



# The Norman Bird Flyer

VOLUME NO. 6 ISSUE 3

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

## THE JOY OF WILDFLOWERS

We are printing this segment of Millie House's book, The Joy of Wildflowers, illustrated by Lucia deLeiris, with the permission of the publishers, Prentice-Hall Books. Of special note is the projected Spring '86 publishing date. The book will not be available until then, but at the time of its availability, we will notify our membership. The book will also be on sale in the Sanctuary bookstore.

Millie House is a Bristol, R.I., native with many years of nature study under her belt. She has taught thousands of Rhode Island school children about nature and now is an instructor of natural history at Roger Williams College.

Millie has for many years been associated with the Norman Bird Sanctuary. Her daughter, Cindy House, did the original artwork for the old museum here.

Lucia deLeiris has lived here on the island for many years and has a long association with the Norman Bird Sanctuary. She is a well-regarded water-colorist, teaches water-color at the Newport Art Museum, and illustrates for Dover, Prentice-Hall, and other book publishers. Her most recent project is a planned trip to Antarctica, coming next winter. The trip is funded by a grant from the National Science Foundation. From her experiences, Lucia will publish a book of artwork and journal writings through Smithsonian Books.



July brings many interesting wild flowers in the fields, roadsides, and sterile places, and along with them a host of insects that feed on them.

There are a number of milkweeds, named so because of the milky sap which exudes when any part of the plant is broken. The one we most apt to see is the common milkweed - Asclepias syriaca - Milkweed family. The flowers are small - 1/2 inch wide - with 5 turned-back petals in shades of pink, lavender and brown. They are found in a rounded cluster terminally or growing out of the

## Summer, 1985

junction of the leaf and stem. It is a tall, rugged plant, up to 6 feet tall or more, with large leaves oval shaped, grey-green, with the undersides covered with fine hairs. The seed pods are very interesting, 3 inches long and warty on the outside. When they open in the fall, each seed has a tiny parachute which carries it off into the wind. Although the plant is toxic, the early shoots are edible and can be used as a green vegetable. It is found growing from southern Canada south to Georgia and west to Iowa.

There are many species of St. Johnswort, but the one that you would be most apt to see is the common St. Johnswort - Hypericum perforatum - St. Johnswort family. It was introduced from Europe. It is thought to bloom on St. John's Day, hence the name. The flowers are up to 1 inch wide, bright yellow, with 5 petals in a perfect circle with numerous yellow stamens. The leaves are narrow or oblong 1 to 2 inches long and covered with translucent dots, a trade mark of St. Johns-



*Tansy*

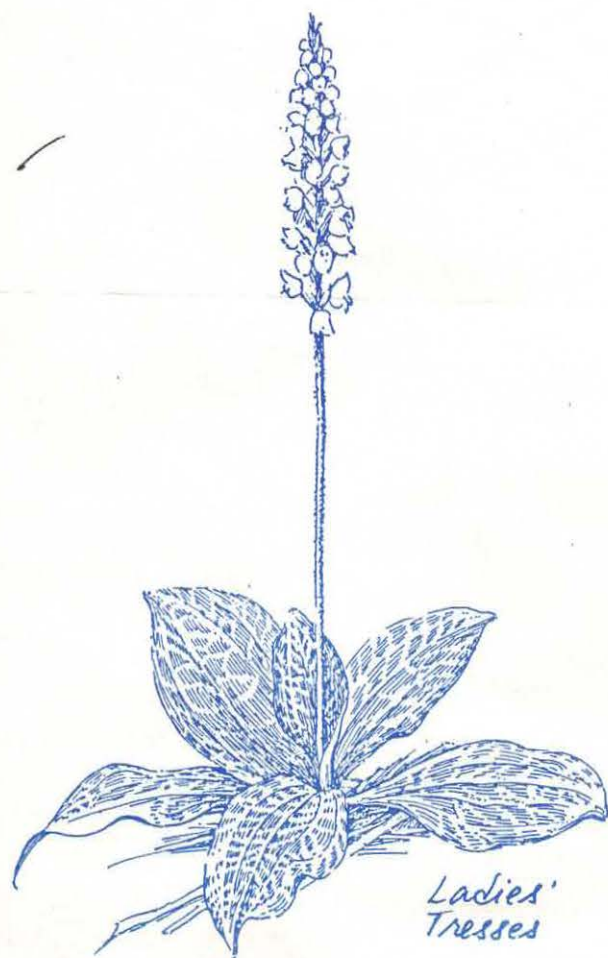


# Wildflowers, cont.

wort family. It grows up to 2-1/2 feet tall and is found in fields and roadsides over most of the eastern United States.

A group of Great Mullien - Verbascum thapsis - Snapdragon family - growing together by the side of the road or in an open field is a spectacular sight. It has tall wooly stems over 6 feet tall with bright yellow, 5-petalled, nearly regular flowers growing in tight clusters growing up the stem. The stem grows from a basal rosette of large grey-green oval leaves. It was brought from Europe, probably because it was thought to have many medicinal qualities as well as others essential to living. The Quaker ladies used to rub their faces with the leaves to put a glow on it, since they were forbidden to use cosmetics. It is found from Maine to North Carolina, west to Iowa, and north to Minnesota.

Evening primrose - Oenothera biennis - Evening primrose family. This is a plant of the fields, roadsides and waste places. It blooms from the end of June well into Fall. The interesting part is that you might not see it in bloom. As the name suggests, it starts to bloom at twilight and closes as the day brightens because its pollinators are night-flying moths. As the season progresses, however, it changes its blooming to



daytime and there are a number of reasons for this. The blooms are 1 to 2 inches across with 4 equal petals growing terminally in clusters at the end of the main stem. The plant is up to 5 feet tall. Its leaves are lanceolate up to 8 inches long and slightly serrated. Another interesting fact is that in the late summer when the blooms are open during the day, there is a yellow and pink night-flying moth that sleeps its day out in the blossom. It is found throughout the eastern United States.

Steeple bush - Spirea tomentosa - Rose family. Looking at the plant, it does not look much like a rose bush. It is actually a shrub and perhaps should not be included here, but it is so often found in a field of wild flowers that it therefore seems necessary to include it. It is a straight bush 2 to 4 feet high with tiny pink, 5-petalled rose-like flowers 1/4 inch in diameter growing in a compact spire up the stem. The stems are reddish brown and wooly. Its leaves are 1 to 2 inches long and oblong and serrated along edge with brownish hairs underneath. It ranges from southern Canada south to Georgia and west to Arkansas and northwards.

Jimson weed - Datura stramonium - Nightshade family, which includes tomatoes, but unlike tomatoes it is highly poisonous. It is a tall rugged plant up to 5 feet tall with a smooth stem. Its flowers are large white trumpets with 5 petals that are fused. The leaves are large and oval and irregularly serrated. It was introduced from Central America. It ranges throughout the whole area.

August is the time when the goldenrods makes their appearance. There are about 100 species in the United States. This is strictly an American flower. A few species have made their way into Europe. It is a much maligned plant for people associate it with hay fever, but goldenrod is unable to spread its pollen because it is sticky and cannot fly around. It is the ragweed that blooms at the same time that is the culprit.

Early goldenrod - Solidago juncae - Composite family. It is one of the first to bloom, even in late July. Its flowers are tiny with both yellow ray and disc flowers growing on branching stems near the top of the main stem. Its leaves are broadly lance and sharply serrated. The stem is smooth and green. It grows 2 to 4 feet high. It is found from Nova Scotia south to North Carolina and west to Minnesota.

Tall goldenrod - Solidago altissima - Composite Family. It is one of the commonest goldenrods and also one of the tallest to 7 feet tall. Its tiny yellow flowers are 1/16



# DIRECTORS' NOTES

inch in diameter and are found on outward curving stems at the top of the main stem. The leaves are long and narrow, rough on the undersides, but wooly underneath and slightly toothed. Its range covers the eastern half of United States as well as southern Canada.

The slender ladies tresses - Sparanthes gracilis - Orchid family. You can find this growing in fields in August. The orchid-like flowers, white with a green throat are very small, less than 1/2 inch long, arranged spirally up a long narrow stem which rises from a basal rosette of oval or egg-shaped leaves. It ranges from Nova Scotia southwest to Texas and north to Minnesota.

The common tansy - Taracitum vulgare - Composite family. This was brought from Europe because it was thought to have many medicinal properties, which sometimes proved fatal. Unlike most of the members of the Composite family, it has only disc flowers about 1/2 inch wide growing in a flat-topped cluster, growing terminally on the main stem to over 4 feet tall. Its leaves are 4 to 8 inches long and are deeply serrated. They have a very strong odor. It is well established all over the United States.

Pearly everlasting - Anaphalis margaritacea - whose tiny white flowers are globular and look like a cluster of pearls at the end of the stem. They are a 1/4 inch wide disc flower with white bristles or bracts encircling the disc. It grows about 1 to 3 feet high with leaves of greenish white. Its leaves are long and narrow, up to 5 inches long. Because they dry very nicely, they are often used in dried flower arrangements. Male and female flowers are found on separate plants. It is found in open sandy places, fields and roadsides. It ranges from Canada across the United States to North Carolina and west to Kansas.

My wife Delia and I will be leaving our posts in August to begin new endeavors in the hinterlands of Connecticut. Delia has already started as Director of the New Canaan Nature Center's Children's Programs. I will be attending the School of Forestry and Environmental Studies at Yale University in New Haven to earn a Master's Degree.

We have enjoyed the past five years of life at NBS immensely, and leave with sadness the many friends we have made here and the refuge land itself.

Special thanks are due to you, the Sanctuary membership, for growing with the Sanctuary over the past five years; participating in special events like the Art Fair, Birds and Breakfast, and, of course, the Harvest Fair; for renewing your membership every year; and for generally appreciating the very special nature of the Sanctuary: A beautiful tract of land thoughtfully preserved for wildlife and plants and the many future generations of Aquidneck Islanders to come.

The Advisory Committee has done a thorough search for a new Director and is near the point of deciding on their person. As in the past, the new Director will need support through your volunteer efforts, participation in programs, and your membership renewal.

There are some very exciting projects in store for the Sanctuary in the coming years. A new house has been purchased and renovated for the Director, the Museum project has received some funding in the form of a \$15,000 matching grant from the Rhode Island Foundation, and new areas of educational programming wait to be developed.

Keep the Ball Rolling!

## WHAT'S IN THE REFUGE?

Ducks are nesting back in Maple Swamp Pond this summer. A female Mallard and six ducklings were observed nibbling the tiny duckweed plants in the Pond's southeast corner. They hightailed it back into the flooded woods when the observers approached.

A Great-horned Owllet was studied all Spring atop its cedar tree nest site. It grew up and subsequently out of the nest in late May.

Observed in flower in a little known spot on the Blue Trail was Herb Robert, Geranium robertianum. This flower is infrequent in Rhode Island, State heritage biologist Chris Raithel informed us on his recent visit here to verify a record of the flower dating back to the 1930's.





# SUMMER NEWS

Nature Day Camp this year will be directed by Lisa Pritchard. Lisa is a Portsmouth native who earned her Bachelor of Arts Degree from the University of Vermont. She is a three-year veteran counselor of Nature Day Camp and has most recently organized and taught public school programs for Save-the-Bay, Inc.

Lisa is especially strong in the areas of nature crafts, including Batik, Basket weaving with natural materials, and paper making. Ask her how to make a Kaleidoscope!

Lisa informs us that, while Nature Day Camp weeks are all full, there is still some room in Summer Challenge sessions. These are for youngsters in 5th through 7th grades. Call her for more information.

David Narciso will supervise up to 10 CETA funded youths here this summer. "It's hard work," says David, "and the kids don't always love it, especially when clearing thorns out of the trail. But they learn to work together - to come to work on time. It has its fun moments, too."

This summer's crew will be using Newport Garden Club funds to build a bird blind by the pond, and a new trail is planned for the East side of the refuge.

David Narciso's salary is funded by grants from the Newport Lions Club, the Newport Rotary Club, and Aquidneck Island Ecology. Many thanks to all who have participated in this project. Over the past four summers, over 40 youths have worked part-time in the refuge.

This Summer, callers with questions regarding injured or orphaned animals will be aided by Ann Potter, an animal care specialist the Sanctuary will have on hand.

Ann will care for our resident animals and will supervise volunteers in animal care. She is looking for 5 VOLUNTEERS IN 8th OR 9th Grade TO WORK WITH HER ON ANIMAL CARE. Call her if you are interested and she will arrange an interview and training.

The Sanctuary will act as a clearing house for information and aid but, in general, will not be able to accept wild animals for rehabilitation. If you are interested in learning more about our policies and philosophies concerning animal care, please feel free to call.



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