

“Man living  
in harmony  
with nature.”

–B.W. Wells



# Rockcliff Farm Quarterly

THE B.W. WELLS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

## DONNA WRIGHT TO SPEAK AT ANNUAL MEETING

Donna Wright, Teaching Technician for the Plant Biology Department at NCSU, will give a short presentation about the B.W. Wells Lantern Slide Collection. Donna was instrumental in the archiving and cataloging of these important historical images of North Carolina vegetation and natural landscapes.

This collection of about 450 images was an integral part of the opening exhibit of the NCSU D.H. Hill Library's new Gallery. The exhibit contained artifacts from Dr. Wells' life and work, along with many images from his own photography and artwork. The collection is now an on-line exhibit, accessible to the public on the Library website.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

You have probably already received invitations to our annual meeting together with reminders about renewing your membership, if applicable, from Pamela Andrejev, Director of Membership. The Annual Meeting will take place on Sunday, September 19. A Genuine Pig Pickin' lunch will be served at 1 pm, again provided by Jimmy and Alice Ray, family and friends.

We will have a brief business meeting to catch you up with what the association has been doing. Then Donna Wright from NCSU will present information about Dr. Wells' lantern slide collection. The studio will be open, displaying the latest paintings donated to us by people who knew Bert and Maude Wells personally. The grounds and trails will be available for viewing wild flowers in bloom and just enjoying Rockcliff Farm. And don't forget the free wildflower raffle!

We were able to install the new trail-side displays for Heritage Day last March but many of you haven't had a chance to see them. It will be worth coming out just to see them. Vickie Cumbee and

Brian Bockhahn did a terrific job on them. They really add a great professional touch to the park.

There is more good news about our next big project which is to rewire the Wells house and studio. The project has been approved by superintendent Scott Kershner, Falls Lake State Recreation Area, the Corp of Engineers, the N.C. State Historic Preservation Office and the State Construction Office. We are hoping to receive a grant from the Wake County Historical Society to defray expenses for this project. I

Right: One of 13 new wayside displays at Rockcliff Farm.



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## UPCOMING EVENTS

We are starting to plan for the annual Winter symposium that will be held on Saturday morning February 26th, 2011 at the Wake Forest Chamber of Commerce, 320 S. Main Street, Wake Forest. Start time, 10 am. Ending, 12:30 pm.

Be sure to put the next **HERITAGE DAY** on your calendars, Saturday in March 26, 2011.

Rockcliff Farm is open for guided tours. Please see the website for contact information.

### SEPTEMBER 2010

**Sunday, Sept. 19 (1pm – 4pm)**  
**Location: Rockcliff Farm**  
**ANNUAL MEETING**  
BBQ lunch provided by Jimmy & Alice Ray and family.

**PLANT RAFFLE!**

**DON'T FORGET TO ENTER THE PLANT RAFFLE AT THIS YEAR'S ANNUAL MEETING. PAST WINNERS HAVE REPORTED THEY HAVE RECEIVED STRONG AND BEAUTIFUL BLOOMERS, JUST RIGHT FOR THEIR N.C. GARDENS.**

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE (continued)

always think I can get things done way before it usually happens. We started planning this project over a year ago with Bill Howard, then President of the Wake County Historical Society. If we can get a couple more estimates we may have this project under way before the annual meeting.

The completion of this project is the first step in other projects needed to stabilize and improve



photo by John Pelosi

Carolina moonvine, (*Matelea caroliniana*)

all structures at the farm. Perhaps next year we can open the house for tours. It is really a very interesting house!

Hugh Nourse, Events Director has worked hard and has been very active during the year conducting wildflower walks and tours not only of Rockcliff Farm but at other sites as well. He has taken groups to explore Mitchell Mill and power lines near Wake Forest reservoir. I went with him on one of these hikes and saw a flower I had never seen before, Carolina moonvine, or *Matelea caroliniana*. Hugh is planning to again have a Winter Symposium in February. All of this to say I think the association is alive, well and doing what it is supposed to be doing. I hope you can join us at the annual meeting for really good food and to tell us what you think about what we are doing, should be doing and to learn about future plans.

– John Pelosi



**bicolor lespedeza**  
(*Lespedeza bicolor*) – invasive

**black-eyed susan**  
(*Rudbeckia hirta*)

**common milkweed**  
(*Asclepias syriaca*)

**gayfeather**  
(*Liatris squarrulosa*)

**gray goldenrod**  
(*Solidago nemoralis*)

**New York iron weed**  
(*Vernonia noveboracensis*)

**elephant's foot**  
(*Elephantopus tomentosus*)

**camphorweed or marsh fleabane**  
(*Pluchea camphorata*)

**prostrate eryngo**  
(*Eryngium prostratum*)

## MANY THANKS TO SCOUT PACK #5

On August 30, 2010, Cub Scout Pack 5 volunteered to re-paint the fencing around the cemetery at Rockcliff Farm. Over 40 scouts and their parents showed up to lend a hand, or brush. Five gallons of paint and one hour later the job was completed, just in time for their meeting and snack! Among those buried in the cemetery, are the graves of Charles Ray who built the main house, his wife Della and her father Joseph Newton Lowery the first person to live at Rockcliff Farm. The remains of his cabin are by the square well, and the chimney was relocated and re-used at the B.W. Wells studio. Many thanks to Sheila Tharrington and her “army” of scouts!



– Brian Bockbahn

## PAINTING THEIR MASTERPIECE

Benjamin Patrick Haynes and Bethany Harper got creative at Heritage Day this year and won “best” in artwork. Benjamin’s raccoon in a tree image was painted freehand and Bethany painted B.W. Well’s favorite flower, the fire pink, *Silene virginica*.

Winners of the game *What Would You Call It?* were Alex and Evan Melgar for “Lady In A Boat” and Stephen Hayes for “Purple Fluffy Tail” They gave these creative names to the mystery plants used in the game.

Congratulations and keep up the good work!





## “NEW” WILDFLOWERS AT ROCKCLIFF FARM

Can there possibly be “new” wildflowers at Rockcliff Farm? It seems unlikely doesn't it? Regrettably, we have never located a copy of a wildflower list that Dr. Wells might have compiled while living there. Perhaps someone stashed such a thing in some safe place, where it has long since been forgotten or discarded.

In June 2005, we hosted a group of botanists from local universities and from Natureserve who surveyed the trails and woods, and compiled such a list. Yet this year, Herb Amyx has succeeded in identifying some plants that were not on that list. He walked where those people had not walked. Just think about it—there must be many places where people seldom go, and there may be other plants growing there unrecognized.

Herb set out on a quest to find pawpaw. You know—George Washington's favorite fruit that flourishes along the banks of the Delaware River. The large pawpaw is *Asimina triloba*, and not only is the fruit favored by our fauna, but the deer love to eat the leaves and stalks too. The leaves on young shrubs grow quite large in shaded areas where they are competing for light, to the point where they resemble young umbrella Magnolias. Herb found it growing near an old farm road that leads down to the river. Alongside the *A. triloba*, he found a big patch of painted buckeye, *Aesculus sylvatica*. Oddly that is another plant that does not grow along the established trails at Rockcliff Farm so it was not listed in the 2005 Survey. But I have found it growing on the point of land across the river where Little Horseshoe Creek flows into the main channel of the Neuse River. Painted buckeye makes a lovely ornamental plant for the garden, staying low, between two and three feet tall, with very attractive leaves.

Then there is the twining snoutbean—yes that is the common name, believe it or not. This is a legume, *Rhynchosia tomentosa*, that grows only a few inches tall while spreading in full sunlight. Herb found this growing abundantly along the roadside. It has a small yellow blossom that appeared in late June, then almost disappeared during the drought of July, but came back strong once the rains arrived. Once one sees it, one is astonished that it had not been reported before. Even Dr. Wells' close friend, the late Ed Osborne did not have a photo of this in his collection. Could a bird have brought the seed in recently?

It was only last year in 2009, we identified camphor weed growing along the edge of the lake. This is *Pluchea camphorata*, which has a notable fragrance. We had overlooked it before, as we do most wildflower walks in spring or summer, but *Pluchea* is at its best in the fall, growing in damp places. The fragrance of the leaves garners different reactions from different people. It is strong and while many people find it not unpleasant, some others find the fragrance objectionable, calling the plant stinking marsh fleabane.

—Hugh Nourse



photos by Herb Amyx

**Top: Pawpaw (*Asimina triloba*) flowers and leaves. Did you know that the zebra swallowtail butterfly lays its eggs only on pawpaws? Find out more about the paw paw and its delicious fruit in the September issue of *Wildlife In North Carolina* magazine.**

**Below: Twining snoutbean, (*Rhynchosia tomentosa*). The trifoliate leaves clearly show that this is a legume and a member of the bean family Fabiaceae. The yellow blossoms account for the unattractive name of snoutbean. There should be plenty of bean seeds to grow another crop.**



photos by Herb Amyx

## GIANT RESIN BEES

During May, Hugh Nourse noticed a steady flight of large black bees, shuttling to and from a fallen cedar tree. These bees were so large that he was wary of approaching them. They were four times the size of a bumble bee. Some weeks later as he started watering a flower bed and brick pathway, on one of those blistering hot days we experienced, bees were attracted to the newly wet brick. Both honeybees and these large black bees gathered on the brick to suck up moisture. This provided the opportunity to photograph the black bees. David Stephan, an entomologist at NCSU identified the black bee as an Asian import, the Giant Resin Bee, or *Megachile sculpturalis*. This bee is now well-established in the area west of Wake Forest, where the B.W. Wells Park is located.

On the website for National Biological Information Infrastructure, we found, “This bee is native to Asia, but was inadvertently transported to the United States in the 1990’s, where it was first identified in North Carolina in 1994. It is now present in most of the southeastern United States. This bee resembles bumble (*Bombus spp.*) and carpenter (*Xylocopa spp.*) bees, except that it lacks both the hairy abdomen that is present on bumble bees and the shiny abdomen that is present on carpenter bees. The giant resin bee is known to pollinate several plants in the United States, including golden rain tree (*Koelreuteria paniculata*), waxleaf privet (*Ligustrum lucidum*), sourwood (*Oxydendrum arboreum*), catalpa (*Catalpa spp.*), buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*), and vitex (*Vitex spp.*). In its native range, the giant resin bee is a known pollinator of crape myrtle (*Lagerstroemia spp.*) and is the primary pollinator of kudzu (*Pueraria montana*). Kudzu, a fast-growing perennial vine, is native to Asia. It was introduced to the United States in 1876 and is now common throughout most of the southeast. In the United States, kudzu is known as an invasive weed that kills or degrades native plants. As in

Asia, the giant resin bee pollinates kudzu in the United States, aiding its spread throughout the country.”

[[http://www.nbii.gov/portal/server.pt/community/introduced\\_and\\_invasive\\_species/1157/giant\\_resin\\_bee/5816](http://www.nbii.gov/portal/server.pt/community/introduced_and_invasive_species/1157/giant_resin_bee/5816) ]

On July 26th, Herb Amyx reported, “I was out at Blue Jay Park yesterday and was struck by the bloom on the Pagoda Tree (*Styphnolobium japonicum*) between the road and the soccer field. It is, of course, relatively unusual for a tree to bloom in late July, and this bloom was spectacular. The bees and bumblebees made such a loud hum that it sounded like a jet flying in the distance — really a remarkable sound. Of interest were the large number (maybe hundreds) of Giant Resin Bees on the flowers, along with bumblebees and carpenter bees. . . . In the side photo of one of the bees, you can just make out the enormous jaws that they have. When I was taking the close-up photos, the bees were using my neck and shoulders as a landing strip between flowers, but they were fortunately very well behaved.”



Now Herb reports that the giant resin bees are making use of a house intended for mason bees. He watched as a giant resin bee investigated a predrilled hole, backing in presumably to lay an egg. Another giant resin bee arrived and was angered to find that bee occupying “its” hole. It leaned in and proceeded to haul the other bee out of the hole. After a skirmish, one bee left. Now, the giant resin bees are systematically filling each pre-drilled hole in the mason bee house and capping the filled holes with resin and then with mud.

—Hugh Nourse and Herb Amyx

**Below: Giant resin bees tussling over a hole in a mason bee house and a flowering pagoda tree; Giant resin bees sucking moisture from wet bricks; the flowering pagoda tree that is so attractive to giant resin bees.**



photos by Herb Amyx

One of the first discoverers of giant resin bees in the USA, was Wyatt Mangum of NCSU. Members of the B.W. Wells Association might recall that the large bend in the Neuse River around Turkey Neck and approaching Zeagle’s Rock is known as Wyatt’s Bend, named for an earlier Wyatt Mangum. We presume there is a family connection.



Join today!

**BENEFITS:**

- > Organized walks and lectures pertaining to the ecology, geology and botany
- > Maintained hiking trails
- > Interpretive displays
- > Meetings and newsletters
- > Environmental Education projects for students of all ages

STUDENT AND SENIOR (60 years old) **\$10**

INDIVIDUAL **\$15**

FAMILY **\$30**

PATRON **\$50**

CLUB/PARTNER ORGANIZATION **\$75**

LIFE MEMBERSHIP **\$100** (limited to individuals only)

**BWWA, P.O. Box 1901**

**Wake Forest, NC 27588**

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**MISSION STATEMENT**

The B.W. Wells Association will strive to educate the public about B.W. Wells, North Carolina's first plant ecologist, and promote his conservation ethics. The Association will achieve its mission primarily by assisting the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to preserve, restore and interpret the unique cultural and natural resources at Rockcliff Farm, the site of Wells' retirement.