Botsoc News

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If you've been there, you know it already: Pigeon Mountain is a national treasure

Eleven very fortunate individuals joined field trip leaders Mike Christison and Richard Ware to see the most spectacular early spring wildflower site in the state of Georgia. A few other sites come close, but none pack such a great diversity of plant species in such a compact area, and that's especially so with plants rare to Georgia, including some that are only found at this one location. This glowing description goes for the

Field Trip: Pigeon Mountain, including The Pocket and Shirley Miller Wildflower Trail

Date: March 19, 2022

Trip Leaders: Mike Christison

and Richard Ware

Trip Report: Richard Ware

whole mountain, with some of the rare plants being found on the western side of

O.R. S.T Photography



Top, Erythronium americanum ssp. harperi (Harper's trout lily). Bottom, Mertensia virginica (Virginia bluebells). Photos by Richard and Teresa Ware.

the mountain, as at The Pocket, and some confined to the eastern side. In fact, there are so many beautiful and rare plants in The Pocket that a boardwalk was constructed to protect the habitat. This walk is the Shirley Miller Wildflower Trail, named for the wife of former Governor Zell Miller.

First, Mike led the group across the creek to the north of the boardwalk parking lot. This rich area has the largest population of *Erythronium americanum ssp. harperi* (Harper's trout lily), plus nice pops of *Sanguinaria canadensis* (bloodroot), *Hepatica acutiloba* (sharp-lobed hepatica), *Phlox divaricata* (wild blue phlox, also called eastern blue phlox), *Trillium decumbens* (decumbent trillium) and many others. A little later, on this side, you may find *Trillium lancifolium* (lanceleaf trillium), *Lithospermum latifolium* (American gromwell) and *Aplectrum hyemale* (puttyroot).

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President's Perspective



BotSoc News

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Georgia Botanical

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I want to begin my message by applauding, on behalf of our society, Beth Grant. Beth is the retired mental health counselor who led the Save Our Forest effort in 2008 at Lost Creek Forest in Thomas County and then served as president of Friends of Lost Creek Forest until spring of last

year. She presented two outstanding virtual presentations for us in February. The two places featured, Lost Creek Forest and the Wolf Creek Trout Lily Preserve in southwest Georgia, have been a major part of her life's work. Another one of own, Linda Chafin, stated it best: "The trout lily site is a textbook case of what Margaret Mead said: 'Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." In addition to those presentations, Beth recently led well-attended field trips to both places. We all owe Beth a special thanks for her diligence and hard work.

By the time you see this, we will have had our annual wildflower pilgrimage in the Savannah area. Just before I prepared this message, Hal Massie informed me that the lovely shirts designed by Jenneke Somerville arrived, and you should have them by the time you read this. Thanks, Hal and Jenneke. We also owe special thanks to Timothy Estep, our vice president and pilgrimage planner, for putting the pilgrimage together under such adverse COVID conditions. I also need to mention several other members of the team needed to make the pilgrimage possible, and these are the registrar, Elizabeth King; Ellen Honeycutt, the pilgrimage brochure editor; our treasurer, John French; and our membership chair, Jo Anne Romfh. All are important parts of the pilgrimage team. As for next year's destination, I feel sure we'll be headed back to the mountains.

About our Name That Plant Contest

I want to mention a topic I spoke of last time, and that is the society's *Name That Plant Contest* faithfully orchestrated since 2008 by Richard Ware. Richard recently told me that, despite my mentioning the contest in the March newsletter, the participation level is still abysmally low – not even 15 (of our 387) members as of this writing! In an effort to get to the bottom of this problem as I near the end of my two-year term, I would appreciate members sharing with me *why they are reluctant to participate*. My email is botanikman@g-net.net. And depending on the response I get, maybe it might help for me to hold a workshop—in person, or probably better, via virtual (Zoom) session—that might encourage some folks to participate. I have retired from the contest and can offer some pointers. I say all this because I hate to see Richard putting in all this work and folks not even trying.

President's Perspective—Continued from Page 2

Workshop or not, the best book for novice plant enthusiasts is *Botany in a Day: The Patterns Method of Plant Identification* by Thomas J. Elpel (May 2013). That's the 6th and latest edition. I have corresponded with Thomas, and he's an excellent self-taught botanist. The relatively inexpensive book stresses plant family pattern recognition using simple terminology and has excellent illustrations. To participate in the contest, you also need to be familiar with *Weakley's Flora* online. And in a workshop, I can offer tips on how to use that terrific resource, which should help contest participants. Learning plant families also helps. When you learn a family, you have a "place" (sort of a mental file folder) to put new plants. That way plant names don't just go in one ear and out the other. That's another reason Elpel's book is a good investment. One final tool in plant identification is HIPDAD (*Tipularia*, 2016), because you are *not* allowed to consult experts. (Just a reminder: The acronym HIPDAD stands for six diagnostic factors helpful in plant identification. They are habitat, illustration, phenology, distribution, abundance and description.)

Lastly, I invite you to go to our website and see out field trip and event offerings orchestrated by Susan Crozier and Tom Morrell, our field trip chairs, and <u>posted to our web site</u> (https://www.gabotsoc.org/?page_id=10928) by Jackie Miller and Merrill Morris. With more than 25 trips or events this year so far, we are getting close to the number of offerings in pre-COVID years. And speaking of COVID, for the time being, we've relaxed some of our COVID rules for field trips. See you on the trail!

Вовву Hattaway

Pigeon Mountain—Continued from Page 1

We then walked the short distance south to the boardwalk, first crossing the bridge over Pocket Creek. The ground along the boardwalk—on both sides of the creek and at least halfway up the slope above the walk—is for the most part completely covered with different wildflowers, shrubs and trees! This amazing display extends to some degree all the way (approximately a quarter mile) to the base of the waterfalls. The most prolific wildflower along the boardwalk is Mertensia virginica (Virginia bluebells) with pink buds opening into beautiful blue flowers. There are vast thrifts of Stylophorum diphyllum (woods poppy) extending from the boardwalk upslope. Common along the walk are Trillium decumbens (decumbent trillium), Camassia scilloides (wild hyacinth), Geranium maculatum (wild geranium), Erigenia bulbosa (harbinger-of-spring), Claytonia caroliniana (Carolina spring beauty), Caulophyllum thalictroides (blue cohosh) and many



Hepatica acutiloba (sharp-lobed hepatica). Photo by Richard and Teresa Ware.

others. As you near the end of the boardwalk and the base of the slope, you begin to see Actaea

Pigeon Mountain—Continued from Page 3

pachypoda (dolls eyes), *Trillium flexipes* (bent trillium), *Dicentra cucullaria* (Dutchman's breeches) and two rare ferns, *Dryopteris celsa* (log fern) and *Homalosorus pycnocarpos* (glade fern).

Mike led a group further up the trail to the base of the falls to view the waterfall and the myriad of plants along the trail. Afterward, we had lunch in our cars, and after lunch, we walked up the old road to the top of the falls, all uphill, but not too steep and around a quarter of a mile. I think all of us really enjoyed this walk. The layered rock wall on the left was completely amazing, and it seemed as if every crevice was filled with wildflowers! The flowers weren't limited to the wall but were on both sides of the road as well. Some were seen earlier, like wild blue phlox, sharp-lobed hepatica





Top, *Phlox divaricata* (wild blue phlox). Bottom, *Stylophorum diphyllum* (woods poppy). Photos by Richard and Teresa Ware.

and bloodroot, but other plants like *Viola rostrata* (long-spurred violet), *Erigeron pulchellus* (robin's plantain), *Sedum ternatum* (mountain stonecrop), *Vicia caroliniana* (wood vetch), *Aquilegia canadensis* (wild columbine), *Euphorbia mercurialina* (Cumberland spurge), *Lithospermum tuberosum* (southern stoneseed) and *Antennaria plantaginifolia* (plantain pussytoes) were new to the trip.

After this walk we drove to the eastern side of the mountain and Blue Hole Road. First we stopped at what we call "the Jeffersonia site" and afterward drove to the end of the road and the Blue Hole, so named from the bluish tint of the water flowing out from limestone caverns. We were about a week too early for the Jeffersonia diphylla (twinleaf) and Hydrastis canadensis (golden seal) blooms. (In fact, we came back a week and one day later and both were in perfect bloom.) The most common plants all through the Jeffersonia site were Cardamine dissecta (dissected toothwort) and Aesculus glabra (Ohio buckeye), and thanks to the eyes of Teresa Ware we saw a blooming Corallorhiza wisteriana (spring coralroot) and a single blooming Obolaria virginica (pennywort). We did see golden seal coming up, Trillium lancifolium (lanceleaf trillium) not quite in bloom, and the very rare shrub Neviusia alabamensis (Alabama snowwreath), not blooming yet.

In closing, I will say, as I've probably said many times before, Pigeon Mountain is a state treasure and, in my opinion, a national treasure. This document is too short to begin listing all the rare plants, shrubs and trees located there, but I'm sure more information can be found online, and I would be glad to send one of my plant lists (not a complete list) to anyone who wants one (gabotany@comcast.net). If you haven't visited Pigeon Mountain from mid-March to early April, I would strongly encourage you to do so.

Book Review

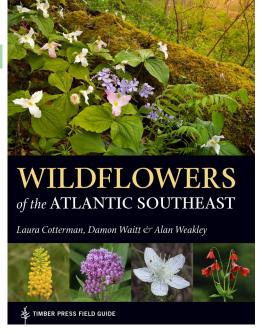
Wildflowers of the Atlantic Southeast

By Laura Cotterman, Damon Waitt, and Alan Weakley

This beautifully illustrated guide from the North Carolina Botanical Garden:

Reviewer: Richard Ware

- Covers Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, West Virginia, Virginia, the District of Columbia, Maryland, Delaware, New Jersey, and southeastern Pennsylvania.
- Describes and illustrates more than 1,200 species.
- Includes perennials and annuals, both native and naturalized non-native.
- Features 1,337 color photographs, 1,218 range maps, and one regional map.
- Has a user-friendly organization by flower color and other, easily observable plant features.
- Is an authoritative trailside reference.



The book is a natural outgrowth of decades—even centuries—of botanical exploration in the southeastern and mid-Atlantic states. This easy-to-use field guide has 511 pages and is divided into several standard sections, such as *Preface*, *Acknowledgements*, and *Introductions* but has many sections that are unique to this publication, including:

- Climate, Geography, and Natural Communities: Reading the Landscape
- Exploring for Wildflowers
- How to Use This Book
- Key to Wildflowers
- Understanding Plant Families and Genera as an Aid to Plant Identification

Following these sections, from pages 71 through 480 we find the comprehensive treatment of wildflowers beginning with white, then yellow, red, blue, orange, green and brown. Each treatment consists of an identifying photo, scientific name, synonym, common name, month of bloom, height, habitat, description, range map and photographer's initials.

And lastly we have a *Glossary*, *Resources for Learning More*, *Photographers*, and *Index*. This book comes highly recommended and, in my opinion, should be on the bookshelf of anyone that has an interest in learning more about wildflowers and nature.

Wildflowers of the Atlantic Southeast is a Timber Press Field Guide. It is available through <u>Timber Press</u> at \$27.95 and at other online booksellers, including Amazon and Barnes & Noble, at varying prices.

Seeing salt marsh and so much more on the Sandpiper and Avian trails at Skidaway Island

On a surprisingly chilly March morning on the coast, BotSoc Field Trip: Sandpiper Trail Loop and Avian President Bobby Hattaway led a group of four on a walk along the Loop Trail at Skidaway Island State Park Sandpiper Trail Loop at Skidaway Island State Park near Date: March 20, 2022 Savannah. Attending the field trip were members Lynn Hodgson, Trip Leader: Bobby Hattaway Gemma Milly and the author, along with one guest, Ellen Trip Report: Shannon Matzke Blanchard. This was a bit of a practice run for Bobby and me, since each of us were to lead this same hike during the annual BotSoc

Pilgrimage in April, and it also offered an opportunity to compare phenological differences between early and mid-spring.



Lynn Hodgson, Gemma Milly, Ellen Blanchard, Shannon Matzke and Bobby Hattaway at Skidaway Island State Park.

The Sandpiper Loop Trail is 1 mile and is the most popular trail in the park. It passes through salt flats, marshes, and island hammocks. There is also an option to add on the Avian Loop Trail, another 1 mile loop that borders the Intracoastal Waterway. As is the custom on our field trips, the botanizing began in the trail parking lot. In fact, I only found the group because I saw them staring at pine bark and picking up cones. Who could it be but the Botanical Society? The first plant that Bobby pointed out when we started was a planted Muhly grass whose iconic purple-pink flowers were gone for the season. This is perhaps the most common native plant used in landscaping along the coast, both because of those flowers and its minimal upkeep.

Once we began on the trail, we had two main quests: first, to search for dwarf palmetto (Sabal minor) in the sea of cabbage palm (Sabal palmetto) and saw palmetto (Serenoa repens), and second, to see if we could differentiate redbay (Persea borbonia) from the more common swamp bay (*Persea palustris*). We immediately were met with juvenile cabbage palms, which look similar to dwarf or blue palmetto. Bobby's easiest trick to tell the two apart at this stage is to look for an inflorescence. A cabbage palm can remain in a trunk-less, juvenile state for many years, and during that time it will not flower or fruit. Therefore, if a shrub-like, trunk-less, Sabal-like palm has an inflorescence, it is *not* a cabbage palm, and it is very likely dwarf/blue palmetto, at least in Georgia.

(Spoiler alert: We saw no trunk-less palms with inflorescences during our hike, so we made no definitive dwarf palmetto identifications. Bobby said he found the dwarf/blue (*Sabal minor*) at Wormsloe nearby and it should be in this park too.)

The beginning of our hike took us through a salt marsh, and we saw 11 of the state's 14 "jurisdictional species." These are the plants listed in the Coastal Marshlands Protection Act of 1970, which was created to regulate and protect the state's tidal salt marshes, and these plants are used to determine if the state has jurisdiction in a location, i.e., whether the area can be considered a salt marsh. Georgia's coastline accounts for one-third of the remaining salt marsh habitat on the U.S. East Coast, so it is vital that this habitat be protected by the state. There is no doubt that the Sandpiper Trail encompasses salt marsh because we saw smooth cord grass (Spartina alterniflora), salt marsh hay (Spartina patens), tree groundsel or silverling (Baccharis halimifolia), false willow (Baccharis angustifolia), sea ox-eye (Borrichia frutescens), sea lavender (Limonium carolinianum), marsh elder (Iva frutescens), pickleweed (Salicornia virginica), black needle rush (Juncus roemerianus), coastal dropseed (Sporobolus virginicus), and salt grass (Distichlis spicata), though I must add that we may not have seen both dropseed and salt grass because the two are nearly impossible to tell apart without flowers. Since we saw them from the boardwalk, no one could say for certain either way, so I makred them both down on our trip list!

Pickleweed is a succulent herb that is native to the coastal regions of most of North America. The common name comes from its taste and its primarily dark green color. It has been historically harvested for its edible leaves that can be cooked or used raw, often in a salad. Other common names for this plant are glasswort and samphire. We believe that we saw pickleweed and not dwarf saltwort (*S. bigelovii*) because the diameter of pickleweed shoots is only about 3 mm in diameter, while dwarf saltwort has thicker shoots, 5 mm in diameter. However, both species are found in salt pannes in coastal marshes, so there may







Top, pickleweed (*Salicornia virginia*). Middle, black needle rush (*Juncus roemerianus*), showing linear rhizome growth habit, and bottom, a close-up of black needlerush. Photos by Bobby Hattaway.

be some dwarf saltwort on the trail as well. The species has been documented elsewhere on Skidaway Island. (At the risk of getting technical, some earlier authors have identified our plants as *Salicornia europaea*, a diploid species from Europe, but we are following Weakley's Flora (2020) here in recognizing *S. virginica*--apparently tetraploid, or 4N--as a separate species.)

We continued into a salt marsh/marsh hammock transition area. Marsh hammocks are more formally known as "back-barrier islands" that form either when relict dunes on barrier islands





Top, yaupon holly (*Ilex vomitoria*). Below, side-by-side views of the undersides of leaves of the more common swamp bay (*Persea palustris*) on the left and redbay (*Persea borbonia*) on the right. Note that the redbay leaf is nearly hairless. Photos by Bobby Hattaway.

become isolated by salt marshes and tidal creeks or when there is an over-wash and accretion regime in the area. These marsh hammocks are often home to maritime forests. In this hammock we saw live oak (Quercus virginiana), seaside goldenrod (Solidago sempervirens), and marsh fimbry (Fimbristylus castanea). Marsh fimbry is a sedge that we saw lining the trail, and after examining the roots, we learned that the specific epithet references the chestnut-colored base.

It was here that we came across our first bay of the day. The leaf was hairy on the underside and dull on the upper surface, so identified it as swamp bay and continued our quest for a true red bay, which is more maritime in habitat, at least north of Florida. We continued to see species typical of maritime forests such as vaupon holly (*Ilex vomitoria*) and wax myrtle (Morella cerifera). This trail also had an abundance of loblolly pine (Pinus taeda). A patch of saw palmetto (Serenoa repens) gave us a good opportunity to see the difference between it and Sabal spp. Saw palmettos have teeth on the petioles and a blunt hastula (a flange of tough material on the upper side of the petiole where it joins the frond blade), a stark difference from

Sabal spp. that have unarmed petioles and a long hastula that goes up into the blade.

After this discovery, we finally found our first redbay (*Persea borbonia*) of the day. This one was a much cleaner looking leaf—nearly hairless on the underside and very glossy on the upper side. We

saw more redbays during the day, and it was such a treat because they are few and far between in our area (please see the accompanying photo comparing the undersides of the leaves of the two bays). And that prompts a quick reminder: In 20 years, laurel wilt disease, caused by a fungus and transmitted by invasive ambrosia beetles, has wiped out hundreds of millions of trees in 11 southeastern states, so we need to always be vigilant about *not* moving firewood. You never know when the next invasive beetle will pop up.

We made what was essentially an unspoken decision to add the Avian Loop Trail to our journey when the best lunch spot was about 100 yards down that trail. This loop had a more mature marsh hammock, and we saw what may have been the largest yaupon holly that any of us had ever seen; well, at least it was definitely the biggest that I've seen! We saw more redbays along this trail, and the leaves were even more strikingly redbay-like than the ones that we saw on the Sandpiper Trail. Bobby pointed out a camphor tree (Cinnamomum camphora) that had the green characteristic of the twigs bay family (Lauraceae). Both the native bays we saw have that trait too, and all members of that family have aromatic foliage when bruised. The camphor tree is native to Eastern Asia but



Above, from Richard and Teresa Ware's extensive online <u>ngaflora.com</u> collection of botanical photographs, an image of a variegated and heavily armed saw greenbrier or cat greenbriar (*Smilax bona-nox*). Note the thorns and toothed leaf margins. Photo by Richard and Teresa Ware.

escaped from

cultivation in the U.S. and is now considered an invasive species in Georgia. We unfortunately saw a few more of these along the trail.

Plants, beware! A bench (right) lends scale to the replica fossil skeleton of a prehistoric giant ground sloth at Skidaway Island State Park Visitor Center. Photo by Shannon Matzke.

It was then that we were introduced to a plant so menacing that I audibly gasped: saw greenbrier (*Smilax bona-nox*). Bobby assured us that this was a particularly aggressive specimen, likely from being cut back regularly from the trail edge, and that most others were not so intimidating. Regardless, I kept to the center of the path from that point on.

At this point, we were finishing up the Avian Loop and re-entering the Sandpiper Trail Loop. We finished our hike with discussions of oaks. There were some pagoda oaks (*Quercus pagoda*) for us to examine as we made our way out and back to the parking lot. But of course, we couldn't leave yet. No trip to Skidaway would be complete without popping into the visitor center to see the replica skeleton of a prehistoric giant sloth. The perfect

cap to our day.

Field Trip—Paces Mill

Metro Atlanta "rite of spring": Trout lilies' annual flowering near the Chattahoochee River signals ending of winter

River National Recreation Area

Date: March 6, 2022

Trip Leader: Susan Morrell Trip Report: Kevin Doyle

Field Trip: Paces Mill, Chatthaoochee One of the highly anticipated treats in late winter in metro Atlanta is the annual flowering of yellow trout lilies (Erythronium americanum) at select spots near the Chattahoochee River.

> BotSoc members had a choice of two hikes to see those lilies this year, and the second of those took place on a wonderfully mild Sunday

morning in early March. Nine participants joined trip leader and BotSoc Field Trip Chair Susan Morrell that day for an easy walk to one of the best displays of these lovely, delicate, nodding harbingers of spring.

The group met at the parking lot of the Paces Mill unit of the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area (CRNRA). Paces Mill, one of 15 units that make up the CRNRA, is in Cobb County at the downstream end of the CRNRA. The group's ultimate destination was a spot along the banks of nearby Rottenwood Creek, a tributary of the Chattahoochee. Susan led the group from the parking lot along the broad, paved multi-use trail that soon crosses the creek.

Leaving the parking area, the first part of the walk skirts an open field. Like any open area in a highly urbanized setting, the first hundred yards or so offered a master's degree in the struggle between native plants and nonnatives. But a practiced eye finds treasures nonetheless.

Susan pointed out flowering starry chickweed (Stellaria pubera); the soon-to-bloom flowers of yellow jessamine (Gelsemium sempervirens), as well as just-starting-tobloom decumbent trillium (*Trillium decumbens*). She also noted here and there native trees and shrubs such as yaupon holly (*Ilex vomitoria*).

Here and there as well, the group began to see the first vellow trout lilies as the path turned to follow Rottenwood The path crossed the creek twice and then delivered the group to the hike's spectacular payoff—a hillside slope with rock outcroppings and great drifts of trout lilies.

While the group admired the display, Susan talked about the almost magical way that trout lilies propagate. Bees



Trout lily trip participants pause with trip leader Susan Morrell (far right) for a group photo at the foot of a slope that featured a vast display of yellow trout lilies (Erythronium americanum). The slope is in the Paces Mill unit of the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area, a favorite destination for viewing trout lilies in late winter. Photo by Kevin Doyle.

pollinate the flowers, but ants bring the magic through myrmecochory. Once seed capsules drop to the ground, ants collect the seeds because they find them irresistibly delectable. They bring the seeds to their nests, where they store and eat the nutritious external appendage. Then the ants,

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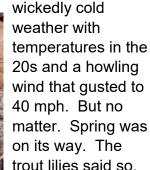


Above, starry chickweed (*Stellaria pubera*). Photo by Mark Ogilvie. Below left and right, two views of yellow trout lilies. Photo left by Kevin Doyle. Photo right by Mark Ogilvie.

which have no further use for the still intact and viable seeds, discard what's left as you and I might toss a peach pit. They move the seeds back outside the nest, often depositing them some distance away. And so the colony spreads.

The group then fanned out to take in the stunning views and to collect photographs before turning to make the hike back to parked cars.

The very next weekend in metro Atlanta was to bring







Look for details on upcoming field trips online at BotSoc's website

May and June offer a half dozen field trips including one in the mountains, several on the coast, and Hal Massie's canoe trip to see shoals spider lilies, endemic to a few states in the Southeastern U.S. Trips offer the opportunity to enjoy late spring wildflowers before summer's warm weather. Field trips then restart when cooler fall temperatures arrive.

View the 2022 Field Trip Schedule at https://www.gabotsoc.org/. Details for upcoming trips are posted at lower right below the Name That Plant Contest. Also please note the changes to COVID safety guidelines link.

Society News

Welcome, new members!

Members listed below joined the Georgia Botanical Society in February and March of this year. Welcome to all of you! We hope to see you soon at field trips and workshops.

New Member(s)	Hometown and State	New Member(s)	Hometown and State
Elizabeth Adams	Savannah, Ga.	Barrett Brannen	Marietta, Ga.
Rebecca Grace	Saint Marys, Ga.	Dave Gregory	Grayson, Ga.
Charles Allen Haynes	Atlanta, Ga.	Nancy Kennell	Roswell, Ga.
Greg Lewis	Perry, Ga.	Diane Skellie and Tony Mietus	Toccoa, Ga.
Jane Zoellick	Atlanta, Ga.		

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