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Spring 2016

The passing of a lady—CAROLINE DEAN

Everyone will have their own Caroline Dean story, and some have already been shared in the sad email news from Margie Anderton and the postings in the funeral home guest book.

I had heard all about Caroline from George Wood and other chapter members after joining AWS in the early 90's. I first met Ms. Dean away from the wildflower society. I was a member of an organization of State College Biology Instructors. We were having a meeting in Columbiana and she was the speaker for it. Ms. Dean gave a presentation to a group of biology teachers, not about lists of flowers, but about her own experiences with setting up and maintaining her bog garden.

She reminded me of one of my grandmothers, but as time passed, I learned more about and from her and realized what a statement she made for wildflowers and wildflower habitats in Alabama. To most everyone she met she issued an invite to view her native azaleas some spring day. Many society members took her up on that invitation.

In 2002 we received our first state newsletter with actual photographs in it. Caroline had done the layout of the newsletter for George Wood. George originally typed it all himself and his idea of a "margin" was the edge of the paper. She is responsible for incorporating the logo used here into the newsletter, and she graciously provided me with the logo and any other support I needed to try and publish a newsletter after the death of George.



ABOVE: Caroline with friends Charles and Florence Webb



LEFT: Caroline with Mrs. Dodd and Moe Nation

2007

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Report on Fall Meeting October 16-18 Birmingham Area submitted by Debbie Pezzillo

Friday, October 16, 2015. Nineteen wildflower lovers along with their fearless leader, Marty Schulman, set out on a beautiful fall afternoon to witness all the wildflowers growing along the well-maintained path to the Irondale Furnace on Stoneriver Road in Mountain Brook. This was the welcoming event for the Alabama State Wildflower Society Annual meeting. Nine of us were from the Blanche Dean Chapter in Birmingham, but the bulk of us were from other areas in Alabama including Huntsville, Boaz, Auburn, Albertville, and Killen.

Wild Ginger was the first plant Marty pointed out to us. As reticent as it is, it was plentiful! Next was Strawberry Bush (*Euonymus americanus*) which was also plentiful throughout the park. There were several kinds of fern including Christmas fern. We also saw Oakleaf Hydrangea, Thoroughwort, Blue Beech, Yellow Wood Sorrel, Ladies Thumb, and Spurge. Wild Ageratum was on its way out along with a different sort of Elephants Foot, Jewelweed, Ragwort, and mild Water Pepper.

Ellen McLaughlin pointed out Wreath Goldenrod and Smooth Hydrangea (*H. arborescens*). Jan Newton found Crane-fly Orchid (*Tipularia discolor*). Boneset and another asters were also well represented. There was Tickseed Sunflower, Mullein, and lots of Creeping Spot flower (*Spilanthes sp.*) which Wikipedia reports as an African and S. American plant. It was the first time I'd ever (knowingly) seen Pawpaw in a nice patch. Marty let us give it a smell. Some think it smells like bell pepper and others think it's just skunky!

Irondale Furnace Ruins has been amended and is maintained as an historic site and walking trail by the city of Mountain Brook. The landscape slopes into the gravel-packed trail and then down to Furnace Creek. On the other side is an Audubon birding trail. Thanks, Marty, for a wonderful afternoon!

Wild Ageratum to right



White American Beautyberry to left

Saturday, October 17, 2015, The group met at Ruffner mountain Nature Preserve, a 1000 acre urban nature preserve in Birmingham. The day at Ruffner Mountain started with a hike on the quarry trail. It was followed by lunch and a business meeting at the Tree House Visitor Center. There was a program followed by a business meeting. One of the important things on the agenda was the election of officers. Margie Anderton (treasurer), and Brian Finzel (secretary) agreed to continue in their present positions.

The newly elected president is Susan Hammack. Susan is a semi-retired Licensed Massage Therapist and Healing Touch Spiritual Ministry Practitioner. In her previous life, she and husband Allen owned a science fiction/fantasy book and game store in Birmingham's Five Points area. She has been an amateur naturalist and hiking enthusiast for many years and helped to build a small part of the Pinhoti Trail. Susan is a member of the Blanche Dean chapter. She is also a member of the Edgewood Garden Club and volunteers with the native plant propagation group and in the Kaul Wildflower Garden at the BBG.

The newly elected Vice-president Debbie Pezzillo is the secretary of the Blanche Dean Chapter. She is twice retired, once in 2001 after twenty-five years of teaching and in 2013 from Alabama Hands on Activity Science Program at UAB.



Garden at Ruffner Mountain

The Scholarship Chairman, Brian Keener, is a professor at the University of West Alabama in Livingston. He has been affiliated with AWS for some time, having been one of our scholarship recipients during his time at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa. It is therefore fitting he is now our scholarship chairman. He also is the administrator of the Alabama Plant Atlas which is maintained at UWA.

State Fall Meeting (cont'd)

Sunday, October 19, 2016. Turkey Creek Nature Preserve is a real asset to our state and, we learned during our field trip there on October 18, 2015, to our nation. The Vermillion Darter that lives there is not only endangered but is found nowhere else on Earth! Two other endangered fish species, the Watercress and the Rush Darter also live in its waters.

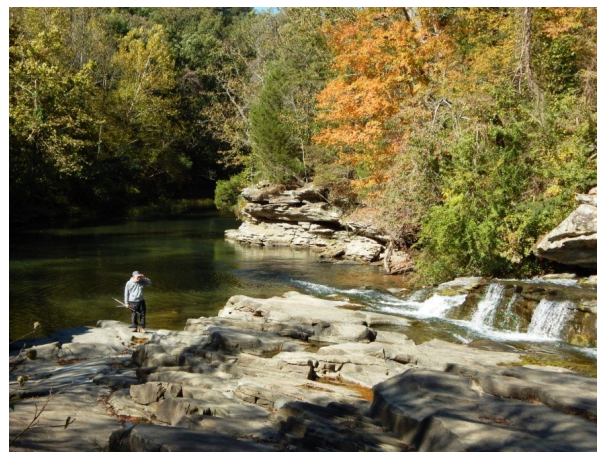
Significant, too, the preserve protects other endangered or threatened wildlife: Flattened Musk turtle, Long-eared and Gray bats, and the Eared Coneflower. From Charles Yeager, the preserve manager, we also learned of its rich history that dates back to prehistoric Native American inhabitants. The land at TCNP played a key role in the early days of Alabama's industrial history and today provides recreational opportunities for the general public and hands-on environmental education for young people.

One of our members, Karen Hutchinson, is one of the many S.T.A.R.T. (Society to Advance the Resources of Turkey Creek) members who played a key role in rescuing the land. This grassroots organization worked with Freshwater Land Trust who purchased the 466 acres and sold it to Forever Wild to protect it as a Nature Preserve. Turkey Creek Nature Preserve operates today with the support of Birmingham Southern College's Southern Environmental Center, Freshwater Land Trust, and the City of Pinson. Each year more than 100,000 visitors enjoy TCNP and 6,000 students receive environmental education.

A tributary to Locust Fork and fed by underground tributaries, Turkey Creek's waters are some the cleanest in the state. Its banks are flanked with Pawpaw patches and many beautiful native trees, shrubs, and wildflowers. We also saw fern, Boneset, Lobelia, Climbing Hydrangea, and Mountain Mint, a white species of American Beautyberry, Wild Ageratum, and Narrow Leaf Sunflower.

Several of our members brought potted wildflowers from their own yards to contribute to the native plant nursery housed at the preserve. Much to our delight, the nursery wildflowers were available for sale. Ginny Lusk brought Bottlebrush Buckeye seeds to give not only to the nursery but also to the members present.

It was a beautiful day, sunny but cool enough to warrant wearing light jackets and sweaters. The birds were about as well and Suzanne Yee noted a Rose-breasted grosbeak flitting about the forest. Two Red-tailed hawks sailed overhead and woodpeckers called from the trees. We're thinking of returning in late March of 2017 to see the large rock outcropping that towers over the creek



April 8-10, 2016 First State Meeting

The Alabama Wildflower Society first spring field trip will be in Florence April 8, 9 & 10. Lodging will be at Comfort Suites, 140 Matthew Paul Court which is one block off Hwy 72. Rooms are queen 2 beds-\$112 +tax or 1 king-\$114 +tax. Make reservations before March 11 for reserved rooms. There are a few downstairs rooms. Full breakfast is included. Phone number is: 256-246-2300. Mention AWS for reservations.

Friday afternoon we will tour the moss garden of Maria Wall and hopefully have Paul Davison to lead us. The garden is known all over the US. We will leave the motel at 2:00 PM to visit there. There are no plans for Friday night but there are several restaurants within a block of the motel. If you plan on coming on Friday please email me, marg-mick271@aol.com as there is limited parking at Maria's. Also there is a rather strenuous walk as it is on a bluff along the river but she has a section that is easy also so almost anyone can make it.

Saturday morning we will leave the motel at 8:30 to travel to Jim & Irene Fowler's garden. Then we will go to Margie's for picnic lunch (please bring). Saturday night we will meet at St. James Methodist Church at 6:00 PM for meal and program given by the American Chestnut Foundation on the restoration of our native chestnut trees. Meal will be provided by Pop's Bar-B-Q for a cost of \$12 per person. Mail check to Margie Anderton, 271 County Rd 68, Killen, AL 35645.

Sunday morning we will leave the motel at 8:30 and go to the trails on The Tennessee Valley reservation. We will hike the First Quarters trail and then walk through the Whitey Hall Memorial Native Plant Garden. Picnic will be at pavilion there with drinks provided. Margie's # 256-710-5851

April 22-24, 2016 Second State Meeting

Our second spring meeting will take place at Solon Dixon Forestry Educational Center near Andalusia, AL. The address is: Solon Dixon Forestry Education Center, 12130 Dixon Center Rd, Andalusia, AL 36420, United States ([map](#))

Our guide and speaker is Mr. Curtis Hansen, the John D. Freeman Herbarium Collections Manager from the Auburn University Museum of Natural History.

The Dixon Center is located in the middle of 5350 acres of working forest. There are four walking trails, clear water springs and streams, and 4 miles of Conecuh River frontage. We will see native azaleas, mountain laurel, and atamasco lilies.

If any of you have a truck/SUV or high-clearance vehicle, please drive it. We will need them to take us to the trails our guide has planned for us.

The per person cost is \$128.30 which includes taxes, hotel room, wireless internet, the banquet on Saturday evening, and all meals beginning with dinner on Friday through lunch on Sunday.

You can reserve a room now by calling 334-222-7779 or sending an email to Teresa Cannon at cannot@auburn.edu.

The Center is currently installing an online reservation feature. It should be ready to use by the end of January 2016. Hope to see you there! Look for more information on the state web site or in our next newsletter.

This is a letter written by George Wood which reveals quite a bit of the history of the Alabama Wildflower Society and may not have reached beyond the scope of the George Wood – Tuscaloosa Chapter. Here is it in its entirety as typed by George.

"As an introduction for the scrapbook they are updating for the Tuscaloosa Chapter of AWS, Jane Rosborough and Joan Rollins have asked me to write an account of how The Alabama Wildflower Society was formed. They asked for the background in which the organization was formed as well as the organizational events. The following is that account.

In the 1950's and 60's I was a forester with an avid interest in Alabama's native plants. My interest had been fostered by my wonderful scoutmaster, Henry Grady Richards of Florence, Alabama. What knowledge I had was gained mostly from reading books from the library and studying them alone in the field. There were few people whom I knew who shared my enthusiasm for native plants. During those years Blanche Dean was busily teaching of native plants and birds and conducting nature camps on them, but I had no knowledge of their existence. A few good nurseries offered a few native plants (one among them being Fruitland Nurseries of Augusta, Georgia, which offered *Elliotia racemiflora*, Georgia plume, in the 1930's), but native plants were practically unobtainable except through local collection.

When I would meet with others who had an interest in native plants, I would ask if there was any organization in Alabama devoted to them, and always the answer was none that the person knew of. I'd ask, 'Why don't some of you start one?' Of course no one did.

Two friends in the Tuscaloosa area who shared my interest in native plants were Joan Rollins and Rebecca Welch. Joan was a native of New York state who had married a forester, Charles Rollins, and from going to the woods with him had become enthralled with the plants she was finding in the woodlands of central Alabama. Rebecca Welch was a grammar school teacher in Tuscaloosa who had an interest in all aspects of nature and believed strongly in knowing and teaching Alabama history, including the natural history of our state.

Joan, Rebecca, and I talked of starting an organization devoted to the native plants of Alabama. With their encouragement, I sent a letter to all the people we could think of who might be interested in starting a native plant organization. A copy of that letter is in our scrapbook files. The response to that letter was not encouraging. Joan, Rebecca, and I were discussing that response when Rebecca asked, 'Did we send a letter to the lady who teaches of plants and birds at the workshop which Auburn holds for teachers each summer? I think her name is Dean.' We had not. That was the first time I had heard of Blanche Dean.

When we contacted Blanche about a state native plant organization, she responded that she thought it a wonderful idea, that she had long considered starting one but had never had the time to do so. She supplied us with the names and addresses of those who had attended her nature camps. We contacted these Alabama nature lovers and had an enthusiastic response. They comprised much of the AWS early membership, which soon reached more than 100 members. Blanche Dean continued to support AWS, leading our field trips and contributing in every way she could. She was our patron saint.

The early meetings and activities of AWS are recorded in our newsletters. One aspect of our first meeting warrants describing, for it demonstrates the psychology of our early days. Rain was forecast for the day of our first field trip. As I drove to the meeting, the clouds began to build up and I felt concern for what we would do if it rained. I need not have worried. Just as we reached the unloading point for our first field trip, a light rain began. There was no discussion of what we should do. Everyone whipped out our raincoats and/or umbrellas and away we went into the Bankhead Forest. This mindset was a part of our inheritance from Blanche's early field trips.

The great progress which has been made in the last 30 years in knowledge and availability of native plants warrants noting. Where it used to be almost impossible to find native plants in the trade, today there are a good number of excellent native plant nurseries offering an extensive selection of native plants. Increased knowledge of propagation has made available species which were almost impossible to propagate in the past. Books on native plants are available in abundance. Excellent in-depth books have been written on almost every major genus of plants native to the Southeast, many depicting them in beautiful color. Every southern state has books devoted to its native plants. Every southern state also has one or more native plant societies which offer field trips, newsletters, and fellowship with other enthusiasts. The Alabama Natural Heritage Program and the Nature Conservancy both have well-qualified botanists and other scientists studying the plants of Alabama, gathering and sharing information ON THEM. The native plant movement has made tremendous progress in the last 25 years. We in AWS can take pride in our small contribution to that progress."

George Wood

State Web Site

www.alwildflowers.org

Direct any questions about the website to:
Rachel Young: ryoung256@yahoo.com

Membership in the Alabama Wildflower Society

If you would like to become a member, dues are: **Individual \$10.00** **Family \$15.00**
(local dues not included in this amount—please send them to local treasurer)

Your check should be made payable to the ALABAMA WILDFLOWER SOCIETY and mailed to:
Margie Anderton, 271 County Rd. 68, Killen, AL 35645

Your name _____

Mailing Address _____

Telephone No. _____ **E-mail** _____

New _____ Renewal _____

Please supply your email address if you have one. It makes contacting each other easier. Supplying your email will put you on the email newsletter list.

Rosemary g. Blethen, Editor
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