

Botanical Society of Washington

Annual Field Excursion 2007 – Southeastern Virginia

***Tentative dates: September 15-16 -Saturday & Sunday
or
September 22-23 -Saturday & Sunday***

Prince George and Southampton Counties of Virginia

Estuarine River Shores and Bottomland Hardwoods

The Botanical Society of Washington's annual field excursion will be a weekend trip to southeastern Virginia in September.

We plan to visit three field-sites in Prince George and Southampton Counties, located deep in Virginia's cotton and peanut farms, approximately 3 hour drive from Washington D.C. The weekend trip will include a group dinner Saturday evening. We are investigating hotel and camping accommodations in and around the town of Wakefield, a.k.a. "Peanut Capital of the World." Nearby Jamestown 400th anniversary celebrations (1607-2007) can be an additional side trip for those interested; a ferry service across the James River provides a direct access route. Local botanists and/or land managers will be invited to serve as trip leaders for each field site, and participation by state Natural Heritage Program staff is also anticipated.

Field sites include:

Saturday Afternoon – Estuarine Shores of the James River

- ***The James River National Wildlife Refuge*** is located in Prince George County, 8 miles southeast of the City of Hopewell and thirty miles southeast of Richmond. The Wildlife Refuge encompasses 4,200 acres of hardwood forest and wetland habitats along the James River, bordered by Powells Creek to the west, and the historic Flowerdew Hundred Plantation to the east. The Wildlife Refuge offers access to undeveloped estuarine (freshwater-tidal) shores and adjacent marshes, shrub zones, and forests. While similar in general appearance to the Washington-area shores of the tidal Potomac or Patuxent, or Chesapeake Bay, the James River flora includes numerous southerly species that don't extend farther north into the Washington region. Plant species of particular importance include sensitive joint vetch (*Aeschynomene virginica*) and Long's bittercrest (*Cardamine longii*). Both of these species are globally rare and are candidates for listing as endangered species.



USFWS photo

For more information, please see: <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/jamesriver/index.html>

- ***Sunday Morning – Old-growth Blackwater Swamp Forest. The Nature Conservancy Blackwater River Preserve*** is located in Southampton County, just below Hickaneck Swamp, extending about one mile on the West Bank of the Blackwater River.

Few examples of Virginia's presettlement cypress and hardwood swamp forests remain, and even fewer are accessible without boats or extended cross-country hikes. This preserve has one of the best remaining examples of an ancient bald cypress forest in the Southeast, with some trees estimated to be least 800 years old!

We are requesting approval to take our group into the Preserve. If such a visit cannot be readily arranged, we will substitute a different non-estuarine wetland habitat in the general area.



For more information on the Blackwater River Preserve, please see:

<http://www.nature.org/wherewework/northamerica/states/virginia/preserves/art1229.html>

- ***Sunday Afternoon – Brief supplementary site.*** Similar to other weekend excursions, a third site in the area will be selected for a brief afternoon visit for those interested, noting that some will want to return home in daylight. The third site might provide another example of one of the habitats already visited, or a brief introduction to a different ecological area in the same region. Suggestions are welcome!

Pat Ford of the Society's field-trip committee is coordinating and organizing this year's excursion. Please contact her for further information or to provide suggestions, especially for local trip leaders, possible restaurants for Saturday evening's dinner, accommodations in the Wakefield area, and possibilities sites for the Sunday afternoon field stop. Or, if you have a preference for September 15-16 or 22-23. She may be contacted by phone: (703)-358-2494 (workday) or (703)-519-3042 (evening/weekend), or by e-mail at: p2zamora@att.net (best option).

***Larry Morse (Chair) and Pat Ford, BSW Field Trip Committee
June 2007.***