

Central South Native Plant Conference

Field Trip Descriptions

The Kathy Stiles Freeland Bibb County Glades Preserve is a 480 acre preserve in Bibb County, Alabama protected and owned by the Nature Conservancy. In 1992, while canoeing the Cahaba and Little Cahaba River in search of Georgia Rockcress, Jim Allison recognized “A Botanical Lost World” in the Bibb County Glades. He identified nine new species from these high magnesium, ketona dolomite glades. Among the newly described species are: Alabama Gentian Pinkroot (*Spigelia gentianoides* var. *alabamensis*), Cahaba Daisy Fleabane (*Erigeron stigosus* var. *dolomiticola*), Cahaba Paintbrush (*Castilleja keraliana*), Cahaba Prairie-clover (*Dalea cahaba*), Cahaba Torch (*Liatris oligocephala*), Deceptive Marbleseed (*Onosmodium decipiens*), Ketona Tickseed (*Coreopsis grandiflora* var. *inclinata*) and Sticky Rosinweed (*Silphium glutinosum*). The glades support many other rare and disjunct species which are particularly showy in spring and fall.

Leader: Jim Allison, Ranger-Naturalist, Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve

Rating: Moderate, some tricky footing

Time from The Gardens: about 45-60 minutes south-southwest

Hind’s Road Sandstone Outcrop near Gadsden and Noccalula Falls is the most expansive sandstone outcrop in Alabama. Due to the thin soil of the outcrop few trees and shrubs are able to grow there. The Scrub Pines (*Pinus virginiana*) and rare Boynton’s Oaks (*Quercus boyntonii*) that survive here are stunted giving them a “bonsai” appearance. On the bare sedimentary rocks of Mississippian origin, crustose and foliose lichens form vibrant blotches. Reindeer–moss (*Cladonia elliptica*), true mosses (*Grimmia* and *Polytrichum*), and Rush-foil (*Crotonopsis elliptica*) are frequent where a little soil accumulates. Various microhabitats result in a diverse herbaceous plant community. Fall bloomers producing a color burst include: Curtiss’ Milkwort (*Polygala curtissii*), Small-headed Blazing Star (*Liatris microcephala*), Blue-curly (*Trichostema dichotomum*), Rayless Goldenrod (*Biglowia nuttallii*) and Sampson’s Snake Root (*Orbexilum pedunculatum*).

Leader: Dan Spaulding, Curator of Collections for the Anniston Museum of Natural History.

Rating: Easy walking (can be slippery when wet)

Time from The Gardens: about 1 hour NE on I 59 towards Gadsden

Homewood Forest Preserve is a 65 acre woodland and the largest undeveloped parcel in the city of Homewood. On Monday, March 2, 2008, stewardship of the preserve was turned over to the Freshwater Land Trust. The property is used by Dr. Mike Howell, Land Trust board member and retired Samford biology professor, and Dr. Larry Davenport, Samford biology professor, as an outdoor classroom for zoology and botany classes. It is known locally as the home of the elusive spotted salamander. There are three main types of forest:

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dry upland, steep sloped and moist riparian plus a meadow display of grasses and forbs under a power cut. There are at least 27 species of trees including American beech, Red Maple, Ironwood, Dogwood, American Holly, Tulip Poplar, Southern Magnolia and Basswood. The flowering plant list is extensive due to the variety of habitats.

Leader: Dr. Larry Davenport, Samford University biology professor

Rating: Moderate

Time from The Gardens: about 20 minutes

Moss Rock Preserve is a 250 acre, public nature preserve owned by the city of Hoover. Within the preserve there are boulder fields for climbers, trails for hikers and a variety of plants and wildlife that attracts birders and native plant enthusiasts. The most unique natural community at Moss Rock is the sandstone glade, which is a rare example of a Little River Canyon Sandstone Glade. Growing upon the glade are scattered bonsai-sized trees, grasses, lichens and wildflowers such as Fine-leaved Coreopsis (*Coreopsis pulchra*), Nuttall's Rayless Goldenrod (*Biglowia nuttallii*), and Small-headed Blazing Star (*Liatris microcephala*). Look for Alabama Cherry (*Prunus alabamensis*) at the edge of the glade near a rapidly descending stream.

Leader: Ken Wills, president of Friends of Moss Rock

Rating: Moderate

Ruffner Mountain Nature Center, founded in 1977, is a 1,011 acre upland oak-pine-hickory and xeric limestone urban forest. This certified wildlife habitat has over 11 miles of footpaths for hiking and birding. Ruffner Mountain is an historic site that was mined for iron ore and quarried for limestone until the early nineteen fifties. Hike to an old limestone quarry, a small cave, and Hawk's View Overlook for a panoramic view. Expect to see many blooming composites and a wide diversity of species that thrive in this protected environment.

Leader: Marty Schulman, Ruffner Mt. Nature Center Naturalist

Difficulty: moderate, 2.5 mile hike

Time from The Gardens: 20 minutes

Talladega National Forest – Shoal Creek Ranger District is in the rugged Appalachian foothills of eastern Alabama. The Montane Longleaf Pine Community plus the co-dominant Shortleaf Pine-Zeric Oak Community extend up into the mountains of the Talladega National Forest offering views of verdant slopes, cascading streams, and fall wildflowers. On this trip, we will be traveling mostly along the Pinhoti National Recreation Trail and visit

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areas of the TNF that are being actively managed for the federally-endangered red-cockaded woodpecker. Longleaf forests often burst into color during the fall, so expect to see species such as Appalachian Bellflower (*Campanula divaricata*), goldenrods (ex. Erect Goldenrod, *Solidago erecta*), Purple Gerardia, *spiranthes*, *liatris*, numerous fall-blooming asters including Georgia Aster (*Symphytotrichum georgianum*) and Smooth Aster (*S. laeve* var. *concinnum*), warm-season grasses (ex. Weeping Indian Grass, *Sorghastrum elliottii*), and many others.

Leader: Jeff Gardner, biologist with the Shoal Creek Ranger District.

Rating: Easy-Moderate

Time from The Gardens: about 1.25 hours east on I-20

Turkey Creek Nature Preserve is a 466 acre Forever Wild property in Pinson. The history of human occupation begins with Native Americans using the natural features of the area (a rock shelter, some knolls and the creek) over hundreds or thousands of years. European explorers and then detachments of Andrew Jackson's army followed. Americans of European and African descent moved into the area after the American Indians ceded lands to the Federal government in 1819. Turkey Creek is a tributary of Locust Fork and home to three endangered species of fish: the Vermilion Darter, the Watercress Darter and the Rush Darter. Natural features of the area include a water fall and "Bull Frog Bend", also known as "Blue Hole" used as a swimming hole, baptismal pool and gathering spot. In the fall, one can see a large array of blooming and fruiting plants due to the diversity of habitats: seeping rocks, streamside, open roadsides, dry and wet woodlands. A few highlights include White Beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*), Strawberry Bush (*Euonymus americana*), White Turtlehead (*Chelone glabra*), Pink Thoroughwort (*Fleishmania incarnata*), Wingstem and Yellow Crownbeard (*Verbesina alternifolia* and *V. occidentalis*), Slender Gerardia (*Agalinis tenuifolia*) and Wild Poinsettia (*Euphorbia cyathophora*).

Leader: Arnie Rutkis, landscape designer and sculptor

Rating: Moderate rolling hills

Time from The Gardens: 45 minutes