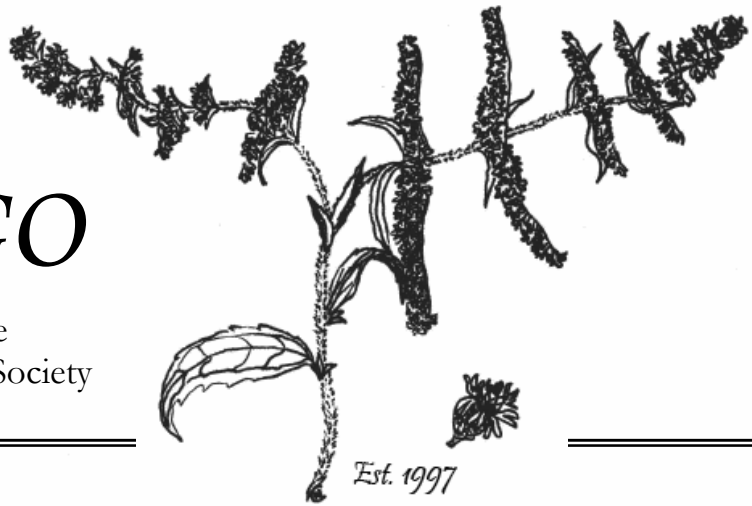


# SOLIDAGO

The Newsletter of the  
Finger Lakes Native Plant Society



Volume 12, No. 4      December 2011

## **Prairie Senna (*Chamaecrista fasciculata*)** **New to the Cayuga Lake Basin Flora**

by Robert Dirig

I might as well begin by saying that this is mostly a butterfly story, but with a lot of information about associated plants — including one that is apparently new to the region's flora.

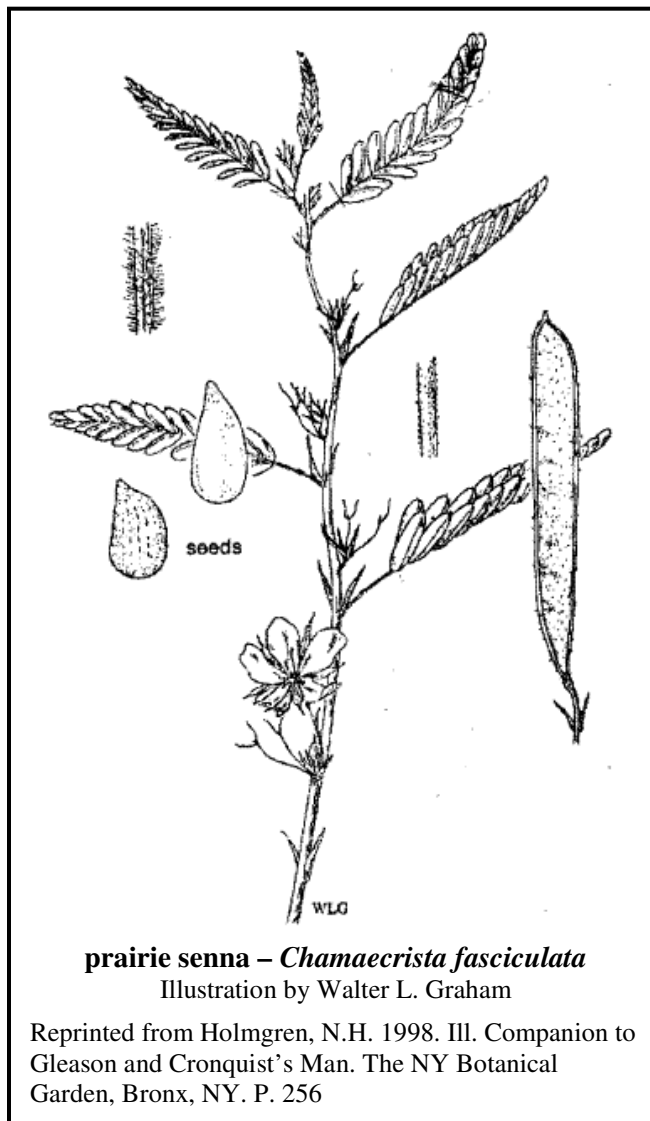
August 26<sup>th</sup> 2011 was warm (76°F.) and humid, with clouds clearing to lovely blue sky and rafts of cumulus blowing over between 2:15 and 3:45 p.m. That afternoon, I visited the Finger Lakes Land Trust's **Goetchius Wetland Preserve** on Flat Iron Road, north of Rt. 79 in Caroline, Tompkins County, N.Y., for the first time. Charlie Smith had recommended it to me, having found three unexpected southern butterflies there on August 18<sup>th</sup> — **Variegated Fritillaries** (*Euptoieta claudia*, A\*), **Common Buckeyes** (*Junonia coenia*, B\*), and **Common Checkered Skippers** (*Pyrgus communis*, C\*). All three may move north of their usual range in the Southeast in summer, and migrate south in early autumn. The Checkered Skipper is often locally present or even intermittently resident in the Ithaca area, but the other two are unusual, the Buckeye being especially rare inland in New York, occurring most

commonly on and near the Atlantic Coastal Plain in this state. I knew that Buckeyes were having an unprecedented "boom year" in the Northeast in 2011, and had found them at Rock Cabin Road near Montour Falls in Schuyler County on and after July 9<sup>th</sup>, and at Cornell's McLean Bogs Preserve near Dryden in Tompkins County on August 16<sup>th</sup> (B\*). I had also seen frequent reports of Buckeyes

from eight nearby counties, and read butterfly lists posted on the *NYS Butterflies* email group of species seen at the Goetchius wetland, so was curious finally to see the site for myself.

I did not find any Buckeyes or Variegated Fritillaries, but there were about thirty Checkered Skippers zipping around, the most I've ever seen at once. This in itself was enough to make the trip worthwhile for me! Additional common butterflies I saw there included the Orange Sulphur (*Colias eurytheme*), Clouded Sulphur (*C. philodice*), Cabbage White (*Pieris rapae*), Common Ringlet (*Coenonympha inornata*), Black Swallowtail (*Papilio polyxenes asterius*), Eastern Tailed Blue (*Everes comyntas*), Least Skipper (*Ancyloxypha numitor*), Monarch (*Danaus plexippus*), Pearl Crescent (*Phyciodes tharos*), Silver-spotted Skipper (*Epargyreus clarus*), and American Lady (*Vanessa virginiensis*). This was a good

*continued on page 6*



**prairie senna – *Chamaecrista fasciculata***

Illustration by Walter L. Graham

Reprinted from Holmgren, N.H. 1998. Ill. Companion to Gleason and Cronquist's Man. The NY Botanical Garden, Bronx, NY. P. 256

## **BECOME A MEMBER OF FLNPS**

To become a member of FLNPS (suggested dues \$20 [\$10 students]) send your name, address, phone number, and email along with your dues to:

Finger Lakes Native Plant Society  
532 Cayuga Heights Road  
Ithaca, NY 14850  
THANKS!!!

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## **NEXT NEWSLETTER DEADLINE** **March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2012**

Please send items for the newsletter to David Werier, editor (email noted in box to the right). The deadline for the next newsletter is **Friday March 16<sup>th</sup>**. As always, we need your pieces to help make this newsletter lively, interesting, and informative. Items to send can include articles, stories, trip reports, drawings, photos, information on relevant upcoming events, letters to the editor, and more. Thanks again for your help in making this newsletter possible.

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## **THE FINGER LAKES NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY**

### **Steering Committee Members**

**Charlotte Acharya:** [redacted] at large  
**Krissy Faust:** [redacted] Projects (chair)  
**Meena Haribal:** interim webmeister  
[redacted]  
**Mark Inglis:** at large  
**David Keifer:** Treasurer  
**Rick Lightbody:** [redacted] at large  
**Susanne Lorbeer:** Outings and Education  
**Rosemarie Parker:** [redacted] Secretary and Assistant Newsletter Editor  
**Dan Segal:** [redacted] at large  
**Anna Stalter:** [redacted] [redacted] President, Outings & Education (chair)  
**David Werier:** [redacted] [redacted] Newsletter Editor  
**Bob Wesley:** Outings and Education

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**Send all correspondence regarding the newsletter to: David Werier, Editor, 30 Banks Rd., Brooktondale, NY 14817** [redacted] [redacted]

### **New Book - Spring Wildflowers**

A new book, which will likely be of interest to FLNPS members, is soon to be published. The book is titled "Spring Wildflowers of the Northeast" and is authored by Carol Gracie. For details see [http://books.google.com/books/about/Spring\\_Wildflowers\\_of\\_the\\_Northeast.html?id=QVHWcdDRU3cC](http://books.google.com/books/about/Spring_Wildflowers_of_the_Northeast.html?id=QVHWcdDRU3cC).

If you would like to review this book for *Solidago* please contact David Werier, editor. See contact information in the box above. Currently we do not have a review copy so you will have to purchase the book in order to write a review.

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### **The 12th Northeast Natural History Conference (NENHC)**

This conference promises again to be the largest regional forum for researchers, natural resource managers, students, and naturalists to present current information on the varied aspects of applied field biology (freshwater, marine, and terrestrial) and natural history for the Northeastern United States and adjacent Canada. It will serve as a premier venue to identify research and management needs, foster friendships and collegial relationships, and encourage a greater region-wide interest in natural history by bringing people with diverse backgrounds together. For more information visit [www.eaglehill.us/NENHC\\_2012/NENHC2012](http://www.eaglehill.us/NENHC_2012/NENHC2012)

## **FLNPS Educational Displays & Handouts –**

### **Can you help?**

by Rosemarie Parker

FLNPS has 3-4 standard displays for our information board when we “table” at an event. We have wildflower identifying games, invasives vs. natives, and a display on native maples vs. Norway maple. We also have many handouts that visitors can take with them. I’d like to compile a list of everything that we have, what needs updating, what is still fine, and then replace, renew, revise, eliminate. Actually, I’d love it if someone with a penchant for order would like to take on this task. I’m also looking for a few people to work on new displays, on new or old themes. Please let me know if you would be interested in helping FLNPS present a fresher, more current display.

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### **NAME THAT PLANT CONTEST**

The photo from last issue’s [Solidago 12(4)] name that plant contest was of American bittersweet (*Celastrus scandens*). A lot of excitement was raised by this plant and I received numerous interesting replies. I list a few of these here.

Steve Young of the New York Natural Heritage Program (NYNHP) wrote to inform me that the NYNHP keeps track of native populations of American bittersweet and would appreciate information people have regarding populations in New York (contact Steve at [smyoung@gw.dec.state.ny.us](mailto:smyoung@gw.dec.state.ny.us)

Bruce Gilman wrote: Your image in the latest issue is the American bittersweet (*Celastrus scandens*)! They are really beautiful as they open and disperse their seeds. The invasive oriental species (*Celastrus orbiculatus*) has become much more common in the wetland forest communities associated with the inlet and outlet areas of the western Finger Lakes.

Bob Dirig wrote: Your mystery plant this time (Volume 12, Number 4, Dec. 2011, pg. 2) is American bittersweet (*Celastrus scandens*), with unopened capsules clustered at the end of the vine. Where I grew up in the Catskills (southern Delaware & Sullivan Counties, N.Y.), we knew of a few plants growing along old stone walls and in hedgerows, and waited every year for the bright orange capsules to open, revealing the scarlet seeds. A few years later, I found luxuriant masses of vines along steep, south-facing banks of the Delaware River, clambering over shrubs of Staghorn Sumac, with its garnet-colored panicles of velvety drupes--probably the primeval habitat of both of these woody plants in the Delaware corridor. In the Finger Lakes Region, I have seen American bittersweet on similar slopes along Rock Cabin Road In the Seneca Lake Basin near Watkins Glen, shouting its presence in flame-orange hues, here and there along the sere autumn roadside. In

recent years, the Oriental bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*) has colonized a bank of RCR near its native congener, allowing close comparison. (Oriental bittersweet has smaller, paler orange capsules that are scattered along the branches).

Here’s a haiku I wrote in 1980 about this lovely native plant:

Scarlet fruits unfurled  
and the sweet sound of singing  
in the bitter cold.

Thanks for reminding me of this bright botanical treasure as winter approaches!

Congratulations to contest winners: Betsy Darlington, Bob Dirig, Vern Durkee, Bruce Gilman, John Gregoire, Ken Hull, David Keifer, Susanne Lorbeer, Rosemarie Parker, Lisa Podulka, Georgeanne Vyverberg, and Steve Young.

This issue’s plant contest is pictured on the opposing page (page 2). I had a number of comments that I gave too many clues to last issue’s contest. So this issue I will leave you to figure out the answer without any clues. Still, hints and suggestions are often provided to contest participants who try. Please submit your answers to David Werier (email and address in the box on the opposite page). Common and/or scientific names are acceptable. More than one guess is allowed. The photo was taken by David Werier on 24 April 2011 in Livingston Co., NY

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### **Haikus**

by Sara Brown

Red oak tree stands tall  
Pointy leaves, tracks on the bark  
Holier than me

Flowering dogwood  
Three seasons we walk on by  
Spring opens our eyes

Cold gathers moonlight  
As ice crystals turn mud hard  
Winter in New York

Short and complete days  
Cold earth, bare trees, quiet mind  
The winter solstice

**Carex siccata – Dry-spiked Sedge**  
**A New Native Addition to the Flora of Tompkins**  
**County**

by David Werier

I report here dry-spiked sedge (*Carex siccata*) as a new addition to the native flora of Tompkins County, New York. This past June (2011) I had the privilege and honor of planning and leading the field trips for the 2011 annual Joint Field Meeting of the Botanical Society of America - Northeastern Section, Torrey Botanical Society, and Philadelphia Botanical Club. I chose as one of the sites, Thatcher's Pinnacles. This location, on the rim of the Cayuga Inlet valley, is one of my local favorites. The site is chocked full with interesting and special plants from whorled milkweed (*Asclepias quadrifolia*) to wood reed grass (*Calamagrostis perplexa*) to slender wheatgrass (*Elymus trachycaulus*) to wood lily (*Lilium philadelphicum*) to arrow-leaved violet (*Viola sagittata* var. *ovata*) and lots more.

I visit Thatcher's Pinnacles two to three or more times a year since I enjoy this site so much, often showing this area to visiting botanists. This site is a well known botanical hot spot and was highlighted by botanists as far back as 1886 (Dudley 1886). On June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2011 I was leading the Joint Field Meeting field trip to Thatcher's Pinnacles and while showing the participants some of the exciting and interesting plants of this area, I noticed a small patch of dry-spiked sedge (*Carex siccata*). I was both shocked and not surprised at the same time as I realized this species had not previously been reported from this site or Tompkins County as a whole and at the same time that the habitat was perfect for this species. I made one small specimen (21 June 2011, Werier 4105) and will be depositing it at Bailey Hortorium.

In New York this species grows in dry open or thinly forested habitats. It has long rhizomes and therefore grows in large clonal patches. The population at Thatcher's Pinnacles appears native and I have no reason to suspect otherwise.

*Carex siccata* was not noted from the Cayuga Lake Basin in Wiegand and Eames's (1926) Flora of the Cayuga Lake Basin but four years after the publication of their flora, in a mimeographed addendum, they note that this species was collected for the first time within the Basin in 1926 in the Junius area (Seneca Co.) (Wiegand and Eames 1930). I checked the specimens of this species that are housed at the Bailey Hortorium and found that besides for collections from the Junius area there have been no additional collections from the Cayuga Lake Basin which includes Tompkins Co. Within south-central New York, the BH only has specimens of this species collected from two other sites, both in Chemung Co. one of which I collected in 2008. The New York Flora Atlas (Weldy and Werier 2012) includes one additional county for this

species from south-central New York, Tioga Co. The Tioga Co. record in the Atlas traces back to the New York State Museum master plant distribution files. I took a look at a copy of these files and the Tioga Co. record is based on an alleged specimen housed at the New York State Museum herbarium (NYS) that Fenno collected in 1900 from Apalachin.

Within the past 10 years I have reported three additional native *Carex* species (*C. backii*, *C. baileyi*, and *C. deflexa*) from Tompkins County which were overlooked in the past (Werier 2004, 2006, 2010). This information suggests that even in very well botanized areas like Tompkins County there are still native plant species that have not been found and therefore it is likely we don't have a full understanding of the biodiversity of even well known parts of the world. It is crucial that we continue to prioritize a full understanding of our surroundings. We can then use this knowledge to better understand the conditions of the natural systems where we live and work towards conservation of regional biodiversity.

I thank the Bailey Hortorium and its staff and curators including Anna Stalter and Peter Fraissinet for allowing me access to the collection.

**References cited:**

- Dudley, W. R. 1886. The Cayuga Flora. Andrus & Church, Ithaca, NY, USA.
- Weldy, T. and D. Werier. 2012 New York Flora Atlas. New York Flora Association, Albany, NY, USA. Available at [newyork.plantatlas.usf.edu](http://newyork.plantatlas.usf.edu).
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- , 2006. *Carex deflexa* - an addition to the flora of Tompkins County and central New York. *Solidago* (The newsletter of the Finger Lakes Native Plant Society) 7(3): 1, 7.
- , 2010. Bailey's sedge – *Carex baileyi* a new addition to the Flora of Tompkins County and the Cayuga Lake Basin. *Solidago* (The newsletter of the Finger Lakes Native Plant Society) 1(4): 1, 10-11.
- Wiegand, K.M. and A.J. Eames. 1926. The Flora of the Cayuga Lake Basin, New York. Vascular Plants. Memoir 92. Cornell University Agricultural Experiment Station, Ithaca, NY, USA.
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***Carex siccata* – dry-spiked sedge**

Illustration by Susan A. Reznicek

Reprinted from Flora of North America, V. 23. Oxford Univ. Press, New York, NY. 2002. P. 303.

## **Orchid Hunt**

**By Kenneth Hull**

**I know swamps, bogs, marshes and fens in the heat of August,  
When vegetation is head-high with switch grass, cattails, brambles and vines  
Along with downed trees, and boot-sucking mud all set on preventing my progress.  
Poison ivy, poison sumac and stinging nettle wait in silence to snag me.  
But I must risk it, if I'm to find orchids protected by these stalwart defenders.**

**Some orchids may be present within this mess, but the elusive nodding pogonia  
Resides on the other side, through a field of tall goldenrod and thickets that add  
To my misery, then into the deep woods adjacent to yet another swamp  
That has left fingers of black muck on whose edges grow beech and yellow birch.  
Here, with diligence because they are nearly invisible, I find a few of these orchids  
Six inches off the ground, white with limey green throats and purple pollen sacs.  
This small flower, resembling a bird in flight, opens for just one day, then dies.**

**Ubiquitous mosquitoes more interested in me than these endangered orchids  
Swarm, nip, tuck, dart, dodge and defy insect repellent DEET.  
I'm soaked in sweat, swatting and swearing at these creatures, anxious to flee  
So in reckless haste I take some pictures and trudge the same route back.  
Elated to find them in flower, exhausted by the effort, with smug satisfaction  
I now reside in orchid hunter's heaven.**

## **Prairie Senna (*Chamaecrista fasciculata*)**

*continued from page 1*

butterfly showing for late August in this region.

Because butterflies are inextricably entwined with their larval hostplants and nectar flowers, I cannot write about one without reference to the other; and I am always interested to see what plants compose butterfly habitats.

My first impression of Goetchius was astonishment at the variety and abundance of flowers. Just out of the car, I was surprised and delighted to find masses of **prairie senna** (*Chamaecrista fasciculata*, Fabaceae, **D**), the first place I've seen this herbaceous annual legume off the coastal plain! It was very odd to find it in the Finger Lakes Region, as it usually is associated with sandy soils. Its lovely pinnately compound, yellow-green leaves, foot-high burgundy stems, and bright apricot flowers were very beautiful, and there were masses of them here, covering recently disturbed, wet open spaces, and all in perfect bloom! When I got home, I checked the local floras for historical records: none in Dudley's *Cayuga Flora* (1886) or Wiegand & Eames's *Flora of the Cayuga Lake Basin* (1926); also not listed in Clausen's *Checklist of the Vascular Plants of the Cayuga Quadrangle* (1949), although he did include wild sensitive plant (*Chamaecrista nictitans*, as *Cassia nictitans*, a similar species with much smaller flowers, perhaps from Tioga County, as shown in the *New York Flora Atlas*). Modern internet resources (the *Tompkins County Flora* and the *New York Flora Atlas*) likewise showed no local records for *C. fasciculata*, and the Bailey Hortorium Herbarium has no specimens from the region (the nearest records were from Oneida and Ulster Counties). Thus this appears to be a new plant record for the Cayuga Lake Basin. I and others have wondered if it could somehow have been introduced with soil from the Atlantic coast, or as seeds from there dispersed on tire treads or footwear?

Another impression of Goetchius was how color-saturated the flowers were! The *Chamaecrista*'s petals seemed darker yellow than on the Atlantic coast; blue vervain's (*Verbena hastata*) were richer purple than usual; and I saw one wild morning glory (*Calystegia sepium*) that was a deep rose-pink, as opposed to its usual white or pale pink trumpets. Everything was very lush, perhaps from residue of fertilizer used on adjacent agricultural fields.

Goetchius is a wet site, with shallow pools that were mud-cracked and drawn-down from the summer's drought. I made an informal field list of plants: A large chenopod (like those I've seen with prairie senna in coastal New Jersey); red clover (*Trifolium pratense*); white clover (*T. repens*); rice cutgrass (*Leersia oryzoides* — foodplant of the Least Skipper); musk mallow (*Malva moschata* — foodplant of the Checkered Skipper); broad-leaved cattail (*Typha latifolia*); a large clumped arrowhead (*Sagittaria*

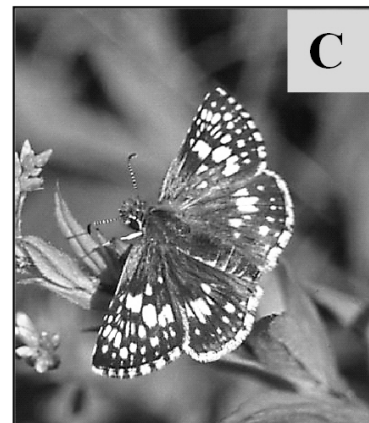
sp., perhaps not *S. latifolia*); bird's-foot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*); spotted Joe Pye weed (*Eupatorium* cf. *maculatum*); grass-leaved goldenrod (*Euthamia graminifolia*); spike-rush (*Eleocharis* sp.); bull thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*); beggar-ticks (*Bidens* spp., cf. *cernua* and *frondosa*); low cudweed (*Gnaphalium uliginosum* — with larval nests of American Lady on them); huge, abundant annual ragweeds (*Ambrosia artemisiifolia* — Achoo!); reed canary grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*); spotted jewelweed (*Impatiens capensis*); seedling black locusts (*Robinia pseudoacacia* — foodplant of the Silver-spotted Skipper); common and narrow-leaved plantains (*Plantago major* & *P. lanceolata* — but no Buckeye larvae on this frequent larval host!); velvet-leaf (*Abutilon theophrasti* — another possible foodplant for Checkered Skippers); lamb's quarters (*Chenopodium album*) and redroot (*Amaranthus retroflexus*) — foodplants of the Common Sooty-wing (*Pholisora catullus*), a tiny black, white-dotted skipper that Charlie Smith found there three days later, and a locally rare species; and the lovely silverrod (*Solidago bicolor*), a "white" goldenrod I see too rarely nowadays. A large wet field to the west had mud-cracked shallow basins and many aquatic plants. A shallow but fast-flowing stream extended its 3-foot-wide channel about 150 feet on the east edge of the field, and was paralleled by a ribbon of Joe Pye weeds, blue vervains, goldenrods (*Solidago* spp.), and other tall blooming flowers that were nectar magnets for many of the butterflies in the area (**E**). Another visit on September 3<sup>rd</sup> added Viceroy (*Limenitis archippus*) to my butterfly list, but the 95° heat and overwhelming ragweed pollen necessitated a short stay.

I plan to visit Goetchius regularly in the coming season, and hope others will go there to see the prairie sennas, and look more closely at the other plants. There are many unexplored riches at this site.

Thanks to Anna Stalter and Peter Fraissinet at the Bailey Hortorium Herbarium for access to specimens, and to Anna for reading a draft of this note.

**Editor's Note:** In recent years, wetland restoration work has been implemented at The Finger Lakes Land Trust's Goetchius Wetland Preserve. Planting were part of these restoration projects and my guess is that the *Chamaecrista fasciculata* along with other non-natives were intentionally planted as part of the restoration work. – David Werier.





## Plant & Butterfly Treasures of the Goetchius Wetland Preserve

*Three southern butterflies that were recorded there in summer 2011: Variegated Fritillary (A), Common Buckeye (B), and Common Checkered Skipper (C). A new plant for the Cayuga Lake Basin: Prairie Senna (D). Scenic on August 26<sup>th</sup> 2011 (E). Photographs by Robert Dirig.*

A photographed at Monkey Run, 30 Sept. 2000. B photographed at McLean Bogs Preserve, 16 Aug. 2011. C photographed at Jane McDaniel Tract, 12 Aug. 2007.



# **FINGER LAKES NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY**

## **UPCOMING PRESENTATIONS Winter/Spring 2011/2012**

**February 15<sup>th</sup> – Wednesday – 7 pm – Bringing Nature to Your Garden by Ellen Folts, Amanda's Garden**

**March 21<sup>st</sup> - Panel Discussion - Issues in Native Gardening. Philosophical & Practical**

**April 18<sup>th</sup> – Wednesday – 7 pm – Non-Native Species in Our Midst: A Curse or A Blessing by Susan Cook, Cornell University.**

**May 16<sup>th</sup> – Wednesday – 7 pm – Tiny Mite Homes & Extrafloral Nectaries: The Miniature Drama on Your Garden's Viburnums by Marjorie Weber, Cornell University**

*All presentations are from 7-8:30 pm and are free and open to the public.*

*The locations for the winter/spring presentations are different than our usual location so please take note. From January through May presentations will be held at the Unitarian Church annex (corner of Buffalo and Aurora, enter side door of annex on Buffalo St & go up the stairs).*

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## **WALKS AND OUTINGS**

**February 12 – Sunday – 1 pm – Winter Trees. Led by Tom Koslowski.** Learn how to identify native tree species using winter characters like bark and buds. A moderate walk along even terrain, on the Cornell Campus. May be slow going at times, so dress accordingly. Bring a 10x hand lens and field guides. Meet at CCE at 1 pm to carpool. Call Tom for more info: [REDACTED]

**March 31 – Saturday – 1 pm – Mosses and Liverworts for Birdwatchers. Led by Norm Trigoboff.** An easy walk along even terrain, at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. May be slow going at times, so dress accordingly. Bring a 10x hand lens. Meet at CCE at 1 pm to carpool.

**May 6 – Sunday – 1 pm – Spring Wildflowers at Lick Brook. Led by Susanne Lorbeer.** A moderate walk along the Finger Lakes Trail. Meet at CCE at 1 pm to carpool. Call Susanne for more info: [REDACTED].

**May 12 – Saturday - 10 am – Smith Woods.** Co-sponsored by Cayuga Nature Center. Join Marvin Pritts (Horticulture Professor and CNC Board Member) and Cindy Rice (Manager of Outdoor Education at CNC) for a spring walk in Smith Woods. Smith Woods is a spectacular 30 acre remnant of old growth forest in the heart of Trumansburg. Explore the trails, see wildflowers, and participate in tree identification. Meet at the corner of Cemetery and Falls Road [REDACTED]

Unless otherwise noted, trips begin and end in the parking lot at Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE), located just off Willow Ave. in Ithaca. Field trips are free and open to the public. Participants are encouraged to join FLNPS. Participants are also asked to stay on trails and not to collect any plants without the trip leader's consent. For more information call the trip leader at the number provided, Anna Stalter at [REDACTED], or Susanne Lorbeer at [REDACTED].