

“Man living  
in harmony  
with nature.”

– B.W. Wells



# Rockcliff Farm Quarterly

THE B.W. WELLS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

## PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

We are eagerly awaiting the fall season with its more user friendly temperatures and with it the Association’s Annual Meeting. It is always the third Sunday in September and this year it falls on September 16th. The meeting begins at 1 pm with lunch for all bona fide members, but feel free to invite someone who may consider joining the association.

Board member Jimmy Ray and his family and friends will provide us with their terrific “Pig Pickin’” with all the fixings. He announced at the board meeting last night he was going to feature ‘Chitlins’ this year as a cost saving measure but we know he was just kidding. The meal just gets better and better.

There will be a short business meeting to provide reports to the membership and hold election of officers and board members. Rob Evans, the coordinator for the N.C. Plant Conservation Program, will be our keynote speaker this year. The primary goal of the Plant Conservation Program is to protect and restore plants within their native communities.

Please go to the [www.bwwells.org](http://www.bwwells.org) and click on the link for Facebook. If you click “Like”, you will automatically receive notifications from the B.W. Wells Association as they are available. One of the highlights of the annual meeting is a free raffle of wild flowers courtesy of the NC Botanical Garden. Visits to the buildings and hiking along the trails can take place after the meeting is adjourned.

We began the year with a very ambitious plan to protect the buildings and make needed repairs. As reported in the spring newsletter, bids on resealing the roofs were impossibly high. However, Erich Meyers has almost singlehandedly completed repairing the breezeway, “Speed’s Breezeway”, connecting the kitchen house with the main house in Wells retirement home. Jeff Adolphsen helped Erich get that project started. Significant repairs have been made to the main house. Jeff discovered a serious leak in the roof near the breezeway which was deteriorating the window sill and adjoining wall. Jeff donated building materials and spent a great amount of time working with a carpenter skilled in historic building renovation to complete repairs in that part of the house.

We have received a sizable donation of \$2500 from the Wake Forest Garden Club. This donation is earmarked for repair of the Smoke House. It badly needs repair and we are seeking bids to do the work at present.

–John Pelosi

A painting by B.W. Wells looking towards the Ray house with smoke from the B.W. Wells compound.

Courtesy of the Ray family



## UPCOMING EVENTS

Rockcliff Farm is open for guided tours. Please see the website for contact information, information about the association and updates on events throughout the year.

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### SEPTEMBER 2012

Sunday, September 16  
(1 pm – 4 pm)

Location: Rockcliff Farm  
**ANNUAL MEETING**

Come out to hear our guest speaker, Rob Evans, coordinator of the N.C. Plant Conservation Program. Hike the trails, enjoy the park and try your luck by entering the wildflower raffle.

### APRIL 2013

Saturday, April 6  
(9 am – 4 pm)

Location: Rockcliff Farm  
**HERITAGE DAY!**

See trout lilies, Hepatica and other spring ephemerals. Games, guided tours and more.

## ROCKCLIFF FARM HORNET RAID

On a very hot and humid day in mid-July, Hugh Nourse, Emily Abernethy, and I were at Rockcliff Farm identifying the locations of wildflowers prior to a scheduled mowing of the area. I walked in front of the huge White Ash tree at the side of the Wells house, and was immediately surrounded by a swarm of hornets. They were European Hornets (*Vespa crabro*), the largest hornets in North America, second in size only to the giant Cicada Killer Wasp. Fortunately for me, this tree was not their home hive; European Hornets are known to defend their homes violently. Rather, they were conducting a raid of a wild bee hive located within the tree, and they ignored me completely. There was a steady stream of hornets entering and leaving the tree at a frantic pace. I took a few photos and then withdrew to a location about 20 feet from the tree. When hornets raid a bee hive, they take adults, pupae and larvae, often permanently wiping out the hive. They have been observed to do the same to domestic bee hives, earning the hostility of beekeepers.

European Hornets are easily identified by their size—about three times larger than a common yellow jacket, and their color: yellow face, reddish brown head and thorax, and bright yellow abdomen.

European Hornets are primarily carnivores, eating many species of insects, including bees, wasps and hornets. They also eat some ripe fruits like apples and peaches, and are known to covet the nectar in hummingbird feeders in the late summer and early fall. They are very aggressive at the nectar feeders and sometimes kill the yellow jackets that are drinking at the nectar ports. The accompanying photo (from my deck) shows a hornet on a feeder, with the scattered legs of a just-dispatched yellow jacket visible against the red foreground.

—Herb Amyx



*“Fortunately for me, this tree was not their home hive; European Hornets are known to defend their homes violently.”*

**An introduced species, The European hornet (*Vespa crabro*) may be considered an asset or a pest in the garden. As a carnivore, it eats other insects which includes the domestic honeybee and is also known to girdle tree branches.**

Photos by Herb Amyx



## LAKE SHORE LOBELIAS

**B**elow Rockcliff Farm, and just below the Zeagle's Rock Trail, the ground is rocky and full of tree roots as it slopes down to the water. This creates an excellent environment for a healthy colony of *Lobelia spicata*, the Spiked Lobelia. Its flowers are a pale blue to almost white color, giving rise to another common name—Pale Spike Lobelia. The “spike” portion of the name comes from the leafless spike that the buds and flowers form on the upper part of the stem. The pale flowers stand out against the darker soil of the slope, so the flowers can be seen even from a distance.

*Lobelia spicata* is relatively common around the Falls Lake area and has a few characteristics that separate it from other medium sized Lobelias. It has distinctive broad and wide basal leaves, which are still easily seen during the flowering period, and the stem is angular or ridged near the flowers. It also lacks leaves in the upper stem where the flowers and buds occur.

Like most lobelias, the leaves and stems are toxic. And also like its relatives, the flowers are actually inverted, so the lower lip of three petals is really the top of the flower, and the upper lip of two petals is really the bottom of the flower. The term for this inverted condition is called Resupination, and is accomplished by a twisting of the flower stems.

—Herb Amyx



*Lobelia spicata* blooms from late spring well into the summer, providing a dash of blue color to the green that surrounds visitors hiking the Zeagle's Rock trail.

Photos by Herb Amyx

## ROOF REPAIR AND WINDOW SILL REPAIR WORK COMPLETED

The latest two projects to be completed at Rockcliff Farm are the repairs to the 5V metal roof on the connector between the main house and kitchen and the window sill repair on the west wall of the main house.

In November of 2011, restoration carpenter and roofer Joe Armstrong repaired the deteriorated siding and roof on the north slope of the connector. The roof was improperly flashed and for the last few years, rain water had slowly deteriorated the siding which permitted water to enter the wall cavity. Joe removed the roof panel that was adjacent to the siding, the deteriorated siding, and the bee's nest that was inside the wall cavity (**photo 1**). Nailers were sistered to the existing studs and salvaged sections of siding were installed. The roof panel was installed, flashed and counter flashed (**photo 2**).



photo 1



photo 2

In May, Joe returned to the site, to make what were thought to be relatively easy repairs to the window sill (**photo 3**). Unfortunately, while removing the trim the wall noticeably moved and the studs on both



photo 3

sides of the window were found to be badly deteriorated (**photo 4**). Within moments, the scope of work had greatly increased, but to what extent. The amount of deterioration necessitated the removal of the siding from the window to the door inside the connector and several pieces of siding below the window sill to troubleshoot the problem. With the wall open, it was discovered that the sill had been replaced several decades earlier but most of the studs were not fastened to the sill! A few studs were so deteriorated that they did not even reach the replacement sill. The studs on both



photo 4

sides of the window were cut back to good wood, and an equal sized stud fitted and secured to the remainder of the stud above and the sill below. A nailer was installed alongside the repaired stud providing for additional support (**photo 5**). Additional nailers were then installed on the remaining studs that were not attached to the sill. After the structural issues were addressed, the window sill was then repaired. The old sill was too deteriorated to be reused and a salvaged sill was cut to size and installed. The bottom sections of the jambs were replaced as were two stops and some trim. The interior sheathing was then refastened to the studs and the nails set. Deteriorated siding was replaced and salvaged siding was reinstalled (**photo 6**). Epoxy repairs were then made to the siding and the window was caulked.

*-Jeff Adolphsen*



photo 5



photo 6

**Extensive repairs have been made to the main house at Rockcliff Farm. Photos and text display the details.**

Photos by Jeff Adolphsen

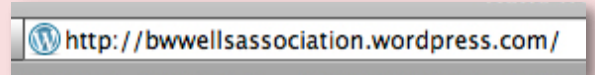
## MAKING CONNECTIONS

Be sure to check us out at the new web site. “Like” us and you will get the latest news, events and updates from the association as well as shared pictures of B.W. and Maude Wells from our archives.

We’d love to hear from you, so please pass along any stories and/or pictures you may have of Rockcliff Farm and B.W. Wells.



See our blog at:



The **MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE** is looking for a volunteer to head up our initiative to coordinate talks about Rockcliff Farm and B.W. Wells. This person would contact community groups, homeowner associations and the like to raise awareness and membership.

Please contact Pamela at:  
[andrejev20@gmail.com](mailto:andrejev20@gmail.com)

## AND THE NOMINEES ARE . . .

The nominating committee is pleased to present the following people who have agreed to stand for election as directors of the B.W. Wells Association:

- Hugh Nourse (President)**
- Joe Paulonis (Treasurer)**
- Pamela Andrejev (Board)**
- Sanford Bailey (Board)**
- Vickie Cumbee (Board)**
- Carmen Samples (Board)**

We also extend our thanks to John Pelosi, our outgoing president, and to Jeff Adolphsen, for having served as directors for the past nine years.

—Susan Trombley, Chair,  
Nominating Committee



**Join today!**

**BWWA, P.O. Box 1901  
Wake Forest, NC 27588**

***Benefits include:***

- Organized walks and lectures pertaining to 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)

**B.W. WELLS ASSOCIATION**

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

President, John Pelosi  
Vice President, Gerard Hayes  
Treasurer, Joe Paulonis  
Secretary, Susan Trombley  
Committee Chair, Hugh Nourse

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Jeff Adolphsen (Buildings)  
Erich Meyers (Buildings)  
Hugh Nourse (Education and Events)  
Herb Amyx (Education and Events)  
Pamela Andrejev (Membership)  
Joel Wolf (Grounds)  
Jimmy Ray (Corporate Partners)  
Larry Earley (Communications)  
Vickie Cumbee (Newsletter)

**ADVISORY BOARD**

Margaret Pridgen  
Ken Moore  
Benson Kirkman  
Brian Bockhahn  
Johnny Randall



**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.