

## **A Program Not To Be Missed!**

Wednesday, September 16, Dr. Jeff Kirwan, author of "Remarkable Trees of Virginia" will discuss his book at the Gloucester Library at Main Street Center at 7 PM. Master Gardener Bill Walker has arranged Dr. Kirwan's visit as a service to the public. This is an opportunity to hear the story of the five Gloucester County entries in this 'remarkable' book!

This was an incredibly involved process because the 'tree team' had to sort through the thousand nominations for trees to be included that had come from passionate tree lovers from all over Virginia. Narrowing down those entries to the selected one hundred was a challenge and necessitated a lot of travel to see the candidates.

Just as a tree is more than a tree, sometimes a book is more than a book. In "Remarkable Trees of Virginia" by Nancy Ross Hugo and Jeff Kirwan you are doubly rewarded. I expect marketing experts might label it a coffee table book because of its dimensions, 11 ¼ X 12 ¼, but I would demur. It is so difficult to put down, it is a 'lap' book.

Photographer Robert Llewellyn has a wide reputation among Virginians for "Upland Virginia", "The Academical Village" and other award-winning books and his photographs in this book are mesmerizing. Whether winter or summer, dawn or sunset, Llewellyn's camera has caught the magic of each tree.

Chosen for their beauty, age, and significance, the selected trees were studied over a period of four years. Jeff Kirwan actually walked across Virginia, three hundred dedicated miles, to more intently see trees!

Some of the trees in the book are hundreds of years old and others are extremely large and it was fascinating to learn that those two attributes may not necessarily be found in the same tree. Just as small folk may be old and very large ones young, so it is with trees. For example, a small red cedar growing on the Pembroke cliffs near Blacksburg was alive when Martin Luther posted his 95 theses on the door of Wittenburg Castle Church in 1517.

The authors are scientists so you may be sure that the facts presented are facts, however there is nothing cut and dried about the text! Every tree has its own story engagingly told. Not all of the stories are happy: one sad tale is the loss of hemlocks in Virginia decimated by the spread of the wooly adelgid.

However, the wooly adelgid story is also a bit of a mystery. At Mountain Lake in Giles County about 30% of the Eastern Hemlocks have survived the pest that has killed as many as 95% of the hemlocks in Shenandoah National Park. Don't you wonder why?

In our area nearly all tree devotees mourned lost trees after Isobel but Virginia's third largest live oak, the Algernourne Oak at Fort Monroe was spared. According to R.J. Stipes, professor of plant pathology and physiology at Virginia Tech, this amazing oak may have been germinated in 1540. Its spread of 97 feet is home to colonies of yellow-crowned night herons. Another live oak, at Hampton University, is known as the Emancipation Oak.

Do plan to hear Dr. Kirwan next Wednesday evening. You will be so glad you did.

#### AFTERWARD:

After reading the book and thinking about trees and what a difference they make in our lives, I was remembering a specific oak tree. It grows majestically along Route 17 directly across the highway from the Short Lane Ice Cream Store. On the other two corners are sited Lowe's and a gas station distinguished by large signage. The stop light at that busy intersection offers you the chance to admire the oak. Can you think of any enterprise that is more valuable to Gloucester than that tree? Far in the future if a business desires to use that corner, can the tree be a part of its site planning? We understand of course that it is always cheaper to clear a site, or even to tear down rather than reuse. But local folk deserve beauty, rather than banality, and you know the continued use of the old building across the highway has added charm to those delicious ice cream cones.