VOL. 78 | NO. 8
OCTOBER 2016

THE AMERICAN BIOLOGY TEACHER

About Our Cover

Shown on this month's cover is a partial cluster of samaras from the yellow poplar tree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) resting on a chestnut oak leaf (*Quercus montana*). The yellow poplar is primarily distributed in the eastern and southeastern United States and is considered one of the tallest hardwood trees in North America. The shape of the flowers and the distinctive leaf shape both bring to mind the shape of tulip flowers; thus, yellow poplars are sometimes referred to as "tuliptrees" or "tulip poplars."

Samaras are often known by other names, such as "helicopters," "wingnuts," or "whirlybirds." The fibrous, paper-like "wing," developed from the ovary wall of the dry fruit (called an "achene") containing the seed, enables the seed to be carried by wind. These wind-dispersed samaras are an anomaly, as most eastern trees with showy flowers produce fleshy fruits and rely on animals for seed dispersal.

The image was taken in Scott's Run Nature Preserve in Fairfax County, Virginia, using a tripod-mounted Nikon D750 with a 60 mm Micro-Nikkor lens, by Bob Ford, Professor of Environmental Biology at Frederick Community College, Frederick, MD.

Contents