Mosses in the Field: 
A New Approach to Identification

Jerry Jenkins & Susan Williams

June 7 – 13, 2020

A new course, focused on field identification, emphasizing macroscopic characters and ecological patterns. Field identification is hard but possible: most of our mosses can be identified to genus or species in the field. We have created this course, and a suite of new books, charts, and digital tools, to help. It is designed for students with some lab and field experience who want to get the next level. It could be taken by a beginner, but it would have to be a brave one. The course will cover five habitats and about 60 species, traveling a little farther from Eagle Hill and visiting different habitats than we do in our introductory course. It is structured as a series of problems. Each day we pick a habitat, prepare by studying moss maps and our mobile moss forest (MMF) indoors, and then try to identify as many as we can in the field. When we can’t, we bring them back and put them under the microscope. At the end of each day, we make a map of the site we visited and discuss who is and isn’t there and why. Our goal is to spend lots of time handling, comparing, and enjoying mosses, indoors and out. Nothing works better, and nothing is more fun.

about the instructor

Jerry Jenkins (jerrycreejenkins@gmail.com) trained in philosophy and mathematics, and has done botanical work and teaching for 54 years. He has free-lanced in botany and ecology and worked as a researcher for the Wildlife Conservation Society. Currently he produces books and imagery for the Northern Forest Atlas Project. He has written books on acid rain, climate change, conservation easements, Adirondack geography, and three photographic guides (Woody Plants, Sedges, Mosses) and accompanying digital atlases for the Atlas Project. He is currently working on a photographic guide to grasses, a full-length field guide to woody plants, and a book on ecological patterns.

Susan Williams (Rowemosser@gmail.com), of Rowe, Massachusetts, has studied the northeastern mosses for twenty-five years, taught about them for twenty, and is currently working on a field guide using the ecological approach we emphasize in this course.