

## Meet the 2017 Pilgrimage Field Trip Leaders

**Mike Christison:** Mike joined BotSoc in 1991, and has led field trips since 1995. His annual field trips to the Pocket of Pigeon Mountain are well attended by many who love Nature's spectacular display of early spring wildflowers. Along with Richard & Teresa Ware, he has led several trips to the unusual Cedar Glades of Chickamauga National Military Park and other sites. He is also a present and past BotSoc board member. Mike is a life-long hiker and has maintained a section of the Benton MacKaye Trail since the late 1980's. He is also an avid canoer and has paddled many of the rivers in Georgia and the southeast. He has resided in Marietta, GA since 1985, and is looking forward to the 2017 Pilgrimage in his old hometown of Chattanooga.

**Dr. Leslie Edwards:** Leslie is a past president of the Georgia Botanical Society who lives in the Atlanta area. She recently retired as a senior lecturer with Georgia State University and is the lead author of the book The Natural Communities of Georgia. She now dedicates her time to educating the public about the natural communities and native plants of Georgia through giving presentations, conducting workshops and certificate classes, and leading walks. She participates on the education committees of several Georgia organizations, and enjoys restoring natural communities and gardening with native plants.

**John Evans:** John is a botanist and plant ecologist with passion for the conservation of plant species within their native ranges. He holds a BS in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology from the University of Tennessee at Knoxville and an MS in Environmental Science from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, where his research specialized in the flora of the southeastern United States. John is the Greenhouse and Horticultural Manager at Reflection Riding Arboretum and Nature Center in Chattanooga, Tennessee, where he combines his botanical expertise with his life-long love of gardening.

**Tom Govus:** Tom Govus has worked as a botanist and vegetation ecologist in the southeastern United States for the last thirty-six years. Agencies and private groups he has worked with include the North Carolina Natural Heritage Program, the Georgia Natural Heritage Program, the National Park Service, The Nature Conservancy, the USDA Forest Service, the Georgia Plant Conservation Alliance and NatureServe. Projects have included surveys for endangered and threatened species, botanical inventories of National Park properties, monitoring populations of federally endangered plants, ecological reconnaissance of National Forest Service lands, conducting accuracy assessments of vegetation maps, and establishing permanent vegetation monitoring plots for the National Park Service.

**Michael Green:** Michael has lectured and led outdoor programs in botany, natural and human history for over thirty years. A longtime volunteer in the Reflection Riding Arboretum and Nature Center education department, Michael also served on the board for a number of years, including two years as board President. He enjoys sharing his intimate knowledge of this special place with our guests. Families and children are especially welcome as "it is never too early or too late to introduce a child to the natural world".

**Jimmy Groton:** Jimmy is an ecologist specializing in wetlands, streams, threatened and endangered species management, environmental impact assessment and mitigation, and invasive species control with a Knoxville environmental consulting firm. He is the President of Tennessee Citizens for Wilderness Planning and a board member for the Emory River Watershed Association, East Tennessee Whitewater Club, and Tennessee Invasive Plant Council. He is also active with Tennessee Native Plant Society. Jimmy has a deep appreciation of native plants and all aspects of the natural wonders and enjoys sharing his love of nature with others.

**Corey Hagen:** Corey Hagen is the Director of Education at Reflection Riding Arboretum and Nature Center. He has been a part of the education staff since 2005 and became the Director in 2010. Corey has a degree in Wildlife Science from Auburn University where he was also an officer in the Wildlife Society. The education department at Reflection Riding Arboretum and Nature Center is responsible for teaching basic ecology lessons to approximately 15,000 children every year and runs ecology based Summer Camps. During his time as the Director of Education, he has formed partnerships with organizations such as the Tennessee Aquarium, Chattanooga Zoo, Creative Discovery Museum and the Hunter Museum. He is a self-proclaimed science nerd and loves all things pertaining to the Flora and Fauna of the Southeast.

**Halle Henderson:** Following is an introductory message from Halle. She writes: "Hello! I'm Halle. I am truly honored to have the opportunity to participate in my first ever Pilgrimage with the Georgia Botanical Society as a trip leader. I have lived most of my life in the Chattanooga area, including having the privilege of growing up on beautiful Lookout Mountain itself.

It was BotSoc member Mike Christison who first pointed out some wildflowers (probably Turks Cap Lilies) to me between rapids on the Nantahala River in the summer of 1999, and it was then that I began to learn to see, to notice, and to appreciate these little beauties that surrounded me. (Thanks, Mike!)

It brings me so much joy to welcome the annual parade of familiar flower-faces, and there is not much that gets me more excited on a hike than finding a new species in bloom and positively identifying it, peering into corollas and poring over field guides. This year I hope to complete the Tennessee State Naturalist Program Certification. I also hope to catch Elf Orpine (*Diamorpha smallii*) in bloom on Lookout Mountain and Yellow Fringeless Orchid (*Platanthera integra*) in the shrinking wetlands of Tennessee.

When I am not at my day job I enjoy being outside and trying to remember to be in the moment. I botanize without hurry and enjoy copious snack breaks and hand lens breaks. I welcome all ages of folk who want to explore Sitton's Gulch with me on Sunday, April 9 to see what we can find together. I'm hoping we'll see some Lance-leaved Trillium (*Trillium lanceolatum*)! Enjoy the parade."

**Ellen Honeycutt:** Ellen is an active member of the Georgia Botanical Society in the Atlanta area and conducts field trips annually on its behalf. She considers herself to be an average gardener with perhaps an above-average passion about it. She was introduced to the concept of "native plants" in 2000 when she joined the Georgia Native Plant Society. Fostering an appreciation for native plants is now her passion. She enjoys helping other people learn more about the benefits of native plants. She also likes to help people figure out which plants might work best in their gardens. She is also a frequent contributor to the blog, [Using Georgia Native Plants](#)

**Dennis Horn:** Dennis Horn is well known naturalist, author and photographer from Tullahoma, TN. He has worked as an engineer at Arnold Center and has been named an AEDC Fellow. He is widely viewed as an authority on wildflowers and is co-author of the field guide [Wildflowers of Tennessee, the Ohio Valley, and the Southern Appalachians](#). He received a Certificate of Merit from the State Department of Conservation in 2003 for his conservation efforts. He is a charter member of the Tennessee Native Plant Society and is an active member of its Board of Directors who frequently leads field trips in Tennessee.

**Dr. Elliott Horner:** Elliott is a Lead Scientist at UL Environment, but that is just a way to afford to have time to be in the woods. An undergraduate degree in botany worked out well; for a while he was actually paid to be in the woods with the state parks in North Carolina. There, he developed an appreciation of the longleaf pine savanna which he still harbors. Then, graduate school in mycology and forest pathology led to permanent jobs and the career had more time in the lab than the field. Field work eventually became part of the job, but the 'field' was indoor air quality, so 'field work' was in buildings rather than the

woods. He has been enjoying the Georgia Botanical Society trips for about 10 years now and recently started doing some of the work of leading trips. He co-authored an article in *Tipularia* this year about departed botanists. He also authored the following limerick.

Carolina sent forth grad Horner  
To learn plants in the southeast corner  
Now back from years away  
He sees taxa strewn astray  
And botany wanting a mourner

**Mitchell Kent:** Mitchell has had a lifelong interest in exploring nature and in nature photography, which account for his frequent hikes in the woods on the mountain trails of East Tennessee and North Georgia. Since his retirement in 2015, he has been seeking to add to his life list of wildflowers and other native plants. He is an active member of Georgia Botanical Society, Tennessee Native Plant Society, Tennessee Valley Chapter of the Wild Ones and the Southeastern Bluegrass Association. He is on the Board of Directors for the Georgia Botanical Society and serves in the role of pilgrimage planning for the 2017-2018 pilgrimages. He also serves as the East Tennessee Outreach / Education Coordinator for the Tennessee Native Plant Society.

**Hal Massie:** Hal is an active member of the Georgia Botanical Society who leads field trips for the Society throughout the State of Georgia. He is a retired US Air Force veteran and currently works for the Georgia Department of Natural Resources in the Nongame Conservation Section. Hal's roles with the DNR include rare plant monitoring, studying fire effects on vegetation, and a variety of ecological restoration activities, including prescribed fire. Hal is a graduate of the University of Georgia, where he studied botany. He serves on the Board of Directors for the Georgia Botanical Society. His hobbies include botany, gardening, birding, hiking, canoeing and writing.

**Tom Patrick:** Tom is a senior botanist with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. He works on the location, conservation, and status of rare plants. He received a B.S. in forestry and an M.S. in botany in his native New York, and then spent several years investigating trilliums, particularly in the Great Smoky Mountains. Wild orchids, bogs and inventorying flora in natural areas are also specialties. Tom has only missed one Great Smoky Mountain Wildflower Pilgrimage since 1975 and leads wildflower and tree/shrub walks including the taxonomy hike into White Oak Sink, a favorite area. He is an active member of the Georgia Botanical Society and often leads field trips in the State of Georgia on the Society's behalf. Current projects include a survey of pitcherplant bogs of the Coastal Plain and exploration of limesink ponds in southwestern Georgia.

**Dr. Larry Pounds:** Larry works as an endangered plant specialist for the Oak Ridge National Laboratory and the Tennessee Valley Authority. He has also done research on the relationship between biodiversity and the ability of exotic plants to invade plant communities under a grant from the Environmental Protection Agency. Previous work for the National Park Service includes rare plant and/or exotic pest plant surveys in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Cumberland Gap National Historic Park, the Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area and the Obed National Scenic River. His work on the Oak Ridge Reservation includes study of special plant communities, in particular, cedar barrens and wetlands. He helped to revise the natural areas system on the Oak Ridge Reservation that protects quality areas of natural vegetation. He has been working professionally as a plant ecologist for over 25 years. He is an active board member and field trip leader for the Tennessee Native Plant Society. He is the co-author of the book Wildly Strolling Along with his son Ben that discusses a trek on the recently lengthened Cumberland Trail in East Tennessee.

**Mary Priestley:** Mary is a curator of the Sewanee Herbarium located in the Biology Department at the University of The South in Sewanee, TN. She is active with the Tennessee Native Plant Society and with the Friends of South Cumberland State Park, which includes Collins West, the site of one of our field trips. She is one of the editors of the Tennessee Native Plant Society field guide, Wildflowers of Tennessee, the Ohio Valley, and the Southern Appalachians and contributed to the landmark textbook Guide to the Vascular Plants of Tennessee. She is the author of William's Wildflowers for children, Fieri Gizzard, Voices from the Wilderness for grown-ups, and What if Trees Could Walk? for all ages. She has been nature journaling for many years and has conducted several nature journaling workshops, including for the Great Smoky Mountain National Park Spring Wildflower Pilgrimage

**Dr. Rich Reaves:** Rich has been a BotSoc member since returning to his native Georgia in the early 2000's. He is a Senior Ecologist with CH2M HILL, working in their Atlanta office. His interest in wildflowers dates to encountering paintbrushes during his time as a wildlife ecology undergrad at the University of Wyoming. For BotSoc, he conducted volunteer plant inventories at Cloudland Canyon State Park for several years and regularly leads BotSoc walks at the park. He also has a great fondness for the wildflowers in wet ditches and leads roadside botanizing trips focusing on this habitat type.

**Jason Reynolds:** Jason grew up in Nashville, Tennessee and graduated from the Tennessee Technological University with a degree in Agriculture / Horticulture in 1998. He is a Park Ranger at South Cumberland State Park where he has been stationed for 14 years. For many of those years, he was the Interpretive Specialist and concentrated on leading hikes and special programs throughout the park. He has been an instructor in the Tennessee Naturalist Program, as well. In recent years most of his efforts have been directed towards a large reroute / trail-building project on the Fieri Gizzard Trail. The Collins Gulf wildflower hike is one he has done every spring, until the last two years. He remarked that he is very excited to be able to lead the hike there this year for the Georgia Botanical Society in association with Mary Priestley. He also stated that he has a strong affinity for the Cumberland Plateau and is always eager to hike with others that share an interest and love for wild places.

**George Shinn:** George Shinn was drawn to the plateau from his home state of Texas over twenty years ago, after graduating from college with a degree in Fine Arts. George took a job at Fall Creek Falls State Park in 1996, teaching arts and crafts as a seasonal park ranger. This position led to a full time position as the Park Naturalist, operating the park's Environmental Education Center. George then took the opportunity to become a Park Ranger, and was assigned to the Bicentennial Mall State Park in Nashville. He worked there for one year before becoming the Park Ranger at Savage Gulf State Natural Area. "Everything I dreamed a park ranger does, is there at Savage", says George of his time at Savage Gulf. "Once I arrived, I never wanted to leave". In 2013, the South Cumberland State Park manager went out indefinitely on sick leave. The park needed a leader, and George stepped up to become its Interim Park Manager. In October of 2016, George was promoted to Park Manager. In this position, George is determined to make this a great park with the best staff. He is excited about the direction the park is taking and has established a goal of making South Cumberland the "crown jewel" of the Tennessee State Park System. George's hero is Davy Crockett, who he re-enacts, in full costume, at many South Cumberland State Park events. George's wife, Jessica, is from Van Buren County, TN and the couple has made their home in Tennessee since they met in 1993. They are the mostly proud parents of their two teenagers, Katherine and William.

**Richard Ware:** Richard is a past President of the Georgia Botanical Society and is currently co-editor with wife Teresa of the *Tipularia Botanical Journal*. He leads field trips, conducts workshops, and writes articles for BotSoc News and *Tipularia*. Richard likes to find rare plants and then (hopefully) get their habitats protected from destruction. He also enjoys photography and is a Botanical Guardian for the

Georgia Plant Conservation Alliance. He and wife Teresa are lifelong residents of Rome and Floyd County, GA.

**Dr. William (Bill) Witherspoon:** Bill is co-author of the book, Roadside Geology of Georgia, and current President of the Georgia Geological Society. He received his PhD in Geology from the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. He taught K-12 students and their teachers for seventeen years at the Fernbank Science Center, part of the DeKalb County (GA) School District. He was named the Georgia Outstanding Earth Science Teacher in 2007 by the National Association of Geoscience Teachers. He retired in 2014 and enjoys leading geology walks, talks and workshops for the public, of which there have been many since the book was published.