aquilegia canadensis), coral honeysuckle (Lonicera sempervirens), purple coneflower (Echinacea purpurea) and blue-eyed grass (Sisyrinchium angustifolius). For although these plants are native to Mississippi they are not native to the Delta and most gardeners there aren't willing to give them up without a fight. It's the 'Southeastern' native plant definition that they tend to embrace. After all, it's all where you draw the line.

Mississippi Native Plants
The Newsletter of the Mississippi Native Plant Society

Mississippi Native Plants is the official publication of the Mississippi Native Plant Society and is published quarterly.

Winter (Issue 1) December/January/February
Spring (Issue 2) March/April/May
Summer (Issue 3) June/July/August
Fall (Issue 4) September/October/November

Deadlines for the Summer issue are as follows:
Articles—April 15 Calendar of Events—April 30

Deadlines for the Fall issue are as follows:
Articles—July 15 Calendar of Events—July 30

Articles on diskette in Word Perfect or Word along with hard copies are welcomed.
Conference information continued on page 8
Mississippi Native Plant Society
Membership Application

Membership Categories:
  _____ New Member  _____ Renewal  _____ Gift  _____ Address Change

Sender:

  _____ Student: $5.00
  _____ Individual or Family: $7.50
  _____ Sustaining: $10.00
  _____ Contributing: $25.00
  _____ Life: $125.00

Name:

Address:

City:

State: Zip:

County:

Telephone:

I prefer not to have my name appear on the membership list.

Return this form along with a check made payable to Mississippi Native Plant Society to:

Mississippi Native Plant Society
C/O Ron Wieland
MS. Museum of Natural Science
111 N. Jefferson St.
Jackson, MS 39202

All members receive Mississippi Native Plants. Life members also receive Wildflowers of Mississippi by S. Lee Timme.

Gulf Coast Regional Native Plant Conference Continued

REGISTRATION AND GROUND RULES: Advance registration is required, will be limited to the first 250 applicants, and will be processed on a first come, first served basis. Your registration fee of $70.00 includes admission to all presentations and evening networking activities. Registration instructions, maps, parking permits, and receipts will be provided. Any cancellations must be made in writing by May 15 to obtain a refund; a $15.00 processing fee will be retained.

HOUSING: Registrants are responsible for contacting the housing of their choice and for their own housing payment with the exception of those seeking dormitory accommodations which are noted in the registration form. Pleasant Hall is the location of the Conference and is housing rooms priced at $42 dbl., $50 Sgl.

Telephone 504-387-0297

* Wilson Inn, near the University, has a special Conference price of $49.95, June 11-15, until May 28

Reference: GCRNPC to obtain the Conference rate.

Telephone: 504-923-3377

MEALS: Meals are on your own except for Friday's crawfish boil, which is included in your registration. Restaurant information will be included in your packet. A cash bar will accommodate attendees on Thursday and Friday evenings.

REGISTRATION FORM

Please complete one form per person as soon as possible. Make checks payable to GCRNPC Gulf Coast Regional Native Plant Conference and mail to: Native Plant Conference c/o Hilltop Arboretum, P.O. Box 82608, Baton Rouge, LA 70894. For additional information, contact Marlon Drummond at Hilltop Arboretum.

(504/767-6916)

REGISTRATION FEE - $70: $70

HOUSING: Registrants seeking air conditioned dormitory housing - Circle choice and enter appropriate fees: $_____

A. $25.00 Single Room per person/night
B. $20.00 Double Room per person/night

FIELD TRIPS:

Circle trips to be attended and enter appropriate fees: $____

1. ATCHAFALAYA BASIN CANOE TRIP $25
2. TUNICA HILLS HIKING TRIP $20
3. TOUR OF THREE NATIVE GARDENS $20
4. HILLTOP TOUR NO FEE
5. CROSBY BOG FIELD TRIP NO FEE
6. EUNICE/LACASSINE FIELD TRIP NO FEE

TOTAL BALANCE DUE: $_____

NAME: ____________________________________________

ADDRESS: ____________________________________________

CITY:  STATE: ZIP:__________________________

HOME PHONE (____ )__________________ WORK PHONE: (____ )__________________

ROOMMATE PREFERENCE: ____________________________

Mississippi Native Plant Society
P.O. Box 357
Stoneville, MS 38776-0357

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