

Audubon Edibles Trip Report
Alpine Groves County Park
March 20, 2008
Leader: Beverly Fleming

Want to know about plants? Just ask county parks naturalist and self-proclaimed forager Beverly Fleming. The lady is a veritable encyclopedia of wild edibles. Actually, foraging might be a really useful skill if prices keep rising. We'll all be out there nibbling "weeds" with Beverly!

Eleven of us trekked the park's trails this cool, breezy morning to a chorus of spring songbirds. Parula Warblers, Titmice, White-eyed Vireos, Cardinals, Towhees, and Wrens sang. Downy, Red-bellied, and Pileated Woodpeckers called and a pair of Cooper's Hawks flew close enough for a look. The Bald Eagles were not around but we did get a look at their large nest in a pine tree.

As an old South Carolina botanizer, I was especially interested in learning more about Florida's native plants. Some of the ones I wrote down in my notes were Cupid's Shaving Brush, Biden's Alba or Spanish Needle, St. John's Wort, Hawkweed that looks like dandelions, Mock Bishopweed that's in the mallow family, Lyre-leaf Sage, and Coral Ardesia which is an invasive plant that spreads prolifically with its inedible red berries. Several note-takers had pages full of plant species.

Networking with like-minded folks is part of the fun of our Audubon nature walks. Today, we met witty, 83-year-old Ed who fell in love at first sight with Passion Vine! Lara and Nancy told us about the Natural Living Alliance, Linda of Ponte Vedra would like a neighbor to carpool with, Mary Anne just wants to recognize all the "cool stuff" on her 6 acres, and the 3 gentlemen from Julington Creek shared some history of the area. Melinda, Ned, and I kept getting distracted by birds which were also foraging in the plants.

This was a wonderful morning. Thank you Beverly Fleming! We appreciate all you do.

Teddy Shuler, St. Johns Audubon Education Chair