

**LEXINGTON CHAPTER — March, 2017**

<http://lexington.wildones.org>

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The Lexington chapter of *Wild Ones* meets the first Thursday of every month and at other times for special programs. Visitors welcome! Check our website [www.lexington.wildones.org](http://www.lexington.wildones.org) for details.

This newsletter is a publication of the Lexington chapter of *Wild Ones*. It is published nine times a year—March through November—as an electronic newsletter.

If you have any questions, suggestions, or information for future editions, contact Judy Johnson, newsletter editor, at [judylex@twc.com](mailto:judylex@twc.com).

*President's Message...*

On February 11, I attended a thought provoking workshop on the impending update of Lexington's Comprehensive Plan. The plan, which must be revisited every five years, sets development goals for our city as well as regulations on how these goals should be implemented. As the current update process is getting underway the city of Lexington encourages its residents to voice their thoughts and desires about our community's future on the webpage: <https://www.lexingtonky.gov/get-involved>.

Lexington has been growing for many decades and this growth is expected to continue. Growth makes life in our city "vibrant," to use a popular buzz word. In 20 years, 80,000 more people will live here. Of these additional people, 13,000 will be school age children; 25,000 will be young professionals; and a whopping 30,000 will be retirees. The goal of the Comprehensive Plan update is to accommodate these population groups through smart growth.

Currently, 10% of the 54,634 acres within the urban service boundary is vacant, meaning it can, at least theoretically, be covered with housing, commercial establishments, schools, clinics, streets, fire stations, parks and other infrastructure. There is also potential for redevelopment of underutilized sites, for example, by turning mostly empty parking lots toward greater utility. But it is very

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*Suburban Street in South Lexington*

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clear that, given the growth projections for Lexington, neighborhoods will be far more densely built than they were a few decades ago.

This trend poses a challenge to our group. *Wild Ones* promotes the use of native plants in gardens and landscapes, which we understand to be mostly on private properties. These spaces are becoming ever smaller in the urban areas where people live. Cities of the future, at least those with viable economies like Lexington, will not have meaningful garden spaces for plants, native or otherwise. The photo on page 1, taken in Lexington a few years ago, illustrates this trend.

The typical one third acre lots of our older neighborhoods provided not only the space necessary for gardens, but also greenspace for a desirable urban living environment. When those subdivisions were built, there was not much incentive to develop natural parks and greenspaces for passive recreation. In fact, for most Lexingtonians, a “park” is a place where they or their children play competitive sports. As our city plans to accommodate substantial future growth, it will be important to make room for public areas within the city’s boundaries where people can engage with nature. It would seem that our mission to promote native plants in our community calls for our response to the Comprehensive Plan update process as well as our engagement with the city’s parks and greenspaces.

*Beate Popkin*

## In Remembrance of Mary Carol Cooper

*By Suzanne Bhatt*

Mary Carol Cooper was a friend to many *Wild Ones* members and she touched countless others throughout the community with her volunteer endeavors. She served on the boards of several local nature preserves and environmental groups, leading efforts to get people outdoors and involved with nature. Most especially, she educated us all about the benefits of native plants and the “evils” of invasive species. The legacy she left has been memorialized at two of the nature preserves that she loved.

A trail in Mary Carol’s honor will be dedicated this spring at Floracliff Nature Sanctuary where she was a board member and volunteer. The Mary Carol Cooper Loop Trail connects the nature center to one of the original trails leading to Elk Lick Falls. It leads to her beloved blue-eyed Marys in a spot designated for future placement of a bench and beyond to areas where rattlesnake plantain orchids and lily-leaved twayblade orchids are likely to be found.

At Raven Run Nature Sanctuary a memorial bench has been placed near the nature center (see photos below). It honors Mary Carol’s long involvement with the preserve, helping to build the trails and selling admission tickets in the early days of its existence. Later she helped with trail maintenance and, during the last months of her life, with the planting of a butterfly garden next to which the memorial bench has been placed. The bench was donated by her Sierra Club friends in acknowledgement of the many gifts she bestowed on that organization.

While we continue to feel the loss of our friend Mary Carol Cooper, her spirit lives on in the natural places that she loved and worked tirelessly to protect and enhance.



## Check Out This New Learning Challenge

Lexington's Department of Environmental Quality and Public Works is offering a pilot program designed to inform and engage residents in environmental issues. The anticipated outcome is that participants will help the department connect with the community by sharing their academy experiences with family, neighbors, friends and co-workers and by providing feedback from their networks to the department.

Beginning May 20, a series of seven workshops is planned to explore the work of environmental quality and public works, actions residents can take on behalf of the environment and ways to engage in local environmental issues. Topics will include wastewater, urban forestry and stormwater, energy and transportation, and waste. The 12 month program will culminate with participants putting their knowledge to work implementing projects related to the content of the academy sessions. A limited number of projects will be selected by class vote and each participant will be given \$2,500 to contribute to the project of his/her choice.

More information is available on the department website at <https://www.lexingtonky.gov/citizens-environmental-academy-overview> along with a link to the electronic application form. Deadline for submitting applications is **March 31**.

## Considering Sedges

At the February 2 *Wild Ones* meeting Whitney Baker of Kelly Nursery provided the following list of carexes, grassy plants commonly known as sedges. Gardeners wanting to add texture to their blooming plantings might consider some of these. His recommendations, along with the soils they tolerate and their plant characteristics, include the following:

Species	Common	Dry	Average	Wet	Spreading	Evergreen
Appalachica	Appalachian	X	X			
Cherokeensis	Cherokee	X	X	X	X	X
Eburnea	Bristle-leaf	X	X			
Grayi	Gray's	X	X	X		X
Laxiculmus	Hobb or Bunny Blue		X			X
Muskingumensis	Palm		X	X		
Pensylvanica	Pennsylvania	X	X	X	X	
Vulpinoidae	Fox		X	X		X

## 6th Annual Native Plant Symposium



**Saturday, March 18, 2017**

**8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.**

**UTC University Center, 642 E. 5th St., Chattanooga, TN**

**\$60 in advance Non-Members**

**\$50 in advance for Wild Ones Members**

Information and registration form online at <http://tennesseevalley.wildones.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2016/11/2017-Symposium-Brochure.pdf>

**The symposium is planned to provide tips on natural landscaping and plant selection for both experienced and beginning gardeners.**

# Backyard Birding...with Cats

By Katrina Kelly

Do you have cats but also love birding? The cartoon characters Sylvester the Cat and Tweety Bird aren't clichés in the animal world. The hunting instinct of real life domestic felines is one of the leading causes of death for birds with an estimated 1.4 to 3.7 billion deaths per year in this country. According to a study by the Wildlife Management Institute, cats on average kill one bird per 17 hours of outdoor time. Only about 25% of that prey is brought back home, which often misleads homeowners to think their cats are not frequent hunters.

These statistics are alarming to backyard birders and cause a real dilemma for cat owners who care about birds. If you fall into the latter category, here are some actions you can take in your yard and in the wider community to potentially reduce bird deaths.

## #1. Bird Feeders

Set up feeders to discourage birds from feeding on the ground where they are more vulnerable. Feed trays that catch dropped seeds are available to attach right below feeders. Using "no mess" and high quality seed blends or only suet is another way to limit bird activity on the ground. Locate feeders in open areas so birds can see any approaching cats. If you think cats can climb up to your feeder, place it on a very tall shepherd's hook or post. If the feeder is hanging from a tree, you can attach a protective plastic dome over the top of it to deflect cats.

## #2. Birdbaths

There are many types of birdbaths available that hang from a tree or pole. After having a typical standing birdbath for awhile, we found one of our cats hanging around it just waiting for an unsuspecting bird. We have now replaced it with a hanging birdbath consisting of a plastic bowl and wire hanger. It is actually easier to empty and refill with water than its predecessor.

## #3. Make Cats Easy to See and Hear

If your cat wears a collar, pick a bright colored one or one with a bell that can be seen or heard by a bird. There are companies advertising specialty bird-saving collars like BirdBeSafe and ChirpOn. Check them out.

## #4. Keep Cats Indoors

Not only does this protect your cat from a multitude of diseases carried by other cats and rodents, but keeping them indoors more cuts their time hunting. Bringing them in at nighttime alone may reduce bird deaths by 50%. While it can be a slow process training outdoor cats to spend more time inside, newly acquired cats can easily adapt to indoor living.

## #5. Donate or Volunteer to Feral Cat Programs

According to the website LiveScience, feral cats pose a greater threat than pets because they live outdoors and must hunt for their food. There are many TNR (trap, neuter, return) programs aimed at controlling feral cat populations. All of them seek volunteer help. To find a local TNR Program, search [www.neighborhoodcats.org](http://www.neighborhoodcats.org). Another option is to support programs focusing on finding homes for adoptable cats.

## #6. Resist Hanging Bird Houses

Finally, you can help protect fledglings by not offering birds any sites where they may be tempted to hatch eggs. Instead you can strategically place resting perches where birds will be safe at night.

None of these suggestions are perfect but, perhaps, something in the list will spark an idea to help protect our bird population.



## Valerie Askren Offers Ideas for Wildflower Hikes



On Thursday, March 2, Valerie Askren, author of four books on walking, hiking and backpacking, principally in Central Kentucky, spoke at the monthly *Wild Ones* meeting. She shared her top suggestions for walks and hikes to the best wildflower viewing in our area.

She began by focusing very close to home with pictures of yellow trout lilies blooming right along Richmond Road on Henry Clay's estate, proving that sometimes the most beautiful specimens are right in our back yard. She moved on to a discussion of "best trails," those with the greatest variety and density of blooms, running water, few people, and color that varies from week to week. The following are three easy to reach favorites she shared with us.

**Lower Howard's Creek:** Twenty minutes from Man O War Blvd. out Athens-Boonesborough Rd., this lovely area offers both guided and unguided hikes through wildflowers and along creeks. The John Holder Trail is 1.4 miles, open to the public daily from sunrise to sunset. It can be accessed from the parking lot behind Hall's Restaurant. Information at <https://www.lowerhowardscreek.org>.

**Asbury Trails:** Two to three miles of wildflowers and waterfalls located 20 minutes from Man O War Blvd. out Hwy 29 toward High Bridge. Turn right on Shanty Hill Lane. The Asbury Farm gate is locked at 8 p.m. April through September, at sunset during the winter. Information at <https://www.asbury.edu/academics/departments/natural-sciences/facilities/asbury-trails>.

**Shakertown:** Three thousand acre Preserve, 37 miles of trails, 25 minutes from Man O War Blvd. out Harrodsburg Rd. The preserve offers prairies, woodlands, watersheds, cane breaks and a wonderful variety of wildflowers. Hikers are asked to be off the trails by dusk. Directions and maps can be picked up at the front office in the Trustees' Building. Hiking in the preserve is free of charge. Information at <https://shakervillageky.org/the-preserve/>.

For more details about places to enjoy the wildflowers of the Bluegrass, consult the list of Valerie's books on this page.

## Books by Valerie Askren

*Backpacking Kentucky: Your Guide to the Most Beautiful Trails in the Bluegrass* (2017) Paperback

*Hike the Bluegrass and Beyond* (2016) Paperback

*Five-Star Trails: Louisville and Southern Indiana: Your Guide to the Area's Most Beautiful Hikes* (2013) Paperback

*Hike the Bluegrass: Your Guide to Hiking, Walking and Strolling across Central Kentucky* (2011) Paperback

## March Calendar



### Bernheim Arboretum

**Sat., Mar. 25 from 2 to 4 p.m.—Early Spring Wildflower Walk.** Join Wren Smith, Interpretive Programs Manager, for a walk to celebrate the spring ephemerals. Members \$10; non-members \$12. Registration payment due by 4 p.m. the day before the hike. Call 502-955-8512 for more information.

### Floracliff Nature Sanctuary

**Wed., Mar. 29 at 1:30 p.m.—Mid-Week Hike.** Moderate hike led by Josie Miller. The first of two mid-week hikes that will feature some of the early wildflowers along the trail to Elk Lick Creek.

### McConnell Springs

**Tues., Mar. 14 at 6 p.m.—Author Speaker Series: John Snell, author of *Red River Gorge, My Second Home*.** Location is McConnell Springs, 416 Rebmann Lane. The event is free and open to the public.

### Raven Run Nature Sanctuary

**Fri., Mar. 17 at 6:45 p.m.—Woodcock Watch.** This is a 1 to 1 1/2 hour hike around the park looking for these elusive ground dwelling birds. Bring flashlights and binoculars. Program is weather dependent so call 859-272-6105 before you head to the program.

### Urban Forest Initiative

**Sat., Mar. 11 from 10 a.m. to noon—Tree Pruning Workshop at the UK E. S. Good Barn.** UK Senior Arborist Stacy Borden will teach participants the basics of when, why and how to properly prune a tree. **Space is limited so RSVP to Ellen Crocker at [e.crocker@uky.edu](mailto:e.crocker@uky.edu).**

### UK Arboretum

**Sat., Mar. 11 from 1 to 3 p.m.—Volunteer Fair.** Training for new and returning volunteers. Call 859-257-6955 for more information about the event.