

ARKANSAS NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

Fall Meeting Schedule

September 25-27, 2026

Mena Street Event Center

[918 Mena Street; Mena, AR 71953](#)

Friday, September 25th

- 5:00 pm** Doors to the venue open and registration begins; auction setup. *Bring your native plants, books, homemade jelly, jewelry, or plant art for the live and silent auctions. Proceeds from the auction support ANPS scholarships, research grants, and small grants programs.*
- 6:00 pm** Potluck begins & silent auction opens.
- 7:00 pm** Discussion of field trips.
- 7:15 pm** Live Auction begins.

Saturday, September 26th

- 9:00 am** Field trips (*view hike sheets for meetup locations*)
- 2:00 pm** Field trips (*view hike sheets for meetup locations*)
- 5:00 pm** Doors to the venue open, registration continues. Potluck supper.
- 6:00 pm** ANPS Business Meeting.
- 7:00 pm** Speaker, Dr. J.D. Wagner – “Fire Ecology: Flora and Fire”
- 8:15 pm** Silent Auction closes and meeting adjourns.

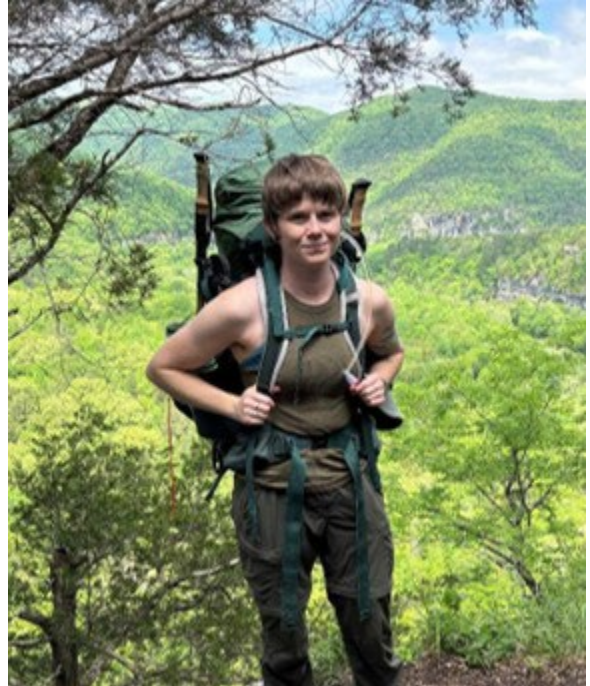
Sunday, September 27th

- 9:15 am** Field trip.
- 12:00 pm** Field trip finishes.

About our speaker:

Dr. J.D. Wagner

J.D. Wagner is an ecologist with The Nature Conservancy's Arkansas Field Office in Little Rock, where they have been part of the team since May 2025. They joined TNC while completing their Ph.D. in Integrative Biology at the University of California, Berkeley. Originally from the southern Ozarks, J.D. developed a deep appreciation for the natural world at an early age, spending much of their free time exploring the woods and creeks, climbing trees, and catching critters. That lifelong connection to the natural world ultimately led them to a career in ecology and made joining The Nature Conservancy's Arkansas team an especially exciting opportunity. J.D. earned an M.S. in Geosciences from Baylor University (2019) and a Ph.D. in Integrative Biology from UC Berkeley (2025). Their research has focused on plant ecophysiology, paleobotany, and the use of plant fossils as proxies for reconstructing past climates and environments. Across their graduate research, they explored how plants respond to environmental conditions and how those responses can help us better understand both modern and ancient ecosystems in rapidly changing climates. At TNC, J.D. leads the plant monitoring program, using ecological data to inform management and restoration efforts across Arkansas. Their work supports TNC as well as its collaborators and partners in evaluating ecological conditions, tracking changes over time, and working toward desired future conditions for the state's beloved natural areas.



ANPS Fall 2026 Hiking Itinerary

Venue City: Mena, AR

Saturday Morning (9:00 AM)

Cossatot River State Park - River Corridor Trail
with Greg Rajskey & J.D. Wagner

Queen Wilhelmina State Park - Lovers' Leap Trail
with Jennifer Ogle & John Simpson

Saturday Afternoon (2:00 PM)

Queen Wilhelmina State Park - Lovers' Leap Trail
with Jennifer Ogle & Steven Augustine

Pine-bluestem Woodland Restoration - Ouachita
National Forest
with Virginia McDaniel & Joe Ledvina

Sunday Morning (9:15 AM)

Fulton Branch Glades (between Mena & Hot Springs)
*with J.D. Wagner, Virginia McDaniel, John Simpson,
& Steven Augustine*

NOTE: We may add another Sunday morning field trip, depending on attendance numbers.

Saturday Morning – 9:00 AM

Cossatot River State Park - River Corridor Trail

Carpool from Sun Country Inn at 8:15 or meet at the Cossatot River North Trailhead at Brushy Creek Recreation Area at 9:00

Leaders: Greg Rajskey (815-814-5055) and J.D. Wagner (501-253-3147)

Hiking difficulty: easy

Description: The trail follows along a ridgetop that overlooks the confluence of Brushy Creek and the Cossatot River. This is a botanically interesting area because it is located at the juncture of two Ecoregions (Coastal Plain and Ouachita Mountains). As a result, many unique plants are found here, and the assemblage of fall flora is stunning.

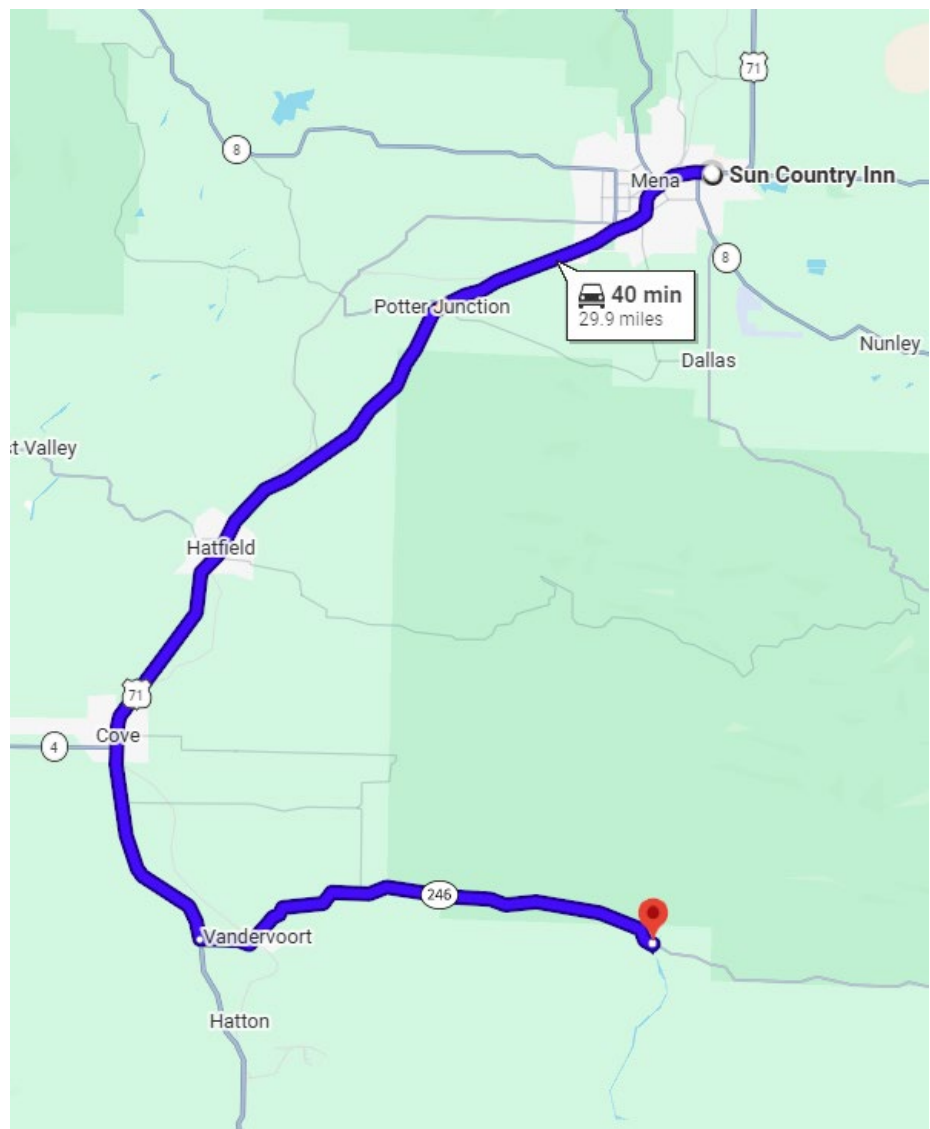
Directions:

GPS coordinates: 34.37943, -94.23703

[Link to Google Maps](#)

From Sun Country Inn:

1. Turn left onto US-71.
Go 20.6 miles.
2. Turn left onto AR-246 E toward Vandervoort. Go 9.2 miles.
3. Turn left into the parking area for Cossatot River North Trailhead (it's on the left just before the Cossatot River bridge) at the Brushy Creek Recreation Site.



Saturday Morning – 9:00 AM

Queen Wilhelmina State Park - Lovers' Leap Trail

Carpool from Sun Country Inn at 8:30 or meet at the N end of the Queen Wilhelmina Lodge parking lot at 9:00

Leaders: Jennifer Ogle (479-957-6859) with John Simpson (501-276-3204)

Hiking difficulty: moderate

Description: Lovers' Leap Trail is a short (not quite a mile back and forth) and generally level walk along the north slope of Rich Mountain through a rich hardwood forest with lots of cucumber magnolia, slippery elm, and pawpaw, and a diverse assemblage of other mesic woodland trees, shrubs, and fall wildflowers. Those of us who don't leap will turn around at the Lovers' Leap platform, an overlook with a splendid view of the surrounding country, perched atop a rock wall covered with jointweed, an uncommon perennial herb of Arkansas' highland glades and southern sandhills. Life Listers will want to know that we'll see Walter's crownbeard in abundance, an Arkansas native known only from Polk County.

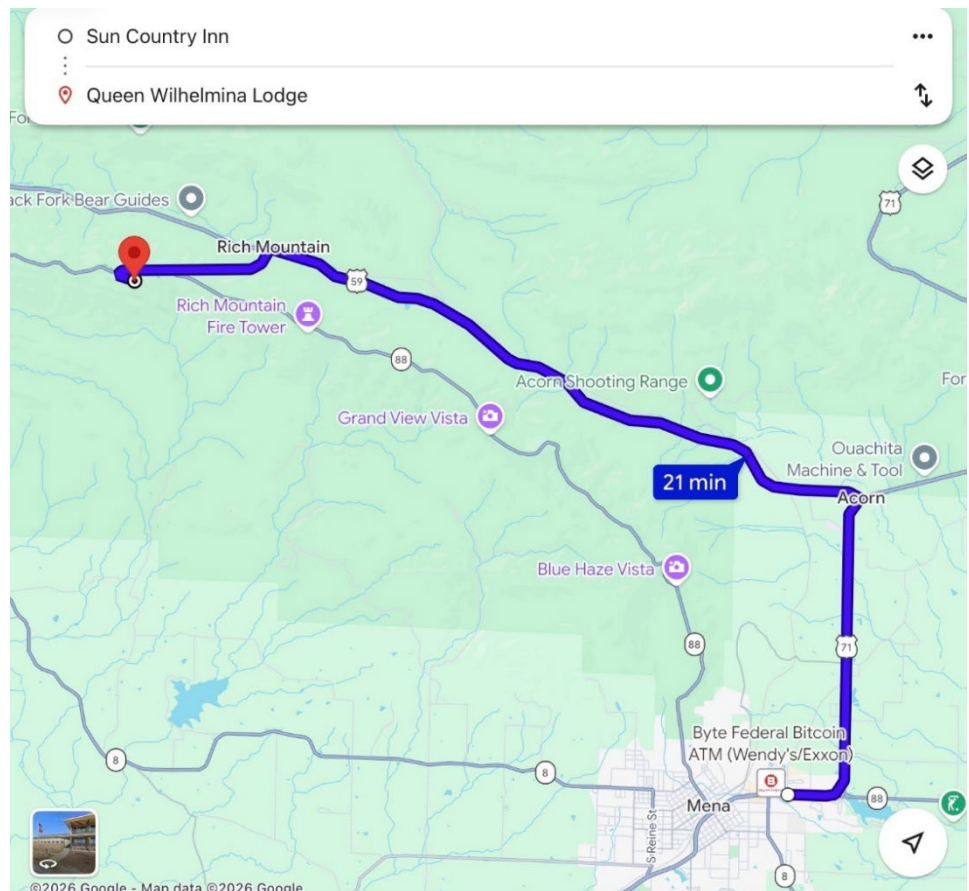
Directions:

GPS coordinates: 34.684586, -94.369367

[Link to Google Maps](#)

From Sun Country Inn:

1. Turn right onto US-71. Go 4.6 mi.
2. Turn left onto US-270 W/US-59 N. Go 8.8 mi.
3. Turn left onto AR-272 W. Go 1.6 mi.
4. Turn right onto AR-88 W. Go 0.6 mi. Queen Wilhelmina State Park is on the left. Field trip leaders will meet you in the parking lot at the N end of the lodge to guide you to the trailhead.



Saturday Afternoon – 2:00 PM

Queen Wilhelmina State Park - Lovers' Leap Trail

Carpool from Sun Country Inn at 1:30 or meet at the N end of the Queen Wilhelmina Lodge parking lot at 2:00

Leaders: Jennifer Ogle (479-957-6859) and Steven Augustine (919-259-4228)

Hiking difficulty: moderate

Description: Lovers' Leap Trail is a short (not quite a mile back and forth) and generally level walk along the north slope of Rich Mountain through a rich hardwood forest with lots of cucumber magnolia, slippery elm, and pawpaw, and a diverse assemblage of other mesic woodland trees, shrubs, and fall wildflowers. Those of us who don't leap will turn around at the Lovers' Leap platform, an overlook with a splendid view of the surrounding country, perched atop a rock wall covered with jointweed, an uncommon perennial herb of Arkansas' highland glades and southern sandhills. Life Listers will want to know that we'll see Walter's crownbeard in abundance, an Arkansas native known only from Polk County.

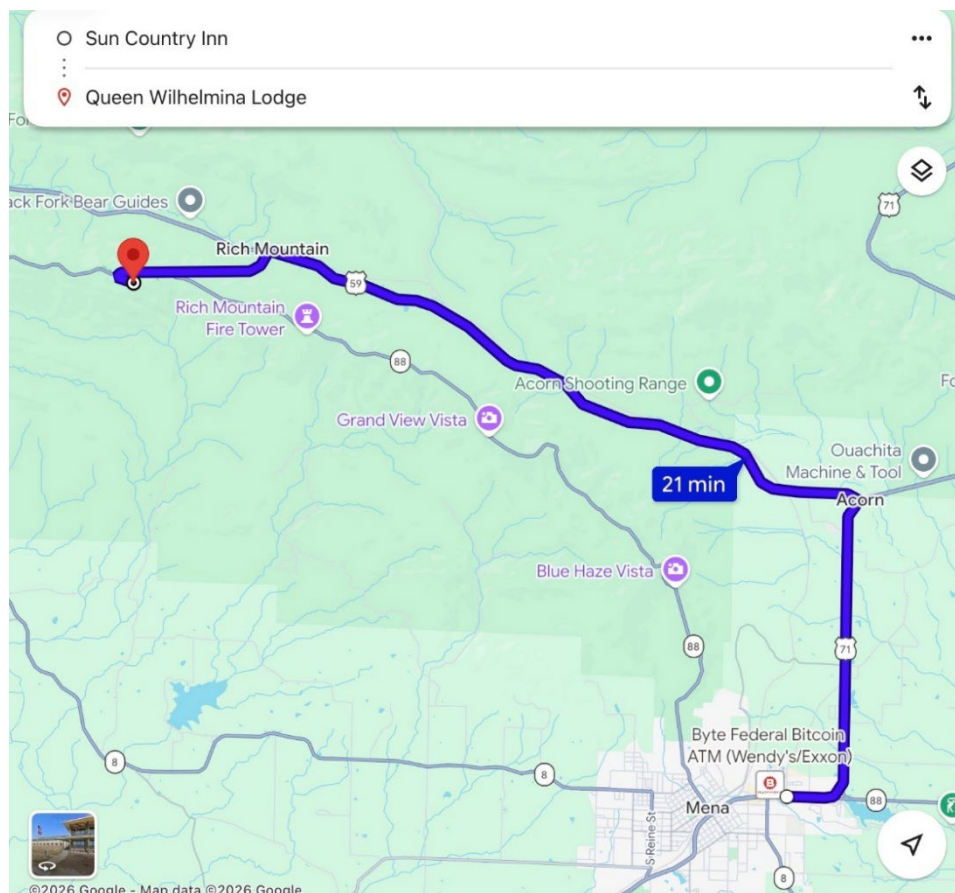
Directions:

GPS coordinates: 34.684586, -94.369367

[Link to Google Maps](#)

From Sun Country Inn:

5. Turn right onto US-71. Go 4.6 mi.
6. Turn left onto US-270 W/US-59 N. Go 8.8 mi.
7. Turn left onto AR-272 W. Go 1.6 mi.
8. Turn right onto AR-88 W. Go 0.6 mi. Queen Wilhelmina State Park is on the left. Field trip leaders will meet you in the parking lot at the N end of the lodge to guide you to the trailhead.



Saturday Afternoon – 2:00 PM

Pine-bluestem Woodland Restoration - Ouachita National Forest

Meet at the Shell Gas Station in Boles at 2:00

Leaders: Virginia McDaniel (828-545-2062) and Joe Ledvina (702-281-4610)

Hiking difficulty: easy

Description: Over the last several decades the Ouachita National Forest has been restoring Pine woodland communities through thinning and prescribed burning. This restoration is critical in the recovery of the bird species, such as the threatened red-cockaded woodpecker and rare Bachman's sparrow. In the process, the herbaceous diversity of these once closed canopy forests had flourished. There are over 600 species of forbs and grasses in these woodland communities, and we will have the opportunity to see many in peak bloom. They include composites like asters, tickseed sunflowers, blazing stars, ironweeds, and goldenrods; a variety of legumes such as sensitive brier, snout pea, pencil flower, and purple prairie clover; and grasses which include big bluestem, little bluestem, and Indian grass.

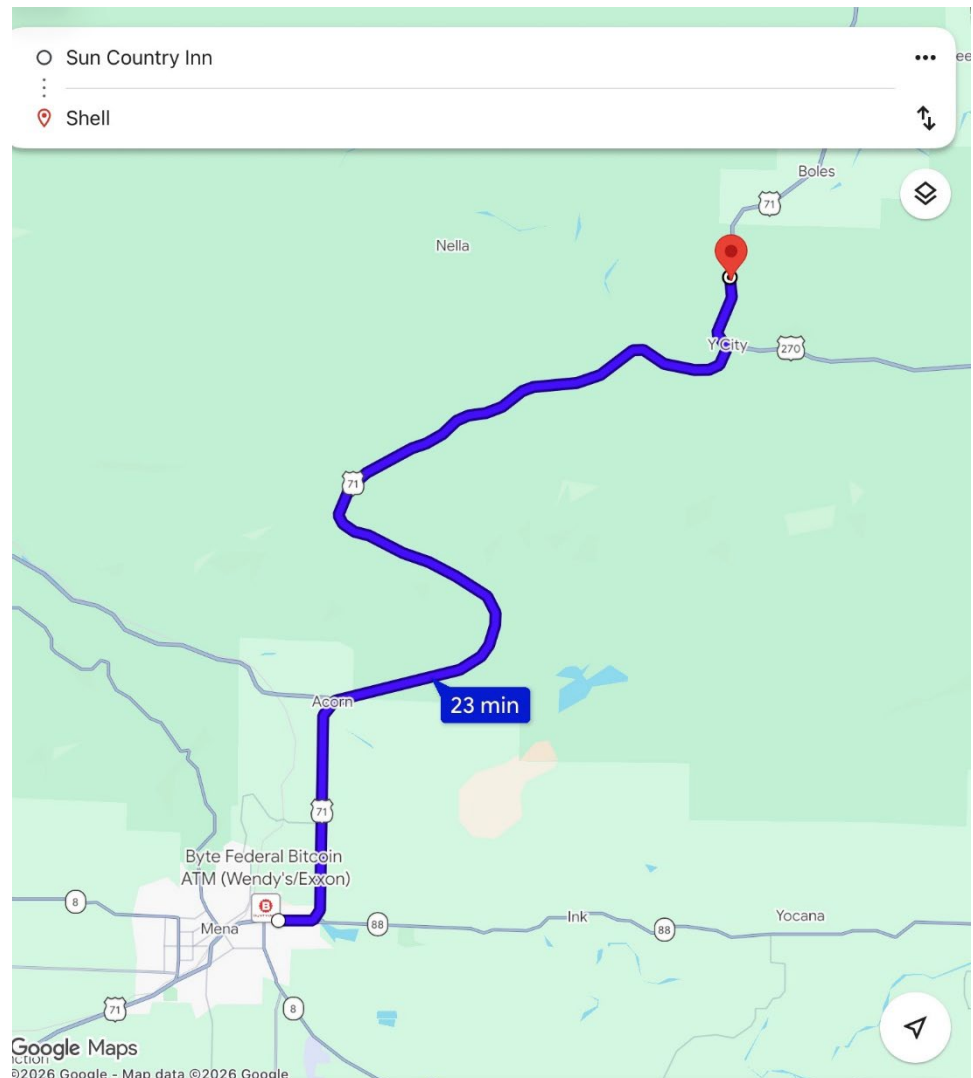
Directions:

GPS coordinates:

34.752075, -94.0760
(Shell Gas Station in
Boles)

[Link to Google Maps](#)

From Sun Country Inn:
Turn right (north) on 71.
Go 21.4 miles (Stay on
71N). Shell Gas Station
will be on your left.
Regroup there and pick
up snacks and Virginia
&/or Joe will lead you
the rest of the way.



Sunday Morning – 9:15 AM

Fulton Branch Glades (between Mena & Hot Springs)

Carpool from Sun Country Inn at 8:30 or meet at the coordinates at 9:15

Leaders: J.D. Wagner (501-253-3147), Virginia McDaniel (828-545-2062), John Simpson (501-276-3204), and Steven Augustine (919-259-4228) **Subject to change if we add another field trip.*

Hiking difficulty: This is a fairly easy field trip which involves some walking on flat ground but we may get our feet wet so prepare accordingly.

Description: This is a Mazarn shale glade which is sparsely covered with tree species, such as red cedar, post oak, blackjack oak, and shortleaf pine. Shrubs includes buckbrush, dwarf hackberry, fragrant sumac, and winged elm. The open areas are diverse, with lichens on rocks, in shallow soils, and hanging from the trees. We will see widow's cross, prickly pear cactus, false aloe, milkweed, and alum root. The rare dwarf pipewort is found on this glade but is more easily seen in the spring. We will be on the lookout. There is a stream going through the glade which has Ouachita blue star and a variety of other species.

Directions:

GPS coordinates: 34.623264, -93.656278

[Link to Google Maps](#)

From Sun Country Inn:

1. Turn right onto US-71. Go 0.5 miles.
2. Slight right onto AR-88 E. Go 29.5 miles.
3. Turn Right onto US-270 E. Go 4.4 miles.
4. Take a sharp left onto AR-298. Go 0.5 miles.
5. Turn right onto the dirt road at the "Fulton Branch Rec Area" sign ("Womble Trail" / "Puckett Bend Rd"). Go 1.5 miles.
6. Turn right at the T. Go 0.2 miles. Hike leaders will be there to indicate where to park along the road.

