



Natural Area News

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Winter Newsletter 2011-12

The Ivy Creek Barn Stands Straight!

Ivy Creek Natural Area was given a wonderful Thanksgiving gift this year! Straightening up the barn, the most nerve-racking and complicated part of the barn project, has been just about completed. If you have not been out to see the project underway yet, please do. A lot of dismantling had to be done to allow for this work. The siding on the North wall has all been removed, and internal supports and beams have been disconnected. But even in this state, you can tell the barn is already in much better condition. It stands almost straight and is ready to be redressed. From here on out we can watch as the barn is put back together. Thank you again to all our partners who made this work possible!

A more technical progress report from Jim Boyd, Heyward Boyd Architects: "Correcting the progressive leaning of the barn is the most visible goal of the barn renovation project. The contractor has now achieved that primary objective, or as close as we can reasonably expect, by pulling the building plumb with tensioning cables. During the next phase, new permanent bracing will be installed to reinforce the structure and provide wind bracing. Permanent bracing will include additional wood posts and beams along the North and West walls, as well as replacement of the two rows of interior wood columns. The new bracing will employ steel connections to the existing structure to prevent future movement. Once the structure is fully stabilized, the more cosmetic repairs can begin – including window installation and North wall siding replacement."



Photo: Victoria Dye



Photo: Current view from the loft, Patricia Jessee

Director's Note

I hope everyone has had a colorful fall! It has been an extra busy season at Ivy Creek. Work started on the barn in September, just after the Annual Meeting. This phase of the barn project is well on course for being completed by the end of the year.

Our attention now turns to developing and fundraising for educational exhibits for the barn. The first exhibit, on spring wildflowers, is being sponsored by the Virginia Native Plant Society and is being produced as I write. Many thanks to VNPS for helping us launch this effort so successfully! We hope several other exhibits will follow in the coming months. Look out for news about our barn Grand Opening and Dedication in the spring.

We mailed out membership renewals in November. Many of you have already sent in your contributions. Thank you!

As ever, thank you to all our volunteers who keep the trails in such good shape and the school children engaged.

And again, please let us know if you would like to receive this newsletter by email.

Wishing you an enjoyable holiday season,

Karen

Bittersweet Threatening Ivy Creek

If you haven't already noticed the Ivy Creek Natural Area and most other wild places in the Charlottesville area are being overtaken by an onslaught of highly invasive alien plant species more destructive than any we've ever experienced before. In numerous areas of Ivy Creek our diverse native flora is being lost from being completely blanketed by oriental bittersweet, an exotic woody vine that first appeared at ICNA only about 15 years ago. Other long established climbing invasives such as Japanese honeysuckle and multiflora rose are lightweights in comparison to the destruction caused here by the rapidly spreading bittersweet.

Initial establishment of bittersweet at ICNA likely resulted from bird dropping dispersal of seed. As is typical of invasive plants it grows at a faster rate than natives, insects and herbivores find foliage unpalatable, and is not susceptible to disease. It's also highly adaptable with its ability to thrive in shady spots. With a preference for sun it will quickly climb heights to attain sunlight eventually blanketing the entire canopy of even the tallest trees. After only about two years growth and having some exposure to direct sun it will be producing seed. Unfortunately in many places we've reached the reseeding stage where control is increasingly difficult.



Photo: Bittersweet damage, Phil Stokes

Despite numerous much appreciated volunteer efforts in recent years to manually remove bittersweet, we've at best achieved control on only a few acres. Clearly we need to commit more resources to preserve more acreage. Sadly I've seen public natural areas comparable to Ivy Creek near Washington DC and Baltimore where invasive plants left unmanaged now completely dominate the understory. That will be Ivy Creek's fate too without intervention.

The Ivy Creek Foundation's Building & Grounds Committee will be selecting high priority areas where invasive control projects will focus. We will also be working with Albemarle County Parks and Recreation utilizing control measures their personnel can provide. Please plan to help at upcoming workdays. Training and tools will be provided. If you prefer to volunteer at a time of your convenience, a work area can be assigned. If we're to preserve Ivy Creek for the future generation, a greater commitment will need to be made now. Contributed by Phil Stokes, Ivy Creek Board Member

A Herbarium for Ivy Creek Natural Area

Ivy Creek will soon have its own herbarium of plant species growing in the Natural Area. The construction of a herbarium involves collecting plant species and then pressing, drying and mounting them on herbarium paper with labels giving the common and scientific names of the plant along with the date, location, and habitat of its collection, and the collector. Thus it gives a physical record of plant species.

Ivy Creek's herbarium is an outgrowth of last year's survey of all vascular plants growing in the ICNA. Tim Williams, Tom Dierauf, who led the effort by a group of Master Naturalist and Native Plant Society volunteers, felt strongly that a physical record of plant specimens would be a valuable complement to the data collected in the survey. The project to create a herbarium of Ivy Creek's vascular plants is now well underway with full financial support from the Jefferson Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society. A new herbarium cabinet is installed in the Education Building and Nicky Staunton, vice president of the Virginia Native Plant Society state organization and an accomplished artist has designed a logo for us, featuring heartleaf ginger, *Hexastylis virginica*, a common and much-loved plant at Ivy Creek. We have now collected, pressed, and dried more than 250 plant specimens and so far have mounted roughly 70 specimens on herbarium paper. Contributed by Mary Lee Epps



Vascular Plants of the Ivy Creek Natural Area Albemarle Co., Virginia

Name *Asclepias incarnata* L.

Common Name Swamp milkweed

Collector Timothy Williams No. 80 Date 8/6/2010

Location Edge of Reservoir off Orange Trail

Habitat Flood plain

Ref: V.F.C.

Rejuvenation: Our Barn Comes to Life

Prepare for the Grand Opening in the spring of 2012. The anticipated restoration of the ICNA barn creates a unique opportunity to enhance the outdoor experience for all our visitors while simultaneously documenting both the current and the past history of the Natural Area.

Current plans for the interior include bringing the barn back to life by labeling and even demonstrating the uses for the various sections of the structure, developing photographic and descriptive exhibits of the flora and fauna of the Natural Area as they vary through the seasons, and providing tables of “hands-on” displays. In addition, a portion of the exhibits will honor the heritage and dedication of the Carr family, who farmed this area from the 1870s through the mid-20th century. We hope to locate farm implements identical to those used by the Carrs. We also plan to add a descriptive exhibit to complement the living bee hive so that visitors may better understand this important pollinator.

Although the “new face” for the barn will have features of a nature center, it will be more than that. The exhibits will not, nor should they, replace the experience that only a wander in natural surroundings can



Photo: Round-lobed Hepatica, Tony Russell

render---peace and rejuvenation of the inner soul. Our intention is for the barn experience to complement that “wander in nature” and lead to greater appreciation of the inter-relationships and beauty of the environment so close at hand. As the barn is rejuvenated, so, too, will be the lives of the children and adults who immerse themselves in our natural surroundings. Watch us grow and come to see us in the spring of 2012.

Contributed by Mitch Sams, Exhibit Coordinator and Mary Lee Epps, Assistant Exhibit Coordinator



Draft of our first display, “Woodland Wildflowers of Spring”

Wanted: Board Members!

Please let us know or someone you know might be interested in joining the Ivy Creek Foundation's Board of Directors. We need people with any of the following skills: fundraising; human resources; lawyer. And of course we need people who love Ivy Creek and want to help the foundation fulfill its mission to the fullest.

Coordinator’s Corner

This fall I had the opportunity to visit with professionals and volunteers in a variety of nature centers to learn how they strive to inspire environmental awareness and connection with the natural world. Although we came from different parts of the country and faced a variety of challenges, we were in agreement. Time spent outdoors has a powerful effect on the emotional, physical and spiritual health of individuals and the community. The more people who spend time outdoors the better our world will be. This is true any season and any moment of any day. I urge you to take time this winter to enjoy the outdoors.

As always, a hearty thank you to the more than 75 volunteers who ran our school tours or taught public programs in 2011. Thanks to these volunteers, over 3000 toddlers, pre-teens, teens, young adults and adults enjoyed the natural world at Ivy Creek and Ragged Mountain Natural Areas this year.

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Ivy Creek Foundation

Our Mission: To enrich lives by fostering environmental awareness through education and connecting the community with nature.

The Ivy Creek Foundation is a volunteer-based, non-profit organization created in 1979 that works to manage, improve, and preserve the ecosystems of the Ivy Creek and Ragged Mountain Natural Areas for the purposes of environmental education, land conservation, and the appreciation of Virginia's natural heritage.

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email: icf@ivycreekfoundation.org or visit our website at <http://ivycreekfoundation.org>



*Membership renewals should have
reached you last month.*

*Please send in your contributions as
soon as you can!*