

Naturally Kentucky

Summer 2004

Number 43



It is the mission of the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission to protect Kentucky's natural heritage by: (1) identifying, acquiring and managing natural areas that represent the best known occurrences of rare native species, natural communities and significant natural features in a statewide nature preserves system; (2) working with others to protect biological diversity; and (3) educating Kentuckians as to the value and purpose of nature preserves and biodiversity.

Kentucky Rare Plant Information Online

By Deborah White and Greg Abernathy
Natural Heritage Branch

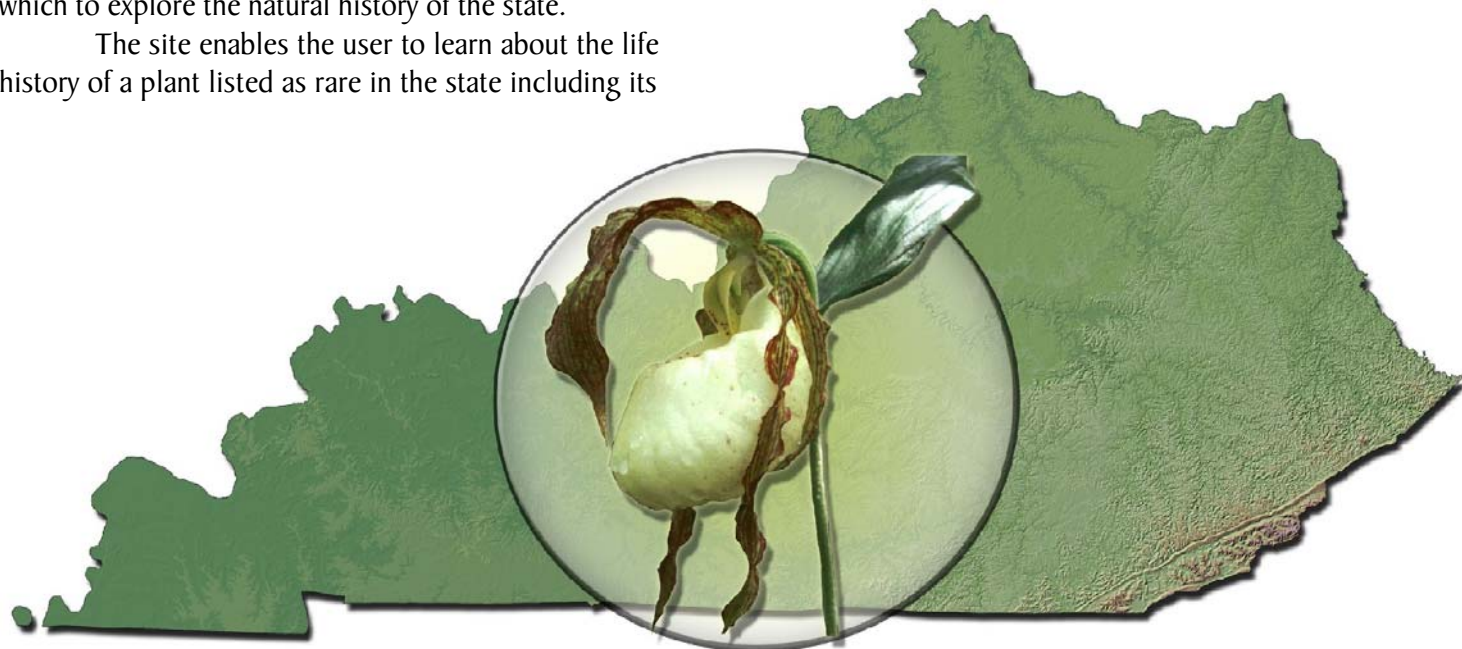
Ever wonder whether that is running buffalo clover on the stream terrace near your house or what rare orchids in the state look like? The Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission and the Environmental and Public Protection Cabinet's Office of Administrative and Information Systems have completed work on a Web site that provides information on the rare plants of Kentucky.

Students, biologists, environmental consultants and amateur naturalists now have access to information on plant species that are rare in Kentucky. Information on many of these plants is difficult to find and this site provides Kentuckians with a new reference base from which to explore the natural history of the state.

The site enables the user to learn about the life history of a plant listed as rare in the state including its

natural habitat, flowering period, the characteristics that distinguish it from other species, and a map of the counties in which the species occur. A line drawing also helps with identification.

To view the Kentucky Rare Plant Database, visit the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission's Web site at www.naturepreserves.ky.gov. While the database currently only features endangered plants (159 species), it will soon be updated to include threatened and special concern species (167 species). Primary funding for the rare plant project was provided by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.



Kentucky Rare Plant Information available online at www.naturepreserves.ky.gov

Raiding Mother Earth's Medicine Chest

by Deborah White
Natural Heritage Branch Manager

Like most issues where humans are involved, herb dealing ranges from extreme reverence to egregious exploitation. The traditional folk and new wave have been married into a movement that has resulted in a million dollar industry. Herb collection in parts of Kentucky has spanned several generations. This interest in herbs, combined with the challenges of making a living in rural counties, has resulted in increased collection for sale to pharmaceutical companies. And this all adds up to significant impacts to these highly-sought native plants.

The two species that have been the most severely affected by medicinal collecting in Kentucky are American ginseng (*Panax quinquefolia*) and Goldenseal (*Hydrastis americana*). While the sale of these herbs is regulated by federal law, there are no specific laws against collecting on private land with landowner permission. Substantial poaching has been reported from Kentucky's public lands. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) reports 16,497 pounds of ginseng collected in the state, twice that of any other state (Traffic 1999). The price for ginseng has been \$400 per lb in the last few years. While some ginseng is now farm grown, this premium price is paid by Asian companies because their consumers are looking for wild grown roots, roots that look more like the human body and thus are thought to have more healing power. Consumers in the United States are not so picky, where a pack of ginseng can be bought from the quick mart counter, but the demand has soared.

Ginseng (primarily the two Asiatic species of *Panax*) has been used in China for thousands of years as a remedy for a long list of ailments including building energy and zest, sharpening vision and hearing, increasing the efficiency of the brain, restoring virility and prolong-

ing life. It has been a gift given by emperors and in some periods was more valuable by weight than gold. The genus name *Panax* is taken from the word for panacea meaning "cure-all."

American ginseng occurs throughout the eastern United States and as far west as North Dakota. Appalachian regions have the strongest traditions of ginseng harvesting or "sang" gathering. Responsible 'sang harvesters do not collect until the seed is mature, usually around September, and distribute the fruit on the forest floor. Patches would only be visited on a rotation, and only certain size plants were taken. With the rising price of the root, these techniques that ensured the supply of plants would not be depleted seem to have been forgotten.

The use of goldenseal has also grown. All parts of the plants are used but as with ginseng, the roots are thought to have the highest medicinal value. The pulverized roots were traditionally prepared as a tonic for the treatment of mouth sores, eye conditions, high blood pressure and as a diuretic. One request for sale of harvested root in Kentucky (counties include Floyd, Knott, Letcher, Logan, Martin, Pike and Trimble) was for a total of 89,000 plants.

KSNPC botanists have noticed that ginseng is rarely seen and goldenseal is less abundant. Both have been on the rare plant list at one time and we will review the status of the species to determine whether the alarming rates of collection of herbs should be more closely monitored. The Kentucky Department of Agriculture oversees implementation of the state regulations on ginseng harvest. These regulations require ginseng dealers to register and maintain records on the amount sold. (USFWS permit application information.)

For info on these plants and the regulation of ginseng and goldenseal, visit these sites online: www.cites.org and/or <http://international.fws.gov/cites>.

Native Grass Symposium

A Grassland Symposium will be conducted at the University of Kentucky on Oct. 3-6, 2004. Due to an increasing interest in the use of native grasses in the eastern United States, the trend has led to the organization of a regional symposium highlighting native grass uses, adaptations and importance. The symposium goals are to share information, experiences and research about recent projects involving native grasses. There will be applied workshops on grass identification, seed testing of native plant species and seed drilling. More information is available online at www.grassconference.com.

Available from
Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission Library

Kentucky Educational Television's
production of the
"Kentucky Life" Special
"Kentucky's Last Great Places"

We are pleased to announce that the KSNPC Library has for loan several VHS videotape copies of the KET special, Kentucky Life - Kentucky's Last Great Places.

This video features "Kentucky Life" host Dave Shuffet visiting many of our Commonwealth's dedicated state nature preserves, and other natural areas. KSNPC staff and others point out the significant and unique characteristics of many of these beautiful places.

The KET program was based on the book, "Kentucky's Last Great Places," written by Dr. Thomas Barnes with the University of Kentucky's Extension Service and published by University Press. The two-hour video gives viewers glimpses of the tallest peaks in the eastern part of the state as well as scenes from lowland areas in the western area of Kentucky. It also highlights the biological significance of each area in easily understood terms, so it is equally informative and entertaining.

This video was produced by KET and aired as part of its Spring 2004 fundraising activities. We understand that this program was so popular, that donations to KET relative to two showings of this program broke all records for a KET-produced show's fundraising.

For information on how you or your group can borrow one of the "Kentucky's Last Great Places" videotapes, please contact KSNPC by phone at 502-573-2886, or online by writing to www.naturepreserves@ky.gov. We only ask that our shipping costs be reimbursed by the borrower at the time the video is returned, and that videos be returned within two weeks of receipt.

To find out how to receive your own VHS tape and/or DVD with additional footage of "Kentucky's Last Great Places," contact KET online at <http://www.ket.org>, call them at 859-258-7000 or write to Kentucky Educational Television, 600 Cooper Drive, Lexington, KY 40502.

**See reverse side for reserving and borrowing
Kentucky's Last Great Places from KSNPC**

**Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission Library
801 Schenkel Lane, Frankfort, KY 40601-1403**

**Kentucky Educational Television's
production of the
Kentucky Life Special
Kentucky's Last Great Places**

RESERVATION REQUEST AND LIBRARY LOAN ORDER FORM

I hereby request that I be allowed to borrow the Kentucky Educational Television VHS videotape of the Kentucky Life special, Kentucky's Last Great Places. I hereby agree to maintain the videotape in good condition and to return it within two weeks of receipt along with reimbursement of \$4.00 (made out to KY State Treasurer) to cover the cost to process and ship the videotape to me. I further agree to assume the cost of returning the video to the KSNPC Library and agree to rewind the tape prior to returning.

My mailing address is as follows:

Name: _____
Organization: _____
Address: _____
Address: _____
Phone: _____

Requested date(s) of videotape loan are:

_____.

If no tapes are available, the alternate dates requested are:

_____.

Signature

Date

(print name here)

Director's Notes

by **Don Dott**
Executive Director

In the past few months under the new administration of Governor Ernie Fletcher, there have been substantial and innovative changes within state government. This is especially true of the new and expanded Environmental and Public Protection Cabinet. With reorganizations and personnel changes, we sometimes lose sight of the people who make positive marks on our state's history. Hugh N. Archer, former Commissioner for the Department for Natural Resources, is one of those individuals who will be greatly missed at KSNPC and elsewhere.

Commissioner Hugh Archer recently left his position in the former Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Cabinet. Hugh has dedicated his life's work to protecting the environment of Kentucky, and has worked particularly hard to preserve natural areas. He began his career in 1977 as an attorney with the Natural Resources cabinet, specializing in waste management issues. He left state government to become the first paid director of the Kentucky Chapter of The Nature Conservancy from 1981 to 1987. While at the Kentucky Chapter of TNC Hugh helped establish 16 nature preserves, negotiated hundreds of private land protection agreements and drove hundreds of thousands of miles crisscrossing Kentucky to visit landowners and negotiate land deals.

Hugh also served as Commissioner of the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission from 1989 to 1995, serving in the role of its chairman. From here he moved on to the executive director of the Kentucky River Authority from 1995 to 1998, working to protect the Kentucky River and its entire watershed. This challenging task was followed by his most recent position serving as Commissioner of the Dept. of Natural Resources for the late Secretary James E. Bickford. In addition to these varied state government and private sector positions, in 1994 Hugh helped form a very successful non-profit organization, the Kentucky Natural Lands Trust. Under his leadership as chairman, KNLT has raised approximately \$3 million to help acquire tracts of old growth forest in Harlan County to become Blanton Forest State Nature Preserve. KNLT has also funded an endowment to underwrite stewardship needs at Blanton Forest, a very necessary aspect of land protection that is too often overlooked.

This past April, Hugh was the recipient of an Environmental Quality Commission Earth Day Award for his many contributions over the years to protecting the natural environs of Kentucky. During the award ceremony held at the Governor's Mansion, EQC Commissioner Lindell Ormsbee said, "Hugh Archer is known throughout the conservation community as an effective advocate for the conservation of Kentucky's natural resources. His dedication to environmental protection during the past 25 years has always gone far beyond just a job and he has committed countless personal hours, days and years in this endeavor." Fortunately, Hugh is not gone from Kentucky, but is only on a much deserved hiatus. We expect to see him back, hard at work for KNLT on its new Pine Mountain Legacy Project. With a 120-mile-long mountain ridge to preserve and protect, I don't think Hugh will long be able to resist the temptation to get back into the water! But if life should pull Hugh in some other direction, we will still find ourselves greatly indebted to him for his many contributions for preserving the beauty and diversity of Kentucky's rich natural heritage.

Kentucky Natural Lands Trust

For information on the Kentucky Natural Lands Trust, visit their Web site at www.knlt.org or phone KNLT at 877-367-5658, or write to them at 433 Chestnut Street, Berea, KY 40403.

New Addition to Hi Lewis Pine Barrens State Nature Preserve

by Joyce Bender
Stewardship Branch Manager

On June 9, the Southeast Education Foundation and the Commission approved the dedication of 138 acres of Foundation property located on the south face of Pine Mountain. This addition to the Hi Lewis Pine Barrens State Nature Preserve brings the remainder of a high quality pine barrens under the Commission's management and ensures the land's perpetual protection as part of the preserve. The open-grown aspect of the pine and oak trees, and the prairie-like assemblage of grasses and wildflowers (including several rare plants and the invertebrates that feed on them) make the preserve a high priority for active management, including the use of prescribed fire.

This agreement with the Foundation reinforces the Commission's expanding views on seeking partners to help meet its mandate to protect and manage Kentucky's high quality natural areas. In these increasingly challenging fiscal times, partnerships must be forged to share limited resources in order to be successful. The Southeast Education Foundation's mission is to develop private sector support and resources for scholarships, instructional programs and administrative needs at Southeast Community College (SCC). With their goals in mind, the Commission submitted a proposal (currently under review by the College) for SCC students to get involved in the management of the preserve as well as to use the site for an outdoor classroom. The benefits to all will be worth the time spent to set it in motion.

Visit KSNPC online to learn about this and other unique state nature preserves located throughout Kentucky.

KENTUCKY STATE NATURE PRESERVES COMMISSION

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Next KSNPC Quarterly Public Meeting September 8, 2004

Lincoln Trail Area Development District Office
613 College Street Road - Elizabethtown, KY
10:00 a.m. ~ 12:00 noon CDT

Join KSNPC for a public meeting at the Lincoln Trail ADD
After a break for lunch (on your own)
reconvene for a site visit of Springhouse Barrens State Nature Preserve
in rural Hardin County

Details on meeting agenda and directions to location and site
available soon online at www.naturepreserves.ky.gov

How to contact the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission:

Mail: 801 Schenkel Lane, Frankfort KY 40601-1403

Phone: (502)573-2886 Fax: (502)573-2355

E-mail: naturepreserves@ky.gov

Visit us online at: www.naturepreserves.ky.gov

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