Missouri Native Plant Society

Petal Pusher

December Volume 2 Number 6, 1987

UPCOMING EVENTS

December 1, Tuesday, 7:30 PM: Jefferson City monthly meeting and program. Dept. of Conservation headquarters.

December 5, Saturday 10:00 AM: State meeting at the Dept. of Conservation Auditorium.

December 12, Saturday 1:00 AM: St. Louis Chapter seminar. Quercus identification at Dr. Chamber's home. 836-9346.

December 15, Tuesday, 6:30 PM Springfield. Native Foods for the Holidays; location TBA. Contact Barbara Newman (417)-881-7378.

December 24, Thursday. St. Louis monthly meeting not scheduled due to the holiday.

January 5, Tuesday, 7:30 PM: Jefferson City monthly meeting.

January 9, Saturday, 9:00AM St. Louis Chapter seminar. Speaker June Hutson. See St. Louis Chapter news.

January 28, Thursday, 7:30 PM St. Louis monthly meeting. Dr. Leonard Blake, speaker.

1988 Missouri Department of Conservation Natural Events Calendar

Did you know that by May 18th, stinging nettles are mature enough to sting? And, that the peak of fall color begins around October 4th and ends around the 25th? The fashionable, about field naturalist will be seen pouring over the new 1988 Natural Events Calendar this season. Produced by the Missouri Department of Conservation, each page contains a wealth of natural history facts useful to hunters, gardeners, fishermen and, of course, botanists.

To order your copy of this collection of more than 200 events, contact your nearest conservation office or send $3.50 plus 22¢ tax per copy to: Natural Events Calendar, c/o Mo. Dept. of Conservation, PO Box 180, Jefferson City, Mo. 65102-0180.

PRAIRIE SLOUGH NATURAL AREA TRIP

After the MONPS state board meeting September 26, 1987, we drove to the River's Edge Motel in Louisiana to carpool to Prairie Slough Natural Area. This site is a portion of the Prairie Slough Wildlife Area and is a wet and wet-mesic bottomland forest along the edge of a permanent water chute of the Mississippi River. The Elsberry and Hamburg topographic maps show the area.

Continued page 2

We drove Hwy 79 south to Elsberry in Lincoln County. From Hwy 79 we took Hwy P east until we reached dirt roads in a river cabin community. We then took "Murph's Lane" which lead us around RV's, trailers and fishermen to a grassy parking spot. From there we walked across a causeway to the Natural Area and met all the mosquitos from Lincoln County. Smartweed was just as plentiful, huge and healthy along the path.

We went into the bottomland woods in the direction of two colonies of the rare rose turtlehead, Chelone obliqua var. speciosa, which we hoped we would find, and in bloom, too! Under foot, shellbark hickory nuts made walking tricky, and we kept our arms and hands up to avoid the poison ivy and nettles. In spite of the mosquitos and plant stings we did find the turtleheads, and others in our group who had gone farther to visit a pond, had found the tiny Wolffia columbiana, Water-meal.

We thanked Ginny Wallace for planning this very interesting trip and for helping us get through the thick underbrush to see the rare plants. We were however very glad to leave the mosquitos behind. Doug Ladd provided an excellent comprehensive list of plants seen on the walk:

Pat Grace

A complete list of the plants found was included in this article. It was too long to be printed. This list can be obtained from Doug Ladd.

- The Editor-

SEPTEMBER FIELD TRIP TO THE
DuPONT UPLAND FOREST NATURAL AREA

The DuPont Upland Forest Natural Area is an 80 acre area in Pike County which is administered by the Missouri Department of Conservation as part of the Ted Shanks Wildlife Management Area.

Do orchids, asters, eupatoriums and impatiens in bloom interest you?

How about tiny, white-capped fungus with wiry stems?

Or a small, tan tree frog marked with darker brown elongate eye mask and curved vertical banding along the back?

If so, you should have been with our group of sturdy hikers exploring the wooded slopes and ravines of the DuPont Natural Area Sunday morning, September 28, 1987. From the steep limestone bluffs of the northern section to the rugged ravines 200 feet below and then up again to the glade-like areas along the ridgeline we trudged, finding Spiranthes ovalis (Ladies' Tresses) in three stages of bud, bloom and fruit, finding Corallorhiza odontorhiza (Late Coral Root) in delicate bloom, and then delighting in the discovery of yet another orchid in bloom - Spiranthes lacera (Slender Ladies' Tresses). All three appeared to be county records!

As to asters, three species also were present and in some stage of blooming: Aster anomalus, A. oblongifolius (Aromatic Aster) and A. turbinellus (Prairie Aster).

Impatiens pallida(Pale Touch-Me-Not) brightened the lower elevation with its tubular yellow flowers.

And the Eupatorium altssimum (Tall Thoroughwort) and E. rugosum (White Snakeroot) reminded us of poor Abraham Lincoln's mother.

White-capped, wire-stemmed fungus stood their one inch tall guard amid the moist fallen leaves. Were these of the Marismius genus?

And the small tree frog -- could it have been a Western Chorus Frog (Pseudacris triseriata triseriata)?

Psora Pseudorussellii was pointed out to us as a reliable indicator of the past history of this area as a more open glade than at present. Insufficient sunlight seems to be killing off these tiny (3 mm. diameter) dark-centered lichen.

Grasses and sedges were represented as well with Panicum latifolium (Panic Grass) of particular interest to some.

And a 75 foot length of Vitis (Grape) vine hanging vertically from somewhere overhead stirred primitive instincts in some of the assembled males.

Numerous other plants were found and noted. It was a Sunday morning well spent.

-- Karen Haller

BOOKS

My favorite mail order book dealer is:

Myron Kimnach
1600 Orlando Road
San Marino, CA 91108

He sells fern books, dozens of them, and publishes a catalog of about 12 pages twice a year. My experience is that shipment is very prompt. Prices are about the same as everywhere else for books in print and very reasonable for books no longer in print. He will send a catalog on request.

-- Sue Hollis

PRAIRIE SALVAGE FOR THE KANSAS CITY CLIFF DR. RESTORATION

The Kansas City Chapter of MONPS has been involved in a salvage project in Bates Co. on the property of Pittsburg Midway Coal Co. The purpose of the salvage was to remove native prairie plants from a 9 acre site that was to be mined in 6 - 8 months.

PM had requested that the plants be used toward the public benefit. When we heard of of the restoration of the Cliff Dr. area in northeast Kansas City, we contacted Pete Laughlin, landscape architect for KC Parks and Recreation. He had a prime location in mind and placed orders for site preparation. We set a salvage date for October 10th.

After weeks of lovely weather, Saturday turned into a grey, cold, wet mess complete with fog and steady downpour. On the way to Trading Post, Ks., our meeting place, I wondered if any other brave fools like myself would show. I found out the world contained 9 other brave fools. We had a last bolstering cup of coffee and headed to the coal mine office to check in. And as the gods always smile on plant people, it stopped raining.

We moved onto the prairie with renewed enthusiasm and began carefully lifting plants. Attention was given to making sure some soil was attached to the roots. Draw string sample bags were used to hold the salvaged plants. Where possible, seedheads were left intact. After three hours, we had 60 plants ready for transport and after locking up and checking out, we headed back to our Cliff Drive planting site.

At the other end, members of the Northeast Neighborhood Association were waiting to begin planting. The sight that met our eyes however, was piles of fill dirt. Due to a bureaucratic error, the site was not ready. But, as a true believer in Murphy's Law, I had made contingent plans to place the plants in cold storage in the Parks and Rec. greenhouse. And so they went.

October 31st, the site was ready and we planted. In spite of the delay, the stored forbs and grasses all showed signs of new growth to the last plant. We sunk the stock, distributed some seed, deeply mulched the area and finished just as a good soaking rain began.

We'll be monitoring the site and adding to it as we can. Spring will require some selective weeding of annuals. Also, Sue Hollis has contributed some seed from the prairie species she's acquired from Merv Wallace's nursery. They will be added to the area this fall for overwintering. Hopefully, we'll see a good beginning this spring and fall. Prairie will once again wave it's colorful self over the Missouri River bluffs in Kansas City.

Linda Ellis

ST LOUIS CHAPTER NEWS

The months of November and December are the vacation period for the St. Louis Chapter, but Thursday, January 28, 1988, regular meetings will resume. That evening Dr. Leonard Blake, archaeological research assistant at Washington University, will speak on "Cultivated Plants of the Prehistoric Indians on the Flood Plains of the Mississippi River East of St. Louis". The meeting will be, as usual, in Room 101 of McMillan Hall on the Washington University campus at 7:30 PM. Coffee and refreshments are at 7:00 PM

The regular monthly seminars, held on the second Saturday of the month are, are continuing. December 12 the group will concentrate on identification of oak leaves and acorns. January 9, June Hutson, Curator of the Mediterranean Collection at the Missouri Botanical Garden, will explain how native species found in rocky habitats adapt to rock gardens.

An Ethnobotany Group is organizing at Washington University.

The Annual Botany Field Days will be held at the Missouri Botanical Garden January 23-31, 1988. The theme is "Partners in Exploration and Research" focusing on both national and international Garden partnerships. Special rooms will highlight educational displays on fragrances, foods, ornamentals and ecosystems.

Donna Ford, a graduate student at Washington University and our Chapter's publicity person, is spending a few months in the Chilean Andes where she will be working on her dissertation involving the Portulacaceae Family.

Botanist Joins MDC Staff

The Natural History Section of MDC has hired Tim Nigh as a Botanist. Nigh holds a Masters degree in Forestry with an emphasis in ecology from the University of Missouri at Columbia. He has also done graduate work in Australia. Tim has been employed with the Department for several years, conducting Natural Features Inventories. His most recent work has been in the Ozarks as part of a 30 county inventory partially funded by the U.S. Forest Service. He is currently completing that report and will be moving to the Jefferson City office in January. He is filling the position left vacant when Sherry Morgan left last April to take a job with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Still - in a way - nobody sees a flower - really - it is so small - we haven't time - and to see takes time, like to have a friend takes time. --Georgia O'Keefe

SO YOU WANT TO WRITE

But your spelling isn't very good and you don't have a typewriter. Write anyway. Write as legibly as you can (yes, I know - me too) and send it to the editors. We will type it, clean up your grammar, etc., and YOU will be published.

Write up a field trip, either with the group or without. Or a book review or your experiences growing wildflowers or a special place or a plant group you are interested in.

All of us have a lot of knowledge that others would like to have - even amateurs have bits of expertise and make unusual finds.

-- Sue Hollis

RULES FOR SUBMISSION

If you type: 4½ inches wide - no more
single space
any length

If you don't type: Write legibly

Include your phone number just in case.

Tell us if you want it printed as you wrote it; otherwise we may correct grammar, etc., or shorten it for space requirements.

PLANTS THAT NEVER WERE
A Floral "Talepiece"

All the (plant) grotesqueries should preclude man's intervention in the playful game of Mother Nature, but civilizations as early as the Chaldean in southwestern Asia have established an iconography of plants that never existed. This was done in part to distil the miraculous and to embody it in the form of a plant that might be venerated as symbolic of all that is dear to man- eternity, fecundity, greatness of spirit, wealth, etc. Later civilizations frequently invented these "nonsense plants" to lend interest to voyages that were otherwise without spectacular event. As we have seen, trees, because of their immensity and longevity, have been foremost among those plants that were sacred or mystical.

In the Temple of Assur-bani-pal the "tree of life" is a highly stylized conception of beautifully interlaced branches and ornamental flowers. Some scholars have suggested that this tree is a combination of the pine and the lotus, symbolic of immortality and fecundity, respectively. I think otherwise by reason of the fact that the shaman in the depiction is approaching the tree with a small purse and a sort of of powder puff. These are the pollen bag and duster used by the Assyrians to pollinate the date tree, in which male and female are separate trees. Thus the tree was symbolic of conception and represented a source of food. Also, the fruit provided a date wine at a time when such wine was poured as a symbolic libation to the gods. So it would seem that the most ancient "tree of life" among this race of magicians was the date palm.

At a later date, and in northern climes the tree of life among the Druids was the oak (Quercus), not only because of its age but because it was the host for mistletoe (Viscum album), the most sacred plant of these people. To the Hebrew it was the cedar (Cedrus) which provided from its wood a precious oil of delicate aroma.

Common names have added much confusion to the histories of such plants; a good example of this is the sycamore of the Scriptures. To most of us this suggests the plane tree (Platanus). Therefore when we read that Egyptians regarded the sycamore as their "tree of life" it is difficult to understand, for the tree has no special attributes that would merit the extreme veneration which the Egyptians were said to have had for it, nor is the plane tree indigenous to the Nile Valley. In reality, the sycamore of the Egyptians was the wild fig (Ficus)

dedicated to fertility, joy, and the afterlife. Since Sycos is Greek for "fig tree," and moros is "mulberry tree" in the same tongue, the two were juxtaposed because the leaf of the fig tree was like that of the mulberry. No sycamore was ever a "tree of life"; it was the wild fig, the fruit of which have been found, in a dessicated state, in Egyptian tombs of the early dynasties.

The first voyagers to Malay returned with lurid tales aboaut a poisonous tree growing on the islands around Cathay (China), which they called the Bohun Upas or "tree of poisons." To the medievel traveler this tree was to be shunned, for it reportedly prodeced narcotic emanations that killed ass manners of plants and animals for miles around. The Malaysians further startled their visitors with stories of prisoners being executed simply by tying them to this great tree. And if one were to inadvertedly fall asleep in the shade of this tree, he would never awaken. By the fifteenth century the tales were even more fantastic, and drawings of this strange tree - highly stylized, of course - were to be found in the first printed books. It would seem that a likely candidate for the Upas might be Antiaris toxicaria, the latex of which contains poisons used by the natives on arrow tips. However, the legendary Upas itself never existed.

Excerpt from Bizarre Plants by William A. Emboden, Macmillan Publishing Co.

Ficus sycamorus, the sycamore of the Bible, which is in reality a fig tree.