

Native Plant Society of Northeastern Ohio

Jackson Field in Cuyahoga County

Wildflower Walk Archives



2 April 2014



Skunk cabbage, *Symplocarpus foetidus* Lisa K. SchlaG 2014

With the recent ending of a very cold and snowy winter, our first wildflower walk of 2014 was more of a general signs of spring nature walk led by Cleveland Metroparks Naturalist Jeff Reibe. The group of six individuals followed the bridle trail south to a small stream which led down to the Chagrin River.



Wild Leek, *Allium tricoccum*

Lisa K. SchlaG 2014



Greek Valerian, *Polemonium reptans*

Lisa K. SchlaG 2014

Along the way we examined everything green emerging trying to identify each to species. Poking their heads 2-3 inches out of the ground were wild leek leaves. Other plants identified included: greek valerian, dame's rocket, wild hyacinth, and the invasive lesser celandine. This highly invasive ground cover was spotted everywhere and much effort will be needed to keep this invasive plant from taking over the entire river valley.



Lesser celandine, *Ranunculus ficaria*

Lisa K. SchlaG 2014



Dame's rocket, *Hesperis matronalis*

Lisa K. SchlaG 2014

On our way along the river, we finally discovered the goal for the night. Many skunk cabbage flowerheads were poking out of the mucky ground -- leaves still a few weeks behind.

Folklore on skunk cabbage was shared including the meaning of the scientific name, *Symplocarpus foetidus*.

Symplocarpus, the genus, means connected fruit. This pertains to the clustered family. *Foetidus*, the specific epithet, means foul smelling. The leaves have a rubber tire smell which attracts flies to the flowers for pollination. On cold winter and spring days, the temperature conditions inside the spathe can be up to 30 degrees warmer which is an inviting environment for the pollinators.



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The Chagrin River provided us with glimpses of wildlife:

- a kingfisher;
- a pair of great blue herons;
- a red breasted merganser;
- a beaver;
- a woodcock was heard in the open field along the river; and
- spring peepers in a nearby wetland serenaded us with their loud peeping.

The forecasted rain held off, but the temperatures were dropping as we finished our walk. Looking forward to the progression of spring as the days warm in the weeks to come.

Judy Barnhart