

BotSoc News



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Eagle Mountain hike in spring rewards with panoramic views, dozens of species of wildflowers, and a rare American columbo bloom

Field Trip: Eagle Mountain, one of this year's Spring Pilgrimage hikes

Trip Leaders: Dan Rawlins and Clayton Webster

Date: May 6, 2023

Trip Report: Clayton Webster

On May 6, 13 rugged hikers climbed one of Georgia's highest mountains, 4,186-foot Eagle Mountain, as one of this year's Georgia Botanical Society Annual Spring Pilgrimage hikes. We gained 2,159 feet in elevation on the 10-plus-mile hike that featured many rewards to make it worth the extra effort. We were co-led by Dan Rawlins and myself (Clayton Webster). Dan is a local resident who

knows the hiking areas like the back of his hand and also knows every plant and tree, how it is pollinated, and any way it can be useful as either something edible or medicinal.

The wonderful thing about this hike is the great diversity of wildflowers you can see at this time of the year. It was like a walk back into spring as we gained elevation on our hike. We did not keep an exact count on this



This hike was billed as a difficult hike, and the 13 people we had were all well suited for this rugged 10-plus-mile trek on an unmaintained and unmarked trail. In addition, we had very knowledgeable hikers. There were no "unknown plants found to be looked up later on." Everyone truly enjoyed the great diversity of wildflowers we saw and were able to identify. Photo by Clayton Webster.

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President's Perspective



Seasons have changed from hot to cooler weather, fall flowers are going strong, and the leaves of trees are changing and falling. That means it is time again for the Holiday Party! I hope to see you there as we finish 2023. I think this year has been a good year, with good field trips, a good pilgrimage, good plant projects, good plants, and

great botanically minded people. For all those that put in time toward the society, “Thank You” and “Good Job.” Now we plan for next year, 2024.

I recently led my first non-pilgrimage field trip in August 2023. I had fun! It was in my home area, I talked about my favorite local plants, and others were interested. I was nervous and a little worried, but I thought it turned out great. What I enjoyed most was hanging out with others that were interested in the plants, and I learned stuff from them too. If you have or have not led a field trip and would like to, do message Shannon Matzke, shannon9512@gmail.com, and let her know of your field trip ideas for 2024.

The pilgrimage planning for 2024 is under way for La Grange, Ga. Be on the lookout for additional details. If you're interested in helping out with the pilgrimage such as leading a field trip or suggesting an idea for one, or helping set up, do reach out to Mei Lee Fung, gabotsoc.meilee@gmail.com.

Do you have ideas to improve the society? Then get involved. One way is to join one of our multiple committees. Our bylaws require a committee to find officer candidates for the next society officer election in 2024. If you have wanted to be more involved in the society, joining a committee is a good start. If you are interested in joining a committee or becoming an officer, then let me know. Your ideas can only happen if you report them

and help to make them a reality: Get involved!

I recently sent out letters to those that donated to the society through their membership forms/renewals. I thank Jo Anne Romfh for a great job in handling much of that material. I take the level of that generous support in donations as acknowledgment that the society is doing a great job. As always, if you have comments or ideas about the society, then do message me at timothystep@hotmail.com. Thank you again for your support of our society programs. And with all this, don't forget to plan for your own botanical endeavors. Take a personal trip to go see some interesting plants, even if they are nearby in your area (survey). Plant some seeds and watch them grow (horticultural study). Then let us know about your experience. I'm not talking about “citizen science”—I am talking about you, the scientist.

Go out and look at some plants. Have a great day!

Timothy Estep

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Georgia Botanical

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Field Trip: Eagle Mountain—Continued from Page 1



hike, but on past hikes here we have logged as many as 65 different wildflower species, many of which you will rarely see on other trails.

Very few in this group had ever been to the top of Eagle Mountain. We almost never see another hiker here. One reason is that the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) road leading to the hike beginning is not even passable with an all-wheel-drive vehicle. Then, there is not a marked or maintained trail to follow either. So this is classified as an off-trail hike, but by following old logging roads, illegal all-terrain-vehicle paths, and horseback routes, it is not that difficult even with the steep 2,159-foot elevation gain.

With our great elevation gain and hike distance, we saw nearly every spring wildflower in this one single day. The dogwoods were still in bloom, as were the flame azaleas. We saw bluets, trout

The view from the top of 4,186-foot Eagle Mountain is surely one of the best in all of Georgia. In one direction you can see 4,784-foot Brasstown Bald, Georgia's tallest mountain. You can also see the Blue Ridge Line, the Eastern Continental Divide, Lake Chatuge, the town of Hiawassee, Bell Knob, and into North Carolina's towering mountains. Eagle Mountain sits at the southern edge of the 23,365-acre Southern Nantahala Wilderness. Photo by Jane Trentin.

lilies, spring beauties, goldenseal, hundreds of pink lady's slippers, and even 20 or so white versions of the pink lady's slippers. We saw yellow lady's slippers, American columbo, large-flowered white trillium (*Trillium grandiflorum*), mountain laurel, and even a few bloodroot still in bloom. Near the top, the May-apples by the thousands were huge. Mixed in with them were hundreds of Turk's-cap lilies (not yet in bloom).

Barrett Brannen leans in to get an up-close and personal shot of the unusual American columbo (*Frasera caroliniensis*), a great find along the trail. We do not see these too often as it can take anywhere from five or six to 15 years for one to bloom, and then it dies. Photo by Clayton Webster.



Field Trip: Eagle Mountain—Continued from Page 3

Another thing that made this hike unusual and also great is that just below 4,000 feet in elevation, we reached an area covering at least 20 or 30 acres that are nice and flat. There are two very strong-flowing springs here. We have learned that during deer hunting season, hunters come up on horseback and camp here for up to a week. This has always been a great place for our lunch break.

Special thanks are due to Dan Rawlins for his knowledge and expertise of the area and of all the plants we encountered. Dan also made arrangements for us to be able to park at a farmhouse to save us from walking another 2 to 4 miles more. That enabled us all to make it back in time for the Saturday night banquet. ◼



Left and above are two more views of the rarely blooming American columbo (*Frasera caroliniensis* [Walter]). Left, a mature plant with panicle. Above, a close up of a bloom. Photos by R & T Photography, the superb collection of photos by Richard and Teresa Ware.

Field Trip: Sassafras Mountain



In high summer, a hike up Sassafras Mountain includes abundant beauty, a lesson on mesophication, and a search for Michaux's lily

It was a hot and steamy August day down in the Piedmont but considerably less so in the mountains when 10 BotSocers met our trip leader, Jess Riddle, on August 12 for a hike up Sassafras Mountain. From a point on the Appalachian Trail (AT) about 10 miles northeast of Springer Mountain, the official jumping off point for the AT, we headed north toward the summit of Sassafras

Field Trip: Sassafras Mountain

Trip Leader: Jess Riddle

Date: Aug. 12, 2023

Trip Report: Linda Chafin

In the photo at left, BotSocers walk part of the Appalachian Trail near Sassafras Mountain. Photo by Gemma Milley.

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Sassafras Mountain—Continued from Page 4

Mountain, about a mile away. Jess started the trip by saying he was hoping to find Michaux's lily (*Lilium michauxii*) since he'd seen it here last year in bud a week earlier.

Jess introduced us to the plant community we'd be hiking through by pointing out the variety of oaks in the canopy: white (*Quercus*



Rock alumroot (*Heuchera villosa*). Photo by Linda Chafin.

alba), northern red (*Q. rubra*), and black (*Q. velutina*). He then had us look around for saplings and young trees of these species in the subcanopy. Surprisingly, there were few to none. Instead, red maple (*Acer rubrum*) and white pine (*Pinus strobus*) were the visual dominants. Jess explained the concept of “mesophication,” a term coined to describe an ecological process that got underway in Appalachian oak forests with the coming of fire suppression in the 1920s. Without fire, shade-tolerant, fire-sensitive species (e.g. red maple and white pine) were able to flourish, and, without fire to create sunny gaps in the forest, sun-loving, fire-adapted oaks and hickories have reproduced at a much lower rate. They produce plenty of acorns but the seedlings they produce fail to thrive without sunlight. You can read more about this process at this website: https://www.nrs.fs.usda.gov/pubs/jrnl/2008/nrs_2008_nowacki_001.pdf.

Right away, we encountered a sunflower that, though fairly common, was new to me, forest sunflower (*Helianthus decapetalus*). This sunflower is rhizomatous and forms patches of tall plants with large, toothed, thin-textured leaves with long petioles. It's usually found in moist, rich forests and was a harbinger of the rich habitat to come.

The trail was lined with an abundance of plants found in rich, moist soils in Georgia's mountains, many in flower: American bellflower (*Campanula americana*, in flower) and its modest cousin,



Top, American bellflower (*Campanula americana*) plant and blooms. Bottom, close-up of an American bellflower bloom. Both photos by Frances Whatley.

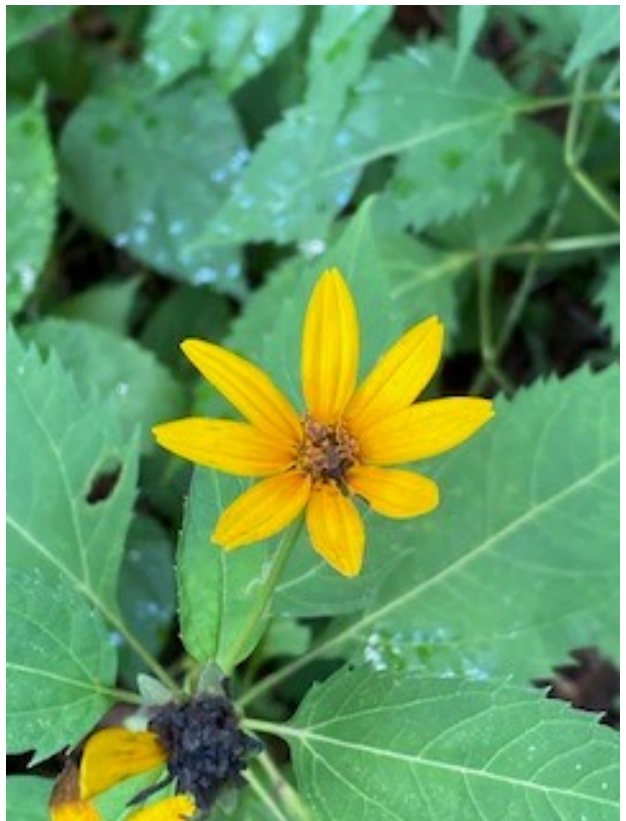
Sassafras Mountain—Continued from Page 5



The tiniest find of the day was the fairy sparkler (*Xylaria tentaculata*), an inch-high fungus found on rotting wood and leaf litter. Credit for the find and photo go to Gemma Milley.

southern harebell (*Campanula divaricata*), columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*, not in flower), dwarf crested iris (*Iris cristata*, not in flower), both orange and yellow jewelweed (*Impatiens capensis*, *I. pallida*), wild yam (*Dioscorea villosa*) with its three-winged fruits, Jack-in-the-pulpit (*Arisaema triphyllum*, in fruit), white wood-aster (*Eurybia divaricata*, in flower). This last species resembles mountain wood-aster (*Eurybia chlorolepis*), a plant found only above 4,000 feet in Georgia. Both have heart-shaped leaves with long-tapering points and long petioles. Small rock outcrops along the trail supported numerous clumps of rock

alumroot (*Heuchera villosa*, in flower), and Jess shared a less well known but far more vivid common name for this species: crag-jangle!). I saw the most robust examples of flowering spurge (*Euphorbia corollata*)



I'd ever seen, with very leafy stems nearly 3 feet tall crowned with large clusters of flowers; the plants I typically see in dry Piedmont forests are half that size. There were several species we recognized only to genus: skullcap

(*Scutellaria* sp.), purple aster (*Symphyotrichum* sp.), mountain-mint (*Pycnanthemum* sp.).

A highlight of the trip was the chance to see broadleaf tickseed (*Coreopsis latifolia*), a plant narrowly endemic to our southern Appalachians and so rare in Georgia that there are but 11 known populations. Note that, unlike other *Coreopsis* spp., broadleaf tickseed has few conspicuous teeth visible here at the tips of ray flowers. Photo by Frances Whatley.

We saw a reticulated net-winged beetle with its aposematic coloration warning predators—stay away!—and got a good look

at a milkweed tussock moth munching on the leaf of a tall milkweed (*Asclepias exaltata*). Prize for the tiniest observation of the day went to Gemma Milley, who found the highly adorable fairy sparklers, an inch-high fungus (*Xylaria tentaculata*) found on rotting wood and leaf litter.



Mountain mint (*Pycnanthemum* sp.). Photo by Frances Whatley.

Sassafras Mountain—Continued from Page 6

A real treat for me on this trip was sighting a nice stand of broadleaf tickseed (*Coreopsis latifolia*), a species very rare in Georgia, with only 11 known populations. A narrowly endemic species to the southern



Appalachians, this species is tall for a *Coreopsis*, up to 4 feet tall with wide,

Left to right, flowering spurge (*Euphorbia corollata*), found on this trip in examples more robust than ever before encountered by trip report author Linda Chafin; middle and right, flower and leaves of the “mystery sunflower” encountered on the trip, suggestive of whiteleaf sunflower (*Helianthus glaucophyllus*) and tentatively assigned as rough-leaf sunflower (*Helianthus strumosus*). Photos by Frances Whatley.

oval, toothed leaves. Most *Coreopsis* ray flowers have conspicuous teeth at their tips; broadleaf tickseed has very small or no teeth.

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Field Notes

One more reason to love botany: always more to learn!

White beauty-berry fruits? No kidding

Editor's note: “Field Notes” is a place for bite-size news about plants and the people who love them, observations from the field, and discoveries.

Timothy Estep sends this note: “A friend gave me a white sample: Did you know there are American beauty-berry (*Callicarpa americana*) plants with white berries? I do not recommend eating wild plants, but these citations (below) claim the berries are edible, yet maybe not palatable. I tried a white berry after 3 weeks off the plant, and it was good. I tried a fresher pink berry from a plant, and it was *not* good. Again, I do not recommend eating wild plants. New to me, maybe new to you! Check out <https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/callicarpa-americana/> and/or <https://blogs.ifas.ufl.edu/bakerco/2019/02/15/wild-weeds-american-beautyberry>” ... And this note from Kevin Doyle: “The Georgia Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Resources Division blogged recently about progress on efforts to preserve and protect the rare Chapman’s fringed orchid (*Platanthera chapmanii*). Check out the [blog post by Ethan Hatchett here](https://georgiawildlife.blog/2023/09/20/roadside-refuge-for-rare-orchid/) (<https://georgiawildlife.blog/2023/09/20/roadside-refuge-for-rare-orchid/>).”



A side-by-side view of the familiar magenta (left) berries of American beauty-berry (*Callicarpa americana*) and (right) uncommon white ones. Photo by Timothy Estep.

Georgia Roadside Wildflowers: Pineland Hibiscus

Early in the day is the time to hunt for pineland hibiscus

By Rich Reaves

Editor's Note: This is the fourth in a series of articles celebrating beautiful flowers that can sometimes be glimpsed along or near our Georgia roads. Author Rich Reaves is a botanist, a frequent leader of BotSoc field trips (including hugely popular trips to view flora in the western United States), and an inveterate roadside botanizer.

Members of the genus *Hibiscus* are some of our showier roadside wild flowers.

Pineland hibiscus (*Hibiscus aculeatus* [Walter]) is common in southern Georgia and can put on a nice display early in the day. The flowers are typically at their showiest mid-morning and exhibit a nastic response (fancy term for closing), probably in response to intense light of mid-day, and start to close around that time and remain closed until the next morning.

You have to get out fairly early to catch the best show. As a roadside flower, I normally encounter this one in electric transmission rights-of-way rather than in the transportation right-of-way. ▣



Pineland hibiscus (*Hibiscus aculeatus* [Walter]) is an early riser best found early in the day as it tends to start to close in the intense light of midday. Photo by Rich Reaves.

Sassafras Mountain—Continued from Page 7



At last! Michaux's lily (*Lilium michauxii*). Photo by Frances Whatley.

By the turning-around point, we'd seen neither hide nor hair (nor leaf nor flower) of Michaux's lily and made our way back to the parking lot. As we reached the cars, Jess suggested we make a roadside stop on our way back to Dahlonega to see an interesting patch of sunflowers: about 20 plants with whitish, waxy stems and roughly hairy leaves with white lower surfaces – suggestive of whiteleaf sunflower (*Helianthus glaucophyllus*), a very rare plant found only in the southern Appalachians. But the heads on these plants were large and showy, with more ray flowers than whiteleaf's typical 5-8 rays, so it was hard to pin a name to it—rough-leaf sunflower (*Helianthus strumosus*) fits the best. While we were scratching our heads over a mystery sunflower, trip participant Charles Milstead wandered up a side road and stumbled on a patch of Michaux's lily in flower! A great finale to a wonderful field trip. ▣

Society News

Plan now to join us at this year's annual BotSoc Holiday Party

This year's Georgia Botanical Society Holiday Party is scheduled for Saturday, Dec. 2, at the Newman Wetlands Center, 2755 Freeman Rd. in Hampton, Ga.—the same location as last year. Join us for a day of friends, cheer, plant talk and memories beginning at 10 a.m. We will have a potluck lunch, so bring your favorite dish, nonalcoholic drink, or dessert. After lunch, we may have a presentation followed by a stroll along the boardwalk. All members—longtime and new—are all equally welcome to come. Ask plant questions, swap native seeds. I might even bring and show off my favorite houseplant. Make a posterboard of your plant activities and show it off! If you would like to help out with the party, have ideas for announcements, or have questions about the event, email timothyestep@hotmail.com, or call 912-424-9758.

The Newman Wetlands Center is an educational facility operated by Clayton County Water Authority. It features wildlife exhibits and has an outside, half-mile boardwalk that provides an opportunity to observe wading birds, woodpeckers, turtles, and a beaver lodge. You can find more information at <https://newmanwetlandscenter.com/>. — *Timothy Estep*

Fun, friendship, and field trips ahead—Renew your membership for 2024 today!

Memberships in the Georgia Botanical Society run from January through December, so it's not too early to renew your membership for 2024. And it's so easy to do. You can renew online by going to the BotSoc website at https://www.gabotsoc.org/?page_id=2. There you'll find a link to the page where you can renew online. Or, if you prefer, print a PDF form for mailing to our membership chair, Jo Anne Romfh. You'll find her mailing address on the form itself. If you are unable to go to the website and need a form, contact Jo Anne at joannromfh@aol.com, or phone 678-461-4466.

Keep an eye out for and offer a warm welcome to our newest members

Members who have joined the Georgia Botanical Society since the end of July include:

Name	Hometown	Name	Hometown
Cathy Kuhn	Douglasville, Ga	Bryn Pipes	Butler, Ga.
Sam Taylor	Toccoa, Ga.	Leslie Wade	Ellijay, Ga.

Mark your calendar: BotSoc Pilgrimage heads to LaGrange on April 12-14

Mark your calendar now for the weekend of next April 12-14. That's when the 2024 Georgia Botanical Society's Annual Spring Wildflower Pilgrimage heads to LaGrange in West Georgia. The always popular event typically includes two to three days of field trips, speakers and a banquet, and it's always a highlight of the BotSoc year. It's also a great chance to catch up with longtime friends and make new ones. Look for more information and a full brochure listing all the planned activities early in the coming new year. 🗓️

Field Trip and Workshop: Sedges

In the midst of August heat in south Georgia, a dedicated band takes to the field to learn about the world of sedges

Field Trip/Workshop: Sedges

Leader: Dr. Richard Carter

Date: Aug. 19-20, 2023

Trip Report: Heather Brasell

A small but dedicated group braved the August heat in south Georgia for two full days of enrichment in sedges. The event was organized jointly by and for the Georgia Botanical Society and the Coastal Plain Chapter of the Georgia Native Plant Society (GNPS) and led by Dr. Richard Carter, herbarium

curator at Valdosta State University, who specializes in sedges. Dr. Carter wrote *An Introduction to the Sedges of Georgia* for *Tipularia* in 2005. Both workshop and field trip were held at Gaskins Forest Education Center in Alapaha, Ga.

Participants from BotSoc and GNPS came from faraway places, including Alabama, Florida, and South Carolina, as well as from all over Georgia, and some stayed in field-house cabins on the property.

The first day was all workshop, with the morning spent in going over characteristics of the main groups of



Dr. Richard Carter, herbarium curator at Valdosta State University, leads a discussion in the field about sedges and the art of telling one from another. Photo by Heather Brasell.



A microscopic view of spike rush (*Eleocharis* sp.) achenes. Photo by Heather Brasell..

sedges and learning the terminology used in identification keys. Then the afternoon was devoted to keying out several sedge species and looking at specimens of others. Richard had brought abundant material to explore. Identifying sedges relies heavily on characteristics of the reproductive material—especially achenes. Some of these features can be seen in the field with a hand lens, but a dissecting microscope is useful and sometimes essential. Richard had brought microscopes and dissecting tools for each person.

We started off looking at some spike rush (*Eleocharis*) specimens, partly because their distinctive achene-tubercule-perianth complexes make them a great place to start applying the identification keys. In addition, the beautiful shapes of the tubercles (that look like hats sitting on top of the achene) and amazing variety of bristles in the perianth (emerging from the base of the achene and assisting with

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Sedges—Continued from Page 10



Bot Soccers Elizabeth King and Amy Delaplaine at work in the field with hand lenses. Photo by Heather Brasell.

seed distribution) provided aesthetic satisfaction. Of course, it was also really helpful to have Richard on hand to help us when we got stuck.

The second day was spent in the field seeking shade while we examined sedges as we visited a variety of habitats—lawn, ephemeral pond, edge of permanent pond, wetland restoration site, cypress swamp and savannah, and two slope seeps. We found



When it comes to dissecting and sorting sedge species, sometimes nothing but a microscope will do. Pictured above are workshop participants John Harrison (left) and Gemma Milley working at microscopes. Photos by Heather Brasell.

33 species of sedges in eight genera—one *Bulbostylis*, three *Carex*, eight *Cyperus*,

four *Eleocharis*, two *Fuerina*, ten *Rhynchospora*, one *Scirpus*, and four *Scleria*. This included two species that are nonnative agricultural weeds—watergrass (*Bulbostylis barbata*) and annual sedge (*Cyperus compressus*). It also included two

Scleria species that were previously state listed—slenderfruit nutrush (*S. georgiana*) and Baldwin’s nutrush (*S. baldwinii*).

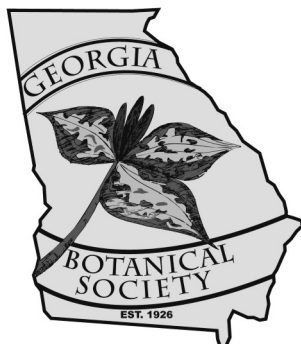
Identifying sedges relies heavily on the characteristics of the reproductive material, especially achenes. Trip and workshop participants found 33 species of sedges in eight genera over the two days together.



Dr. Carter, shown here working not with a sedge but with large-root macrorhiza (*Ipomoea macrorhiza*), prepares a specimen for his field press. Photo by Heather Brasell.

Using a hand lens in the field was an excellent follow-up opportunity to practice what we had learned in the workshop the previous day and to see sedges in their natural habitats that we had already examined under microscope. Richard collected several voucher specimens for his herbarium. He processed them with his natty field press, made from a light canvas material constructed like a straightjacket—flaps folding over and tightly held in place with Velcro. ■

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