
Wildflower Spot – June 2014
John Clayton Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

RATTLESNAKE WEED

Hieracium venosum

By Helen Hamilton, *Past-president of the John Clayton Chapter, VNPS*

Now blooming along roadsides, edge of woods and meadows, Rattlesnake Weed has small yellow dandelion-like flower heads on long wiry stems. They grow in clusters, 1-2 feet tall, with flowers April through July. The tiny, one-seeded dry fruits carry yellowish bristles.

Most of the leaves are at the base of the plant. They are green, veined with purple and egg-shaped, often densely hairy on the edges.

Rattlesnake Weed grows in dry open woods, thickets and clearings, in every county in Virginia. The plant ranges from New York to northern Georgia and west to Michigan, Kentucky, Tennessee and Alabama.

The genus name comes from the Greek *hierax*, for “a hawk,” suggesting another common name, “Veined Hawkweed.” Pliny and others supposed that hawks used this plant to strengthen their eyesight. While relatively widespread, Rattlesnake Weed is most common in areas where



rattlesnakes occur. Another source of the common name is its use as a snakebite remedy. Powdered leaves and roots and teas have been used medicinally, and folk medicine considered the juice in fresh leaves effective against warts. ❖

Photo: Rattlesnake Weed (*Hieracium venosum*) taken by Kathi Mestayer
For more information about native plants visit www.vnps.org.