

# Weyanoke Wildlife Sanctuary *Pathways*

September, 2009



Here is **Hearts A'bustin** or **Strawberry Plant**, currently displaying in the Sanctuary. Look for Beauty Berry, Money Plant Pods, and numerous Indian Pipes, turtles, butterflies and caterpillars in the meadow, and Night Herons along the creek. Fall foliage promises spectacular color due to the plentiful rain all summer. Come and enjoy Nature's panorama!

## Reflections from our Chairperson, Phil Gillette:

After spending much of the summer in New Hampshire, I was struck the other day by many changes in the appearance of Weyanoke since my last visit. The Winterberry Holly that was planted as a memorial to Rob Bastone is now adorned with a profusion of red berries. The meadow garden with its Joe Pye Weed, milkweed, and other plants – which our migratory Monarch butterflies and other pollinators appreciate – are standing crowded and tall. Nearby on the border of the woods, the money plant's "dollars" have turned crisp and tawny. Close to them I marveled at a cluster of tall, spiky, glorious red blooms of the non-native Spider Lilly (allegedly a legacy of Mr. Robert Ruffin, who once cultivated what is now the meadow garden).

Deep in the woods, Indian Pipes are emerging from the soil – in amazing abundance. In contrast to last year's drought (which killed some cherry trees), we've had a surfeit of rain – making for muddy places on some trails. The soft ground, I suspect, had a role in the toppling of a magnificent Live Oak into the creek. Curiously the oak has splintered into three parts: one splinter has fallen into the creek and its leaves have turned brown (it's finished); a second splinter has also fallen, yet its leaves remain green (maybe there's hope); and a third segment remains tall and upright (perhaps it will fill out and in time provide a fuller canopy). I heard a reliable report of a sighting of a Baltimore Oriole at the sanctuary – which is reminder of the value of the sanctuary as a home to migratory birds who use us as a stopover and haven, rather than as a permanent residence. Why not come see all this? *Phil Gillette*

Mark your Calendars! Weyanoke's Fall Open House is Sunday, October 18th, from 2 - 5 p.m. Tour the gardens and paths, enjoy light refreshments, and visit with friends and neighbors.



Girl Scout Troop #397

**Chair's report:** All in all, last year at Weyanoke was a good year! Financially we exceeded our Annual Fund target, raised more money than we spent, and ended the year on June 30 with an endowment of \$41,842 and a balance in our checkbook of \$5,612. Programmatically the sanctuary profited from the generous efforts of school groups, boy and girl scouts, and adult volunteers from the neighboring community. Practically we inched closer to reaching a satisfactory lease agreement with the City of Norfolk permitting a multi-use trail to be built on edge of the sanctuary.

The year ahead should bring significant benefits from the Weyanoke Committee's recent reorganization. Three facets of this change deserve comment. First we expanded the committee by adding four new members (Debora Mosher, Tiffany Plomgren, Gray Puryear, and Mike Schoen) in order to bring us increased energy. Second, the chair's role was redefined. While remaining as chair for the coming year, I plan to delegate certain of my previous tasks so as to concentrate on achieving our mission and goals and to coordinate the work of others. Third and last, the Weyanoke Committee redistributed key jobs. For example, Nancy Milner will now edit *Pathways*, Tiffany Plomgren will coordinate the Annual Appeal, Mike Schoen will assist Tiffany with the Annual Appeal, Debora Mosher will keep our mailing list, and Gray Puryear will act as Assistant Treasurer. I believe that our bigger Committee and new operating mode will be a more sustainable management model for Weyanoke over the long haul. *Phil Gillette*

### **Woody Woodard's Operations Report:**

Spring 2009 was an active season at Weyanoke with numerous volunteer groups, several planned tours of local children, our Earth Day Open House on April 19 and the Audubon Members' Picnic on June 20.

The Elizabeth River Project scheduled three work days at the Sanctuary for the planting of Spartinas in the wetlands of Lambert's Creek, our inlet from the Elizabeth River. Supervised by Princess Elizabeth herself and assisted by Pam Boatwright, wetlands specialist Jim Cahoon and numerous teachers and parents 30 students from Christ the King school in Norfolk planted on April 3, a dozen Nauticus Home Schoolers were here on April 23 and 28 students from the Portsmouth schools I.C. Norcom and William E. Waters completed the seasonal plantings on May 5. All of this work is intended to deter the growth of the invasive and quite noxious reed phragmitis in the creek bed. Progress is being made thanks to the efforts of these young people and their sponsor. We look forward to their continuing efforts in the coming year.



Boy Scout Troop #1 from Norfolk made visits to the Sanctuary on April 5 and May 24. Guided by troop leader David Blake the group completed the spreading of wood chips on the two garden paths, a task they began last year. They continued the pulling of English ivy along the creek bed and successfully completed a special project of adding legs and supports to a 10-foot bench seat donated to the Sanctuary in 2008. It's been a real pleasure to have these boys, their leaders and parents assist in maintenance these last two years and we hope they will continue to support with their youth and energy.

First time volunteers this spring were a dozen young ladies, members of Girl Scout Troop #397. On May 3, headed by Virginia Harvey and supported by other parents, this group handled the planting of numerous native plants in various locations within the Sanctuary. With the help of adequate rain these plants are thriving nicely and will be part of our efforts to create a native plant environment. Our thanks to Troop #397 and hope they will want to continue their relationship with Weyanoke.



Students from the Ghent Montessori School in Norfolk visited on April 1 for a tour of the Sanctuary while a planned tour by Cub Scout Pack #31 on May 11 had to be canceled due to rain. Tours can be great fun and educational for the young and we look forward to more of these in the future.

On Sunday, April 19 the Sanctuary held its Spring Open House to celebrate Earth Day. The weather was ideal, the woodland garden in its spring glory. An estimated 90 persons came to Weyanoke to welcome in the season and to celebrate and learn the message of Earth Day. Congratulations to our Master Gardener volunteers!

On a hot and humid Saturday, June 20, following the monthly bird and nature walk led by Susan Hubbard and David Hughes, the annual Members Picnic was held in the clearing of the Sanctuary, hosted by Ruth Anne Childres. Even with the steamy weather an estimated 30 persons enjoyed David's grill of hamburgers and hot dogs. And many delicious dishes were brought by members and their guests. A special treat was the presence of Joan Taylor, one of the founding members of the Sanctuary over 30 years ago. Despite the weather the general consensus was that the 2009 Members Picnic was as successful as any, with good food and excellent company.



**Susan Hubbard leads the Nature Walk on the third Saturday of each month at 9 a.m. Here are her reports. Meet at the gate if you would like to join us!**

**Nature Walk, April 18** Today was the perfect day to walk through the Sanctuary with Phil, Woody, Anne Prince, Tiffany and four new visitors. One was a 7 year old boy who enjoyed climbing on the live oaks down by the creek as well as looking for birds. We first walked through the Woodland Gardens and admired the many blue flowers....Native Phlox and Valeria mainly. We noted an Adamascus Lily just coming up, a Dwarf Iris, many Spring Beauties, Pale Violets, Columbine, and Native Honeysuckle. We saw a number of Yellow-rump Warblers, Brown Thrashers, a Downy Woodpecker, several Hermit Thrushes. The hawk was seen flying over as we began our walk. The usual Cardinals, Jays, Chickadees were around also. The weather was perfect.

**May 16** In spite of the rain we had a good walk on Saturday morning. Attending were Phil, Woody, Anne P., Tiffany, Nancy and I. We were joined by Martha and John Stewart, a most pleasant couple who are active in saving the wetlands in Norfolk as well as other environmental issues. Birds were scarce, but we admired the lush growth throughout the Weyanoke, the pink blossoms on the blackberry bushes, the Solomon's- seal, the many ferns, the ripe purple mulberries (very tasty), and also the white mulberries and the enormous elm tree.

Saturday, **July 18** was lovely. A rain the night before made everything look green and lush. We had three guests, first time visitors, who seemed to enjoy everything. Birds were scarce..... robins, blue jays, cardinals, house wren, Carolina wren, catbirds, and towhee. Also not many flowers in bloom but the green lushness of the woodland garden made it very special. The many varieties of ferns were particularly beautiful. In the meadow we had Butterfly weed, Joe Pye weed, one Passion vine blossom, and bee-balm. Also, there were lots of trumpet vine throughout the Sanctuary. (And lots of blackberries which we have enjoyed picking and eating!) Along with the three guests were Woody, Nancy, Anne Prince, Anne Brooke and I.

Our Walk on Saturday, **August 15**, was very good in spite of the weather (a little bit of rain). We had four new people, plus Anne Brooke and Woody. Actually there were very few birds, meaning there must have been a hawk hovering in the area. We admired a few blooming flowers, particularly one Passion Vine blossom in the meadow, the Iron Weed, Joe Pie Weed and Phlox. We noted that all the new plants and shrubs on the hill are flourishing. One distressing thing- a large part of one of the Live Oaks by the creek as fallen into the creek.

On **September 19**, Phil, Woody, Tiffany and I had a very pleasant walk this morning on a cloudy, warm day. Birds were scarce. We are afraid the resident hawks are keeping the birds quiet. We did see two immature Yellow Crowned Night Herons down by the creek. That and a cardinal were it! We spent some time in the Woodland Garden, admiring the large number of Obedient plants which seem to have moved all over the garden. Also, the Strawberry Bush was at its peak...just beautiful! And the Beauty Berries, and lots of Turtleheads too. We walked back through the woods noting the new plantings. At the creek side we again bemoaned the loss of a large part of the Live Oak. We saw the American Elm which seems to get bigger every day. Most impressive of all was the abundance of Indian Pipes seen all through the pine woods..... in clumps and also alone. Amazing! In the Meadow we saw several Monarch Butterflies, and many Sulfurs. We admired the blooming Asters and Ironweed.



Indian Pipes are blooming in the Sanctuary in September and October. Look on the forest floor.

The Weyanoke Sanctuary Committee is composed of volunteers: Anne Brooke, Linda Cameron, Phil Gillette (*Chair*), Susan Hubbard, Nancy Milner, **Debora Mosher**, **Tiffany Plomgren**, Anne Prince, **Gray Puryear**, **Mike Schoen**, Hil Strode, and Woody Woodard. **Bold** names are new members, and we have room for more! Weyanoke Sanctuary is supported by contributions, is part of the Cape Henry Audubon Society, and sections have been tended by Master Gardeners. The gates are open on weekends for visitors, and group tours can be arranged. Call Mike Schoen at (757) 390-4099, Susan Hubbard, 625-1907, or Woody Woodard, 625-0776. Editor of this newsletter: Nancy Milner, 692-0955

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