



# TENNESSEE NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

Volume 43, Number 3

September 2019

## May Prairie State Natural Area Coffee County July 20, 2019

About 20 participants gathered for this summer outing at the May Prairie SNA. This was again a joint outing with the newly organized Middle TN Wild Ones. The plant of focus was the rare Snowy Orchid (*Platanthera nivea*). We were relieved to find many plants still fresh, even though flowering had begun as early as July 9 this year. Of note, Chuck Wilson reported finding this plant recently in Warren County, its first known occurrence outside of May Prairie in Tennessee.

As we were entering the Prairie we were greeted by Hairy Wild Petunia (*Ruellia humilis*) and Mitrewort (*Mitreola petiolata*). Once in the Prairie we began to see Sundrops (*Oenothera fruticosa*), the rare Hairy Water Primrose (*Ludwigia hirtella*), Maryland Meadow Beauty (*Rhexia mariana*), Cross-Leaf Milkwort (*Polygala cruciata*) and Swamp Rose Mallow (*Hibiscus moscheutos*).



SNOWY ORCHID  
(*PLATANTHERA NIVEA*)  
BY RICHARD HITT

Further into the Prairie we found Whorled Rosinweed (*Silphium trifoliatum*), Shaggy Rosinweed (*S. mohrii*) – an endemic to TN, AL, and GA, Winged Loosestrife (*Lythrum alatum*), Coppery St. Johnswort (*Hypericum denticulatum*), .....

Cont'd on page 4

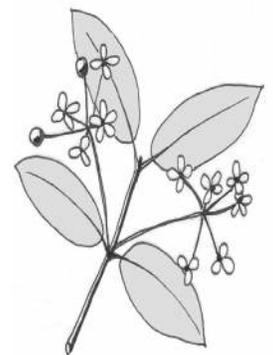
## Searching for Nestronia: A Tennessee Rare Plant

Middle Tennesseans, here's a plant sighting to add to your bucket list: *Nestronia umbellula*, which goes by several common names including leechbrush, conjurer's-nut, and Indian olive. So far, we have not seen this small endangered shrub growing on the Sewanee Domain, but there are populations nearby. In Tennessee it is known to inhabit only six counties, three of those right around Sewanee: Marion and Grundy counties on the Cumberland Plateau and Coffee County on the neighboring Eastern Highland Rim.

*Nestronia umbellula* is an unusual little plant. First, it is a green, photosynthesizing shrub that taps into the roots of surrounding trees for additional nutrients. Second, it is dioecious, meaning that any one plant will produce either male or female flowers, never both. Third, it is clonal, with all plants in the clone genetically identical and linked underground.

This plant then, grows in clones of male or female plants, all of which are connected underground to each other and to the trees they are parasitizing.

At first glance, *Nestronia* looks a bit like a blueberry bush, but on closer examination the plant's opposite leaf arrangement differentiates it from.....



NESTRONIA TWIG

Cont'd on page 5

# TNPS Newsletter

This newsletter is a publication of the Tennessee Native Plant Society and is published four times a year, generally in February, June, August, and November.

The Tennessee Native Plant Society (TNPS) was founded in 1978. Its purposes are to assist in the exchange of information and encourage fellowship among Tennessee's botanists, both amateur and professional; to promote public education about Tennessee flora and wild plants in general; to provide, through publication of a newsletter or journal, a formal means of documenting information on Tennessee flora and of informing the public about wild plants; and to promote the protection and enhancement of Tennessee's wild plant communities.

Dues for each calendar year are:

Regular: \$20

Student: Complimentary

Institution: \$50

Life: \$250

Dues may be sent to:

Tennessee Native Plant Society

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Nashville, TN 37215

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Please send comments and material for the TNPS newsletter to  
djhilgem@gmail.com

## *A Letter from the President*

Hello Everyone,

If you missed the annual Meeting, you missed a GREAT experience. We had wonderful plants and weather. I think everyone enjoyed the pontoon boat ride. We were able to see plants, reptiles and birds. My favorite being the American bald eagle. If you haven't been to Reelfoot Lake, plan to go when you can see the eagles too. Thanks to Bart Jones who did all the hard work organizing this meeting. Also, thanks to our wonderful speakers, Rita Venable and Dr. Tom Blanchard.

We still have some great plant trips on the schedule. I want to take this time to thank all of our leaders. We wouldn't have field trips without you. I always learn something new when I go out with our TNPS folks. You can learn plants as well as birds and butterflies !!

See you on the trails,



Susan

865-938-7627

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MARYLAND GOLDEN-ASTER  
(*CHRYSOPSIS MARIANA*)

BY DAVID HILGEMAN

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# Call for Volunteers

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Some of us native plant enthusiasts may have the most chronic cases of rubbernecking on the highway. As we whiz by at 50 miles per hour, we crane our necks at blurred flushes of color more often than at unfortunate roadside mishaps. We might think to ourselves, “That flash of violet was probably just a short *Vernonia*, but could it have been a *Liatris*?” just before being jolted back to our high-speed reality by the violent but life-saving tremor of our tires crossing onto the rumble strip.

If that describes you, there is now an excuse to put your rubbernecking to good use! This year, the Southeastern Grasslands Initiative embarked on a project funded by the Tennessee Department of Transportation to find and document high quality grassland remnants and pollinator habitat along Tennessee’s highway system. These grassland communities are an increasingly rare site throughout the Southeast. There is an urgent need to find and document these unique habitats now, so that we can begin working to protect them before they disappear. Part of the grant involves working with TDOT to develop a roadside vegetation management plan so that these areas can be properly protected and managed.

As you can imagine, there are a lot of miles to cover, so we’re asking for the help of citizen scientists of all sorts who can help us locate these roadside grasslands. We welcome naturalists of all levels, from professional botanists to amateurs. The program relies heavily on a very easy-to-use (and free!) smartphone app called iNaturalist to log observations—participation requires little more than snapping photos on your smartphone and uploading them to iNaturalist. If you’d like to learn more about the program, contact Cooper Breeden at [cooper.breeden@segrasslands.org](mailto:cooper.breeden@segrasslands.org).



VIEW OF INTERSTATE 40  
SUBMITTED BY SOUTHEASTERN  
GRASSLANDS INITIATIVE

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## Follow the Tennessee Native Plant Society on Social Media and Submit your Photos!

### New accounts include:

- Twitter - We are the Tennessee Native Plant Society@plant\_native.
- Instagram – TNPS@plant\_native
- Use hash tag #tn native plant for both Twitter and Instagram.

### Instructions for submitting content:

- Tweets can be photos but are composed of an 140 word maximum. Tweets can contain links. Items for Instagram must be in the form of a photo or graphic and cannot contain links - only information.

Please send content and photos to Jennifer Trently at [jmtrently@gmail.com](mailto:jmtrently@gmail.com)!

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# Trip Report



GROUP SHOT BY RICHARD HITT

*May Prairie* cont'd from page 1.... Narrow-leaf Mountain Mint (*Pycnanthemum tenuifolium*), and Prairie Milkweed (*Asclepias hirtella*). George Wallace also found Swamp Milkweed (*A. incarnata*), Blue Hearts (*Buchnera Americana*), Twisted Yellow-eyed Grass (*Xyris torta*), and five species of thoroughwort (*Eupatorium spp.*).

Across to the inside of the horseshoe-shaped Prairie we found a large colony of the endangered Coastal False Asphodel (*Tofieldia racemosa*, now *Triantha racemosa*) – a Coastal Plain species found only at May Prairie in Tennessee. We also saw Dense Blazing Star (*Liatris spicata*) and the rare Virginia Goldenrod (*Solidago austrina* or *S. gracillima*) – found in Tennessee only in Coffee County. Both were still in bud.

Dennis Horn



SHAGGYROSINWEED  
(*SILPHIUM MOHRII*)  
BY RICHARD HITT



SWAMP MILKWEED  
(*ASCLEPIAS INCARNATA*)  
BY GEORGE WALLACE



Do you have photos from trips you'd like to share? Are you interested in other TNPS News? Stay up to date and follow us on facebook! [facebook.com/tennesseenativeplantsociety](https://facebook.com/tennesseenativeplantsociety)

# Rare Plant

*Nestronia* cont'd from page 1.... alternate-leaved blueberries. It also slightly resembles sweet shrub, but the latter is larger, more robust, and has a distinctive spicy fragrance.

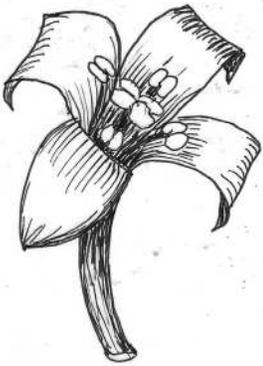
William Bartram was first to describe *Nestronia*, which he found growing in Georgia in 1773. He made a drawing and commented in his *Travels* that when “the Indians go in pursuit of deer, they carry this fruit with them, supposedly with the power of charming the animal to them.”

Today, because of human development, the colonies are more isolated than in Bartram’s day, and fruiting plants are extremely rare. Last year, Jason Reynolds, a ranger at South Cumberland State Park came across what may be the largest *Nestronia* clone in the state.

Dennis Horn, author of *Wildflowers of Tennessee, the Ohio Valley, and the Southern Appalachians*, was the first to discover *Nestronia* in Tennessee in 1982. Lucky for me, he wanted to check out Jason’s newly-discovered population and invited me to come along this past May.



DENNIS HORN COMPARING  
*NESTRONIA UMBELLULA*  
WITH  
*CALYCANTHUS FLORIDUS*



FEMALE FLOWER

Thanks to Jason’s clear directions, we found the population right away on the escarpment overlooking Savage Gulf State Natural Area. Blueberry and sweetshrub were intermixed – a good opportunity to discriminate between these look-alikes. All of the plants were male, many in bloom. Each flower had between three and five petal-like tepals. The flowers of male clones occur in umbels of 3-10 flowers, whereas the female flowers are solitary and are about twice the size of male flowers.

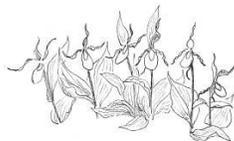
The overall range for *Nestronia* includes Alabama, Georgia, the Carolinas, and Virginia, where the largest numbers of plants (clones) occur in the Piedmont. Although rare, female clones (flowers sometimes perfect) can occasionally be found in this region.

Throughout *Nestronia*’s range, approximately 10% of the clones are female. No female plants have been discovered in Tennessee, but surely they exist in our state, possibly even on the Domain. So keep your eyes peeled, fellow botanizers. Discovering a new population of this rarity — especially one composed of females — would be a real feat!

Mary Priestley with Dennis Horn  
(This article first appeared in the Summer 2019 issue of *The Sewanee Plant Press*)



*NESTRONIA*  
FRUIT



# Summer Trip Report

## Auto Tour Along the New Foothills Parkway Extension July 27, 2019

We had a beautiful day and 4 curious folks attend. Allen had made several trips to try to find special plants and/or special places to walk. This is a new finished road cut in the ridge and valley system. We did see some beautiful views and had some folks new to TNPS. They were appreciative of the plant list that Allen had developed. If you are in the area, drive the new extension. There are beautiful views and the road is not too busy

We saw several summer bloomers, some yet to bloom, and some past bloom. Carolina Lily – *Lilium michauxii* was past bloom while Appalachian Sunflower – *Helianthus atrorubens* was not quite in bloom. Other plants of interest were Stiff haired Sunflower – *Helianthus hirsutus*, Southern Rosinweed – *Silphium asteriscus*, Lesser Prairie Dock – *Silphium compositum*, Wild Quinine – *Parthenium integrifolium*, Hairy Angelica – *Angelica venosa*, and Spurred Butterfly Pea – *Centrosema virginianum*.

We got off the Parkway for a late lunch at the market in Walland and then went on to the Parkway and drove towards Look Rock. You always seem to see something different on the way back and we spotted Yellow-fringed Orchid – *Plantanthera ciliaris* along the road. Thanks to Tobe, Ole and Trish and Steve for joining us for the day.

- Susan Sweetser



PHOTO

BY SUSAN SWEETSER



YELLOW-FRINGED ORCHID  
(*PLANTANTHERA CILIARIS*)

BY SUSAN SWEETSER



# Summer Trip Report

About 25 of us gathered at Wendy's in Manchester for this outing. We first traveled to AEDC to see the orchids flowering under the power lines. We immediately found Ragged Fringed Orchid (*Platanthera lacera*), Rose Pogonia (*Pogonia ophioglossoides*), and Grass Pink (*Calopogon tuberosus*) near the highway. Further in were a few scattered blooms of Spreading Pogonia (*Cleistosiopsis bifaria*). Off into the edge of the woods we found one huge Green Adder's Mouth (*Malaxis unifolia*) in flower, and several Pink Lady's-Slippers (past) and Large Whorled Pogonias not in flower. Total 7 orchids found that day.

Other plants in flower were Death Camas (*Stenanthium tennesseense*, formerly *Zigadenus leimanthoides*), Hyssop-Leaved Skullcap (*Scutellaria integrifolia*), Sampson's Snakeroot (*Orbexilum pedunculatum*), Whorled Loosestrife (*Lysimachia quadrifolia*), Goat's Rue (*Tephrosia virginiana*), and in the wooded edge were Swamp Haw (*Viburnum nudum*) and Virginia Willow or Sweet Spire (*Itea virginica*). Back under the power line we found a beautiful Cecropia moth, wings spread,

posing for a photograph.

On the way to lunch several stopped to photograph Pickerelweed (*Pontederia cordata*) in a ditch along the AEDC highway. After lunch we headed for May Prairie. The prairie had been burned sometime during the past 6 months and the larger red maples had been cut, all done to keep the woody plants in check. In the prairie we found Marsh Pea (*Lathyrus palustris*), Swamp Candles (*Lysimachia terrestris*), Horned Bladderwort (*Utricularia cornuta*), all rare plants in flower. We also found *Phlox glaberrima*, Sun Drops (*Oenothera fruticosa*), Blue Wild Indigo (*Baptisia australis*) fruits and one plant in flower, Cumberland Rosinweed (*Silphium mohrii*), Mock Bishopweed (*Ptilimnium costatum*), and lots of Colic Root (*Aletris farinosa*) mostly past flowering.

Dennis Horn



SWAMP MILKWEED  
(*ASCLEPIAS INCARNATA*)  
GEORGE WALLACE

## Bledsoe State Forest Cumberland Plateau September 7, 2019

Seven of us braved the sun to see those very beautiful wildflowers. Prominent were hollow Joe-Pye weed, many types of goldenrod, tall iron weed, narrow leaf sunflower, downy lobelia, southern prairie aster, late purple aster, dolly's daisy, tall flat-topped white aster and southern blazing star. We saw these along a TVA powerline right-of-way where the habitat was prairie-like. We discussed how TVA is trying to preserve prairie type habitat along this line and other ones.

Larry Pounds



TNPS and TCWP folks joined together to enjoy the fall flowers in Bledsoe State Forest. Usually our fall wildflower event is later in the year. We paid for our early date with hot conditions but we got to see many flowers in their prime.

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# Remaining Hikes in 2019

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9/21 - Hike the Tennessee Valley Authority's Lady's Bluff Trail (Leader Allan Trently)

10/26 - Late Fall at Carroll Cabin Barrens State Natural Area (Leader Bart Jones)

RSVP information and other details can be found at  
*[www.tnps.org](http://www.tnps.org)*.

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## When Dues Are Due?

Unless you are an email subscriber, check your mailing label for your membership date. You are paid through the year listed just above your name. You can pay TNPS dues at any time, and now you can pay online at the TNPS Website. Just go to [www.tnps.org](http://www.tnps.org), click "Membership," and follow directions there. If your address has changed, you can email the new address to [info@tnps.org](mailto:info@tnps.org). We cannot print the newsletter in full color, but you may be pleased to find all the color in email copies and at the website. *[www.tnps.org](http://www.tnps.org)*

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