

BotSoc News



Volume 96

Number 4

July

2021

Reliable as spring rains, the 'Pocket' again proves why it is one of Georgia's must-see displays of spring wildflowers

Field Trip: The Pocket at Pigeon Mountain.
Date: Marcy 27, 2021
Trip Leaders: Mike Christison and Richard Ware
Trip Report: Richard Ware

The "Pocket" is located on the western side of Pigeon Mountain, west of LaFayette, Ga., not to be confused with the Pocket Recreation Area in northern Floyd County. This field trip was a special treat for us. Not only is this site one of — if not *the* — most spectacular

places to view early spring wildflowers in Georgia, but, because of COVID-19, this was the first official field trip that we've been able to attend since 2019. I think everyone who attended shared our excitement. Making the trip even more special, this was the first trip to the Pocket by many of our attendees. But, because of the pandemic, we had to limit the attendees to 10.

We were greatly concerned with the weather, as the forecast called for rain all day, but once again we were blessed with dry weather (although cloudy) and didn't see rain until we had eaten that inevitable Mexican meal in LaFayette.

Our field trip leaders, Mike Christison and Richard Ware, initially led us north from the parking lot. Our intention was to cross the creek and explore the wildflowers in that area, but after a short discussion, we decided that we wouldn't see anything new in that direction and would definitely get our feet wet. We did see interesting flowers before the creek, including purple phacelia (*Phacelia*



Purple phacelia (*Phacelia bipinnatifida*). Photo credit: As with all photos accompanying this article on The Pocket, photos are credited to Richard & Teresa Ware and may be found on their superb website *Guide to the Wildflowers, Ferns, Trees, Shrubs & Woody Vines of Georgia and Adjacent States* at www.ngaflora.com.

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President's Perspective



BotSoc News

is published seven times a year in the months of Jan, March, May, July, September, and Nov, with a special seventh issue annually for the Spring Wildflower Pilgrimage. *Note, however, that with the cancellation of this year's Pilgrimage, there will be only six issues this year.*

Submission deadline

Is Aug. 1 for the September issue.

Subscriptions

Are included with membership.

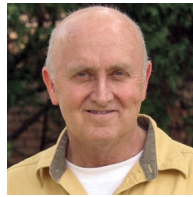
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Although many of you likely saw our revised field trip policy statement in an email last month, we are including a copy in this month's newsletter for easy reference. The revised policy is effective as of June 1.

The biggest change involves the removal of the 10-person -per-trip limit that we imposed at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pre-registration process that we encouraged during the worst of the pandemic continues. It's important to note, however, that the size of any one group depends on the preference of the field trip leader, so there may still be limits to the size of the group for a given trip.

Let me add that, although it is *not* a part of our new policy, I personally think that when you have more than 15 people, particularly on a narrow mountain trail, the quality of the trip suffers. And there are sometimes ecological reasons for limiting the size of a field trip too, especially in wetlands.

I remember all too well back in the early '70s the damage I caused when I tried to take too many folks to see the limestone sinks that were the subject of my master's work in eastern Tennessee. At the time of the study, the three sinks, with a combined acreage of 1.3 acres, harbored about one-third of all the bryophyte species in the entire state of Tennessee. I was so excited to share this tremendous diversity, I was not initially aware of the damage too many feet at a time could do to a wetland, especially if the folks try to gather around the trip leader instead of staying on the narrow trail.

Related to all the above, the number of field trips we offer is expected to continue to grow, but it will likely be some time before we return to our pre-pandemic averages of 35 to 55 trips per year.

And still related to those field trips, which are the primary goal of our organization, the board of directors will finalize in August its guidance on the 2022 Pilgrimage. However, the prevailing consensus has recently been to return to the coastal venue we had to abandon in 2020 and 2021. After all, considerable coordination and planning went into those cancelled events, especially the 2020 one, which was cancelled much later in the planning cycle than the 2021 one. This means that Port Wentworth would again be the hub for next year's Pilgrimage.

I will repeat now some of what I said more than two years ago about why we picked that suburb of Savannah rather than the more picturesque downtown Savannah. There are other considerations, but two of them are as follows:

- 1) The geographical location of Port Wentworth is a good central or focal point for trips, and
- 2) The fact that, traffic-wise, getting in and out of Port Wentworth is a lot more efficient than trying to navigate downtown Savannah, especially when we'd be doing it.

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President's Perspective—Continued from Page 2

There is one other thing I need to mention here though I do so reluctantly.

It's true that compared to the last couple of years, we currently appear to be in a much better place with regard to the pandemic. But there is yet no way to predict how long this return to some sense of normalcy will continue. A lot depends on vaccinations (and attitudes towards them), booster shots and the virulence of variants.

Though I am not a virologist, I have taught enough of that subject within microbiology to know that many respiratory viruses thrive better during fall and winter than at other times of the year. That was certainly true of the Spanish flu more than 100 years ago. I certainly hope COVID does not again become an issue for this country and our society, but if it does, we should know soon enough in our annual Pilgrimage planning cycle to act accordingly. Most of the serious planning and coordination takes place between August and December of the preceding year.

I wish I could have ended on a more positive note, but I have to be realistic, especially when it comes to planning. In the meantime, I am very much looking forward to seeing you out and about on our trips.

Bobby Hattaway

Revised Georgia Botanical Society Field Trip Policy Rules and Recommendations effective as of June 1, 2021

Rules about Field Trips. Decisions about trip participant size, preregistration, and masking should rest with the trip leader with the following exception: If the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines become more restrictive than those in this policy, then field trip leaders will follow CDC guidelines at a minimum, as we have in the past.

Otherwise, leaders can limit the size of a group for any reason they see fit, including for ecological considerations or simply for quality of the field trip experience. This means that the field trip description posted online, in the newsletter, or in any email announcements should include whatever restrictions and requirements the trip leader specifies, if any. If a trip leader wants to further manage the logistics of a trip by requiring proof of vaccination, that is also the leader's prerogative. If trip leaders do not want to relax the COVID safety protocols formerly in place, then that is fine too.

Pre-registration. Leaders should make every effort to pre-register participants and preregistration is mandatory when there is a restricted attendance limit. Experience both pre-COVID and during it, has shown the advantages of having advance contact with prospective participants, including notification of postponement or cancellation in inclement weather. Email contact is probably best, but the leader could at least have folks call her/him to register. *Notes to prospective field trip participants: Those who try to attend without pre-registration risk not being able to attend due to missing the trip leader or to not meeting the trip restrictions published by the leader. No one should try to attend a field trip that has a restricted attendance limit without*

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Field Trip Rules—Continued from Page 3

preregistering.

Carpooling. Though it was the consensus of the BotSoc board that we should encourage safe carpooling, board members decided not to typically require it. The decision to carpool is usually up to those who participate. At least one notable exception stood out during the board's discussions. That was for mountain roadside botany trips where safety considerations and/or parking limitations make carpooling necessary. Eventually we may find another compelling reason to require carpooling, but for now this is the board's decision.

Recommendation. While the COVID health threat persists, we should at least encourage field trip leaders to let prospective participants know in advance that they can still follow the safety rules we formerly had in place, i.e. wearing mask and/or keep their distance, if folks choose to do so. (Note: This is another reason for preregistration.)

Implementation & Duration. These rules and recommendations are effective June 1, 2021, and will remain in place until further notice. Hopefully, with time the need for the recommendation will become nonexistent.

Pocket Field Trip — Continued from Page 1

bipinnatifida), long-spurred violet (*Viola rostrata*), rue anemone (*Thalictrum thalictroides*), star chickweed (*Stellaria pubera*), cut-leaved toothwort (*Cardamine concatenata*), and decumbent trillium (*Trillium decumbens*).



Decumbent trillium (*Trillium decumbens*). Photo: Richard & Teresa Ware.

We then made the short walk to the main attraction, the boardwalk known as the Shirley Miller Wildflower Trail. Here the ground is completely covered with different wildflowers on both sides of Pocket Branch for about one-quarter mile upstream to a beautiful waterfall. As you cross the bridge, the two most prominent wildflowers of the Pocket come into view, Virginia bluebells (*Mertensia virginica*) and woods poppy (*Stylophorum diphyllum*). Both are stunning in their own right, but when you mix the blues and pinks of the bluebells with the yellows of the poppy you get a really stunning display.

According to the Biota of North America Program (BONAP, www.bonap.org), this is the only site in Georgia for the woods poppy. The bluebells are found in six or seven counties, all in northwest Georgia.

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A couple of weeks earlier, the ground was covered with a tiny-flowered member of the carrot family, harbinger-of-spring (*Erigenia bulbosa*). The flower is quite beautiful when viewed with a hand lens, with white petals and burgundy anthers, hence the common name salt and pepper. Also, blooming a little earlier on the left before crossing the bridge are nice groupings of bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*), sharp-lobed hepatica (*Hepatica acutiloba*) and Harper's trout lily (*Erythronium americanum* ssp. *harperi*).

The early part of the boardwalk also reveals large patches of decumbent trillium (*Trillium decumbens*), Canada water-leaf (*Hydrophyllum canadense*), Carolina spring beauty (*Claytonia caroliniana*), and wild hyacinth (*Camassia scilloides*). The water-leaf and hyacinth bloom in mid-April. The



Top, Virginia bluebells (*Mertensia virginica*). Above, woods poppy (*Stylophorum diphyllum*). Photos: Richard & Teresa Ware.

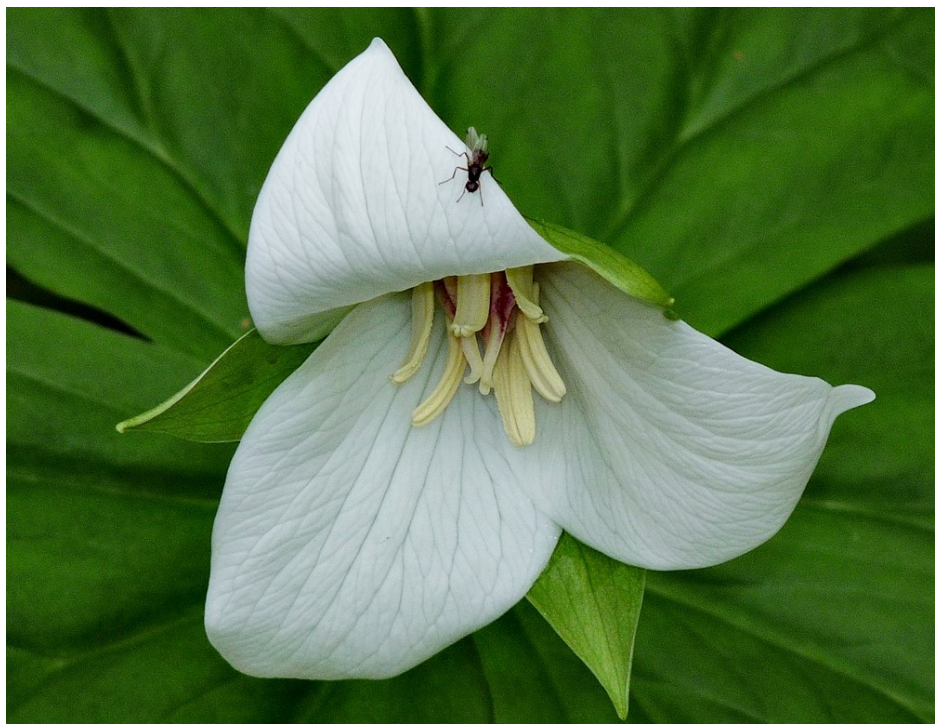
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beginning of the boardwalk has great Indian plantain (*Arnoglossum reniforme*) and blue cohosh (*Caulophyllum thalictroides*). The Indian plantain is only found in three extreme north Georgia counties.

As you near the middle section you should see wild geranium (*Geranium maculatum*), spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*), large-flowered bellwort (*Uvularia grandiflora*), smooth yellow forest violet (*Viola eriocarpa*), foam flower (*Tiarella cordifolia*), and a few patches of another star of the boardwalk, bent trillium (*Trillium flexipes*). And finally, as you near the end of the boardwalk and the base of the steep slope on the right, you are rewarded by even more rarities such as doll's eyes (*Actaea pachypoda*), Dutchman's breeches (*Dicentra cucullaria*), mitrewort (*Mitella diphylla*), Canada violet (*Viola canadensis*), and lots more of the rare bent trillium on the slope with its beautiful white flowers facing down toward the boardwalk.

If you walk to the base of the waterfalls or up the old road to the top, you will be rewarded with wild columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*). Other outstanding plants on the old road are pennywort (*Obolaria virginica*), pale-flowered leafcup (*Polymnia canadensis*), stonecrop sedum (*Sedum ternatum*), and others.

After a short lunch break, we caravanned to the eastern side of the mountain to see all the treasures



Top, great Indian plantain (*Arnoglossum reniforme*). Above, bent trillium (*Trillium flexipes*). Photos: Richard & Teresa Ware.

Pocket Field Trip—Continued from Page 6



Top left, doll's eyes (*Actaea pachypoda*); top right, Dutchman's breeches (*Dicentra cucullaria*); right, Canada violet (*Viola canadensis*). All photos: Richard & Teresa Ware.

along Blue Hole Road. At the very start of this road you can park and walk across the field to the right to the creek and search for the rare Miami-mist (*Phacelia purshii*), only reported from four counties in Georgia. Chuck Wilson reported that they were just starting to bloom, so we didn't see them this trip. A little further down the road we parked and Teresa Ware led us to a spectacular population of spring coralroot orchid (*Corallorhiza wisteriana*). This plant is on the edge of woods supporting several other extremely rare plants like twinleaf (*Jeffersonia diphylla*) and Alabama snow-wreath (*Neviusia alabamensis*). Twinleaf, named for our third U.S. president, Thomas Jefferson, is extremely rare in Georgia and is found only at this one location. The snow-wreath is a rare shrub found mainly in Alabama and Arkansas but reported for Walker and Floyd counties in Georgia. Also, dotting the ground in this location, we have a very narrow-leaved toothwort, dissected toothwort (*Cardamine dissecta*), and if you look really hard you might find more of the pennywort.

Just before the end of the road our field trip leaders stopped to show us a newly discovered population of the rare golden seal (*Hydrastis canadensis*) that Teresa and Richard Ware just found last year. The white flowers are tiny and are really just a bunch of stamens, and at this point the

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A close-up of the rare golden seal (*Hydrastis canadensis*). Photo by Richard and Teresa Ware.

leaves are also small, expanding later to full size. (Note that the photograph above was taken on a different occasion and shows a more mature golden seal bloom.) After this short stop, we drove to the end of the road and the Blue Hole. The Blue Hole is so named for the beautiful blue spring water flowing out of an extensive cave system, which is another big attraction at Pigeon Mountain. Around the Blue Hole we have more golden seal, Harper's trout lily, lanceleaf trillium (*Trillium lancifolium*) and other flowers.

It should be quite evident from this write-up that if you haven't been to Pigeon Mountain, you need to schedule a trip there, and sometime from mid-March to mid-April is best for the early spring wildflowers. And, as usual with our field trips, the day was capped off with a really nice Mexican meal in LaFayette.

See more images of wildflowers found at the Pocket on Page 10.

Society News

Welcome to our **new members** who joined from April 1 to June 22, 2021:

Heather Alley	Athens	GA
Sylvia Frierson	Athens	GA
Melanie Vickers	Clayton	GA
Samantha Castro	Duluth	GA
Amy Van Doorn	Gainesville	GA
Christopher Boon	Marietta	GA

And please welcome also our **new Life Members** since June 2020: Timothy Estep, Beth Grant, Greg Green, and Ellen Honeycutt.

Memorial gifts received from June 2020 to June 2021 include those made:

- ◆ In memory of Frank Bridges: Sam & Eva Pratt.
- ◆ In memory of Barrett King: Elizabeth King, Todd & Susan Morrell.
- ◆ In memory of Dr. Philip F-C Greear: Donna Wear.
- ◆ In memory of Tom Patrick: Donna English.

Gifts were also **made in honor of** other members:

- ◆ In honor of Linda Chafin: Annelle Beall.
- ◆ In honor of Vincent Le: Christopher Boon.
- ◆ In honor of Eddi Minche and Jennifer Ceska: Elizabeth Fox.

Members who joined or contributed at the donor level (\$100+) in the last year:

Bonnie Arbuckle	Nancy Barber	Heather Brasell	Sam & Laura Breyfogle
John Brower	Stephen Cook	Amy Delaplaine	Ron & Susan Determan
Kevin & Demi Doyle	Gail Farley	Joan Frierson	Mei Lee Fung
John Harrison	Elliot Horner	Shepherd Howell	Martha Joiner
Eleanor Lehner	Sue Mager	Thomas Painter	Thomas Painter
Cindy Roesel	Carla Roncoli	Lee Shearrer	John & Emily Smith
James & Christina Powers	Trammell Starr	James Street	Sue & George Upchurch
Betty & Peter Vinten-Johansen	Nancy Waldrop	Patricia Warren	Wendy Zomlefer

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(Please note: If any member's donation has been inadvertently omitted on the preceding page, don't hesitate to contact Membership Chair Jo Anne Romfh at joannromfh@aol.com.)

We would also like to thank all the other **members who supported BotSoc funds not already included above**. The funds and number of contributions to each include:

Marie Mellinger Field Botany Research Grant Annual Fund	8
General Fund	23
Tipularia	23
Maureen Donohue Habitat Conservation	11

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Above, spring coralroot orchid (*Corallorhiza wisteriana*), whose abundance delighted visitors to the Pocket this spring; top right, a close-up of the same plant's blooms; and bottom right, twinleaf (*Jeffersonia diphylla*), named for U.S. President Thomas Jefferson.

Upcoming Field Trips

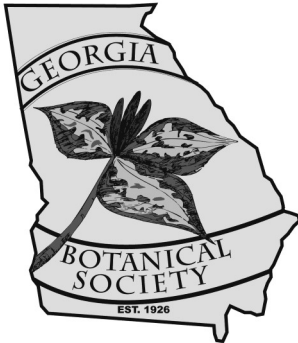
Information for the field trips listed below was that available when this issue of the newsletter was composed. Check the BotSoc website's [2021 Field Trip Schedule page](https://www.gabotsoc.org/?page_id=10537) (https://www.gabotsoc.org/?page_id=10537) regularly for updates and additions. Email addresses for the trip leaders listed below may be found on the following page (page 12).

BOTSOC FIELD TRIP GUIDELINES

Please see the recently Revised Georgia Botanical Society Field Trip Policy Rules and Recommendations, effective June 1, 2021, on pages 3 and 4 of this issue of BotSoc News. Note that the guidelines give considerable discretion to trip leaders. It's good practice always to reach out to trip leaders via email in advance of a trip, even when there is no stated requirement to do so. Remember also that cell phone reception may be spotty in some locales, making it hard to reach trip leaders by phone the day of the trip.

TBD July Linda Chafin	We'll walk the Lake Winfield Scott lake trail and campgrounds in Union County looking for summer wildflowers, especially composites, yellow fringed orchid, turk's cap lily, and others.	Watch BotSoc website's 2021 Field Trip Schedule page for details of this upcoming trip.
July 10-11 Rich Reaves	This will be a roadside botanizing trip in the Waycross, Ga., area in Ware County. We'll be looking for Bartram's rose gentian, <i>Gordonia</i> , spoon-flower, night-flowering wild petunia and pitcher plants.	Watch BotSoc website's 2021 Field Trip Schedule page for details of this upcoming trip.
Oct. 2 Hal Massie	We'll explore the Sandhills Wildlife Management Area's West Tract in Taylor County searching for Sandhills' wildflowers.	Watch BotSoc website's 2021 Field Trip Schedule page for details of this upcoming trip.
Nov. 11 Hal Massie	This trip will take us to F.D. Roosevelt State Park (FDR State Park) in Harris and Meriwether counties for fall foliage and wildflowers.	Watch BotSoc website's 2021 Field Trip Schedule page for details of this upcoming trip.
Nov. 26 Hal Massie	We'll explore Pine Mountain in Harris and Meriwether counties on a "Black Friday Botanical Ramble."	Watch BotSoc website's 2021 Field Trip Schedule page for details of this upcoming trip.

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