

# The *Traveller*

A Newsletter of the Bartram Trail Conference

Spring 2013

## Early Americanists Gather at Wormsloe

A busload of colonialists crossed the Agates of Wormsloe State Historic Site, in Savannah, as part of the three-day meeting of the Society of Early Americanists.

Sarah Ross, President of the Wormsloe Institute for Institute for Environmental History, led the scholars—mostly of early American literature—on a tour of the famous plantation, where of course William Bartram stopped a couple of hundred years ago. In addition to the tour, the group had the opportunity to gawk at the extraordinary DeRenne Library, where a session on early American Environmentalisms was held.

Professors Timothy Sweet (West Virginia University), Gordon Sayre (University of Oregon) and Susan Scott Parrish (University of Michigan) led the roundtable, while our own Thomas Hallock moderated.

The Bartram Trail Conference was kind enough to help support the outing, and as the bus made them a captive audience, scholars were reminded of the BTC's tremendous record of stewardship and public outreach.

Let's hope for further collaboration between the BTC, the Society of Early Americanists and other academic communities! ❀

## Wormsloe Marker

The Wormsloe Foundation and Mr. and Mrs. Craig Barrow III, working with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources and the Bartram Trail Conference, has secured a marker noting William Bartram's visit with his father John Bartram to the Wormsloe Plantation, in 1765. This marker will be installed at the Wormsloe Plantation interpretive center (near Savannah, Georgia), and will be dedicated in September of 2013. This marker will serve as an introduction to William Bartram for many of the visitors to Wormsloe, and will no doubt spark an interest in some to discover just who William Bartram was and the knowledge he left us.

Instrumental in obtaining this marker were Chris Floyd (manager for the Wormsloe Historic Site), and BTC's vice president Dorinda Dallmeyer. ❀



*Pictured with the new marker are Diana and Craig Barrow, and Dorinda Dallmeyer*

### Officers and members of the board

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# Meeting William Bartram

*Jonathan Shafer*

One day several weeks ago, my classmates and I found ourselves in the special collections of Auburn University's Ralph Brown Draughon library viewing a set of peculiar prints that conjured contact with a time and place unlike our own. Our class in American Revolutionary Era history was visiting the library as part of our introduction to William Bartram. The prints in question were reproductions of Bartram's original art, now housed in Britain's Natural History Museum in London. The facsimile reproductions, produced by Alecto Historical Editions, were the gift to the university by Helen and Dwight Carlisle. Turning from image to image, I was impressed at how alive the crocodiles, finches, and flowers of eighteenth century Florida appeared and started to wonder about their creator. Having tried to draw such things myself, I know how challenging it can be to capture an accurate likeness, let alone a lifelike one. Producing pictures like these required more than persistence, it required a passion for nature.

With the help of Dr. Kathryn Braund, we all became better acquainted with that emotion's source: the intelligent and enterprising (if slightly luckless), William Bartram. Though I would be lying if I said we were excited by Bartram's taxonomic descriptions of southern fauna and flora, I would also be lying if after reading *The Travels* I said we were not impressed by the pluck and perseverance of a man who managed to traverse several thousand miles of sparsely inhabited territory and describe what he saw there in vivid detail.

Those details gave life to a landscape that has long since passed from our day-to-day experience. Studying in a place that bases its identity on built structures and not natural spaces, it was pleasant to retreat into the vanished south of Bartram's time. Floating through the verdant wetlands and hearty forests that have become the roads, homes, and shopping centers of modern America, we were

able to experience a place whose character has become obscured. Though some of us were quick to observe that Bartram had in fact mischaracterized the places he described as untrammelled, we all agreed that his book was a window into a world that people have since remade.

In fact, it was Bartram's failure to recognize the influence of Native Americans on the landscape that provided the most interesting food for thought. By making the south out to be a virgin wilderness, Bartram made us wonder what our own unseen influence might be on the world around us. By raising this question, young William imparted a bit of the passion that must have motivated his own journey to each of us. In the future, though it is unlikely any of us will undertake a similar voyage of discovery, our work will be informed by the eager curiosity that sent Bartram on his intrepid trip more than two hundred years ago.

As our class pondered Bartram's art, I concluded that a welcome feeling of animation among their subjects complemented the images' clarity and simplicity. They bespoke more than their creator's talent. They also indicated a love of nature. We were happy to have met the intelligent and enterprising William Bartram. While he may not have achieved prosperity in his years in the South, suffered from a debilitating illness and lengthy convalescence during his travels, and garnered only tepid affirmation after publishing his book, Bartram nonetheless managed to enrich the lives of his contemporaries and people down to the present day. ❁

Jonathan Shafer is a doctoral student in Auburn University's history program. He plans to study the impact of auto travel on tourism in the American West ca. 1880–1930. When not engaged in academic work, Jonathan enjoys taking road trips, going backcountry camping, and watching Detroit Tiger baseball. He encountered William Bartram in Kathryn Braund's seminar on the American Revolutionary Era.

# Letter from the President

Please join us in North Carolina for our 2013 meeting!

The BTC will hold its 2013 biennial conference in western North Carolina at The Mountain Retreat and Learning Center (aka The Mountain). The Mountain, a few miles west of Highlands, NC, was used at the site of a joint BTC/ North Carolina Bartram Trail Society (NCBTS) meeting in 1999; and has been used several times by the NCBTS for meetings. The dates for our meeting are:

Friday October 11, 2013 through Sunday October 13, 2013.

The registration fee for the conference is \$225 (double occupancy). Please note this fee includes two nights lodging (double occupancy) and all meals. Given the limited number of rooms at The Mountain, we are encouraging as many registrants as possible to sign up for double occupancy—that is having a roommate. If that will not work, we can make on a request basis a single occupancy room available for \$295.

To register please follow the link below to The Mountain's online reservation system: <https://mountain.campwise.com/CAMP/default.aspx?AppName=CW&SELLOC=CA0000&OnlineSection=OLRG>

For more information about The Mountain: <http://mountaincenters.org/pages/home.php>

The program for the October meeting is also in this issue of the newsletter. I want to thank our conference planning committee, Kathryn Braund, Dorinda Dallmeyer, Tom Hallock, and Brad Sanders for all of their time and effort. I also want to thank Jim Kautz, Lamar Marshall, and Walter Wingfield from the North Carolina Bartram Trail Society (NCBTS) for all of their contributions in developing an outstanding program for the meeting.

Looking forward to seeing you in the mountains this fall! ❁

*Chuck Spornick*  
President, Bartram Trail Conference

# Bartram Trails in Putnam Committee Continues to Move

The Bartram Trails in Putnam Committee in Palatka, Florida, was established in September of 2012 to design and build a trail system featuring more than twenty sites visited by or written about by William and John Bartram. They will build a virtual trail web site featuring the writings of both describing the sites and the natural history. There will be a sixty-mile waterways trail as well as biking, hiking, and driving trails throughout the county.

The City of Palatka and the group have been awarded a major grant (\$15,000) by the Florida Humanities Council to design and build the main trail kiosk in the city's riverfront park—the site of William's Indian settlement where the residents "were civil and appeared happy in their situa-

tion." The city, in conjunction with Georgia Pacific, is building an environmental education River Center to be completed in 2014. This will become the Bartram Trail Headquarters with educational panels, displays and artifacts. The committee has also applied for the Cultural, Heritage, Rural and Nature Tourism Grant Program from VISIT FLORIDA to publish maps, brochures, and information booklets.

The committee consists of twenty Putnam County residents and collaborations with over a dozen groups including Bartram Trail Conference members Charlotte Porter, Kathryn Braund, Charles Spornick, and Thomas Hallock. The Putnam County Commission and the Palatka City Commission have both endorsed and empowered the group.

In April two of the members will visit with Judith Magee (Curator and author of *The Art and Science of William Bartram*) at the Natural History Museum of London to open dialog about Dr. Fothergill's collection of drawings and samples from William Bartram. The shipment was sent from Palatka's Stokes Landing site of Spalding's Lower Store.

The committee is looking forward to its Project Workshop this summer featuring the above-mentioned scholars. This will be a two-day event to introduce the Bartrams to the community and gather information for the virtual trails. The date has yet to be determined.

Contact Sam Carr at scarr304@aol.com or 386-937-3901 for further information. ☼

## Bartram Trail Conference Membership Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

### Primary Areas of Interest in the Bartram Trail

(try to be specific about geographic locations and activities, i.e., specific Bartram sites, and whether or not you like to hike, read, garden, etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Annual Member Dues.  
Please check one.

- Individual \$25
- Family \$30
- Student \$10
- Contributor \$50
- Sustainer \$100
- Sponsor \$250
- Patron \$500

*Please check one of the choices:*

- I am a new member.
- I am renewing my membership.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please send payment to:*

Anne Hurst Weeks  
138 N. Chaparral Ct.  
Hull, GA 30646

*Your dues support our newsletter, web site, Fothergill Fellowship Awards and other Bartram Trail Conference projects.*



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# Bartram's Bible and Animal Advocacy

Michael Gilmour

Providence University College

William Bartram's *Travels* combines scientific reporting complete with Linnaean taxonomies of excruciating detail, and surprising poetic flourishes. One quickly grows accustomed to reading of palm trees said to be pompous, or the plumage of Spanish curlews that are "white as the immaculate robe of innocence," gleaming in the cerulean skies. Bartram's observations encompass "Men and manners" as well as whatever "may contribute to [their] existence." What interests me here is one curious way he brings these two subjects together, namely his habit of aligning human characters with the natural world. Reading about an insect, bird or animal on one page frequently recalls a human character mentioned on another. Said differently, Bartram populates his writing with anthropomorphic animals and zoomorphic people.

To illustrate, immediately after a description of the great land tortoise that "issues forth in the night, in search of prey," Bartram reports an encounter with a lone Seminole occurring at "the close of day." He fears this man intends to kill him but manages to assuage his violent intent. His suspicions were accurate, as it turns out. A chief later informs him this warrior is an outlaw who recently escaped justice, vowing to "kill the first white man he met." Note the parallels between these two episodes. A hunting tortoise leaves his home, at night, in search of prey. A human hunter also leaves his home (his people), at night, in search of prey (a white man). Both stories appear in close proximity.

Or consider his vivid account of a spider attacking a bee. The arachnid is a "cunning intrepid hunter" that "conducted his subtil [sic] approaches with the circumspection and perseverance of a Siminole [sic] when hunting a deer." Here too commentary on the natural world aligns with proximate human characters because at this point, Bartram is in the company of "an excellent marksman." They come across two bears and this hunter shoots one but to Bartram's surprise, the other does not run off. Instead, the second bear "approached the dead body, smelled, and pawed it, and

appearing in agony, fell to weeping and looking upwards, then towards us, and cried out like a child." When the hunter prepares to shoot the cub, the writer is conflicted: "I was moved with compassion, and charging myself as if necessary to what now appeared to be a cruel murder, endeavoured to prevail on the hunter to save its life, but to no effect! for by habit he had become insensible to compassion towards the brute creation." We move quickly from the bear story, which highlights the hunter's skill as an expert shooter, his violence and his lack of compassion, to the spider story. Both use the terms "hunter" and "prey," both emphasize the predator's prowess, and comment on the victim's distress. Whereas the cub cries like a child, the bee (Bartram refers to it as "he") endeavors to extricate itself from the web, becomes exhausted by his struggles, and suffers "the repeated wounds of the butcher." It is difficult not to read these stories in light of one another, with the result that Bartram most resembles the cub in its tender child-like grief for the fallen dam, and the murderous hunter the butchering spider.

Similar overlapping occurs in Bartram's use of the Bible, which subtly lies beneath his scientific reportage like a palimpsest. Though not often referred to explicitly, its influence is pervasive. For the Quaker Bartram, the world is "a glorious apartment of the boundless palace of the sovereign Creator." Early on he rhapsodizes over the "amplitude and magnificence" of Charleston, which presents to his imagination "an idea of the first appearance of the earth to man at the creation." Bartram thus grounds his real-life adventures in the mythological landscape of Genesis. He even arrives at this American Eden after sailing through a "furious gale," recalling the opening verses of the Bible that progress from watery chaos to order as God separates water and land. And if the lands he visits are Eden, Bartram is Adam, exercising his God-given dominion over fish, birds, cattle, wild animals, "and over every creeping thing" (Genesis 1:26). He comments on each category in *Travels* and even occasionally assigns names to species of flora in true Adamic fashion (cf. Genesis 2:19).

The Genesis creation narratives emphasize the interconnectedness of human and

nonhuman animals: created on the same day (1:24–27); made from dust (2:7, 19); given the breath of life (1:30; 2:7; 7:15, 21–22); alike in covenant with God (9:12), and so on. The animals provide Adam with companionship, and they in turn depend on Adam for their names (2:18–20). Adam is also a gardener, like John and William Bartram (2:15; cf. 2:5). In like manner, the Eden we find in *Travels* reveals a deep interconnectedness among all living things, and even forms of interdependence. "In every order of nature," he writes, "we perceive a variety of qualities distributed amongst individuals, designed for different purposes and uses." Animals serve human needs but remarkably, Bartram advocates for them as well, at times urging others against unnecessary killing. He writes of human obligations to other living things, writing about "our duties to each other, and all creatures and concerns that are submitted to our care and controul [sic]." Soon after this acknowledgment of human obligation to animals, he writes of "horned cattle, horses, sheep, and deer," a list that distinguishes domestic from wild animals just as we find in Genesis, with its reference to human responsibility to other living things, usually translated as "dominion" (1:26–28).

Animals lurk in the background as Bartram describes human characters, and the reverse is equally true. These overlapping narratives about humans and nonhumans remind readers of the interrelatedness of all sentient life. The drifting of imagery across the species defies the rigidity of Linnaean taxonomy, suggesting animals are quite human and humans quite bestial. For Bartram, his poetic blurring of the species is a by-product of a key theological assumption, namely his repeated insistence that all living things originate in the creative acts of God. Almost 70 years before *The Origin of Species*, Bartram wrote eloquently of the interrelatedness of the natural world, and out of this flowed concern to limit the suffering of non-human species.

This is an abbreviated version of a *Huffington Post* blog (<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/michael-gilmour/>). For a still longer version with documentation, feel free to contact the author at michael.gilmour@prov.ca. ☼

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# Bartram Trail Conference 2013 Biennial Conference

October 11–13, 2013

The Mountain, Scaly Mountain, North Carolina

## Friday

- 4:00–6:00 Check-in and Late Registration  
Registration fee: \$225 for double occupancy
- 5:30 Reception
- 6:30 Dinner
- 7:30 Welcome to The Mountain—Chuck Spornick
- 7:45 Demonstration of traditional Eighteenth Century Cherokee Crafts

## Saturday

- 9:00 Open the meeting
- 9:15 *A Cherokee Looks at William Bartram*—Tom Belt  
Elder-in-Residence, Cherokee Language Instructor at Western Carolina University
- 10:00 Botany Panel: *The Botany of the Cherokee Mountains, Then and Now*  
Dan Pittillo  
Ed Schwartzman  
Jack Johnston
- 11:00 Break
- 11:15–12:00 *Cherokee Trails and Trading Paths*—Lamar Marshall
- Lunch
- 1:15 *The Cowee Townsite and Cherokee History*—Tyler Howe, Tribal Historic Preservation Specialist, Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians
- 2:00 *Following Billy into the Vale of Cowee*  
Leave The Mountain by van for a driving tour down river to Nikwasi, Watauga, and Cowee, with the customary “repast” at Cowee, Cowee Mound, north of Franklin, NC on SR 28.
- 6:00 Return to the Mountain
- 7:00 Dinner

## Sunday

- 9:00–1:00 Hike on The North Carolina Bartram Trail to Scaly Mountain  
Lunch and Tour of the Bartram Botanical Trail at the Highlands Botanical Station

*the 2013 biennial conference is sponsored by*

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## Conference Registration Instructions

**1. Friday night session:** we will have three demonstrations of Cherokee crafts: Ramona Lossie, rivercane basketmaking; Mary Thompson, stamped pottery; Sonny Ledford, moccasin making and blowgun demonstration

**2. Registration for the Conference.** The Mountain will be managing all of our registrations for this year’s conference. Just follow the link below to the registration. You will need to set up an account, so select the “Create a user name” button on the lower left. After setting up your account, log in. From the login screen select the button on the bottom right “Add program.”

You will be prompted: **Do you have a Group Registration ID provided by your Group Leader?**

Answer no, and then select the **Proceed** button below, which will take you to the Programs page

On the Programs page, scroll down until you find: **2013 Bartram Trail: 10/11/2013–10/13/2013.**

Immediately below select: Bartram trail (teen/adult) for \$225 and then select the **Next** button below.

On this page, you can purchase a Conference T-shirt and pay your dues. This is a great opportunity to renew your dues for the BTC! Select the **Next** button below and then you will need to provide information on arrival and departure, lodging, and whom you will room with. You can review all your selections, and then proceed to Checkout for online payment.

For technical assistance with your online registration call 866-433-4548 For more information visit our website or contact our office at 828-526-5838

<https://mountain.campwise.com//CAMP/default.aspx?AppName=CW&SELLOC=CA0000&OnlineSection=OLRG>

The Traveller  
c/o Anne Hurst  
138 N Chaparral Ct.  
Hull, GA 30646