

Laura Cotterman has joined the Garden staff as Publications Manager. She assumes responsibility for our newsletter, brochures, announcements, press releases, and other aspects of the job so ably done in the past by Sandra Brooks-Mathers. Laura holds a BA in Biology with an emphasis in conservation and ecology from Vassar College and a Masters in Plant Ecology from N.C. State University. She brings a wealth of experience in botany and knowledge of North



Carolina plant communities from work in positions and contracts with the N.C. Natural Heritage Program, the Plant Conservation Program, and The Nature Conservancy. Between college and graduate school, Laura worked summers as curator and program director of the nature museum at the Highlands Biological Station. She has done editing for UNC Press and UNC's Center for the Study of the American South, and is a writer as well. For the last fifteen years, she served as copy editor and managing editor of the *Natural Areas Journal* and the Natural Area Association's newsletter. Laura lives in Hillsborough with her husband, John Cotterman, who works for Habitat for Humanity, and their fifteen-year-old daughter, Rachel.


The North Carolina Botanical Garden publishes this Newsletter six times a year.

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Report from the Herbarium

In the Footsteps of André Michaux?

by Alan Weakley, Curator of the UNC Herbarium

Many botanists have aspired to walk in the footsteps of André Michaux, but Harry LeGrand Jr. may have literally done so on September 10, 2003.

The North Carolina Natural Heritage Program (NCNHP) biologist was visiting a previously identified natural area in Scotland County known as the Green Pond Bay Rim. LeGrand's field work is part of the Scotland County Natural Area Survey, one of a series of county surveys aimed at locating significant conservation lands in all 100 of the state's counties. These surveys are part of a long-term effort by the NCNHP to "inventory" the state's natural lands, establish conservation priorities, and work with private individuals, corporations, agencies, land trusts, and conservation organizations to conserve the state's diverse natural heritage.

Green Pond Bay Rim was identified in the early 1990s as an important natural area supporting dry longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris*) sandhill vegetation and a large population of the imperiled Pickering's morning-glory (*Stylisma pickeringii*). As he walked through the blazing white "sugar sand," LeGrand noticed some small matlike plants he did not immediately recognize. After puzzling over them, he made a collection (now at the UNC Herbarium) that he and other botanists later confirmed to be pygmy whitlow-wort or Coastal Plain nailwort (*Paronychia herniaroides*). In Radford, Ahles, and Bell's 1968 *Manual of the Vascular Flora of the Carolinas*, this species is reported only for South Carolina (Barnwell, Lee, and Darlington Counties), but I had a vague memory of an earlier report for North Carolina.

A trip to the UNC library revealed that the only previous North Carolina sighting of the plant was by none other than André Michaux, one of the earliest and most important North American explorer botanists! I decided to delve a bit deeper to see if I could determine whether LeGrand was literally walking in Michaux's footsteps.

In his *Flora Boreali-Americana* (1803), Michaux named *Paronychia herniaroides* and described the plant as growing "in arenosis aridis Carolinae septentrionalis" ("in dry sands in North Carolina").

A microfiche image of the type specimen in the Michaux Herbarium in Paris has two labels, one stating "in sabulosis Carolinae" ("in sandy places in Carolina") and the other "pinières arides" ("dry pine forests"). Neither source gives a date or detailed location, but further investigation revealed that Michaux traveled through appropriate habitat for pygmy whitlow-wort in North Carolina twice. In 1789 he trekked from Richmond to Wilmington, then southward to Charleston. In 1794 he repeated his 1789 itinerary but then also traveled from Charleston to Charlotte, and on via Salisbury and Fayetteville back to Charleston.

The latter trip seems the more likely time that Michaux would have observed the whitlow-wort, as all the known populations of pygmy whitlow-wort in the Carolinas are from the inner Coastal Plain and Sandhills and he would have passed through ideal locations and habitats in the vicinity of Fayetteville. In fact, he departed Fayetteville to the west on September 23, crossed the Lumber River the next day (entering present-day Scotland County), and passed at most several miles from Green Pond Bay Rim on September 25, before crossing into South Carolina on his way to Long Bluff (now Society Hill). Dry sandy habitats that might support pygmy whitlow-wort are few along this path, and it is indeed possible that Harry LeGrand found the same population first collected by André Michaux 208 years, 11 months, and 15 days before!



André Michaux