

Native Orchid News:

Vol. 2 Issue 4

December 2000

The Newsletter of Native Orchid Conservation Inc.

Native Orchid Conservation Inc.
35 St. Michael Road., Winnipeg, MB R2M 2K7

Board Meetings:
First Wednesday of every month: 7:30 p.m.
Powerland Computers
170 Marion Street

Orchid of the Month
Sparrow -Egg Lady's Slipper (*Cypripedium passerinum*)

NOCI Website:
www.nativeorchid.com
For more information on NOCI,
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This was an exciting year for NOCI. We enjoyed the fellowship and all of us learned something on the field trips this year. We attended conferences and workshops and played a larger role in the conservation community. Work on our projects went ahead, in spite of bad weather, and we have ideas for others in the following year.

We received support and encouragement from many people and agencies in accomplishing this work. We would like to acknowledge, in particular, the generosity of Manitoba Model Forest in providing us with a grant of \$5,498.00 for research into the pathological condition affecting *Cypripedium* species in their area. If you would like more information about the Manitoba Model Forest, please check out the following web sites:

manitobamodelforest.net (locally)

www.modelforest.net (nationally)

Now that the year is drawing to a close, we would like to remind our new members that their membership renewals are due January 1, 2001. The first 25 people to renew will receive a copy of the new orchid calendar. (See Richard Reeves' article elsewhere in this newsletter.)

This is also the time when we ask our members to dig deep and give some extra support in the form of a donation. This money helps us to carry on our work conserving endangered plants and their habitats, and it is also shows others that our membership is committed to our goals. A tax receipt will be issued for donations of \$10.00 or more. We are grateful for your support now and throughout the year. A special thank you to those members who volunteered throughout the year. We couldn't do this without you.

Seasons Greetings and best wishes for a happy and safe holiday season!

Quebec Conference:

In our last newsletter, we mentioned that NOCI President Bud Ewacha and vice-president Doris Ames were able to attend the Millennium Wetland Event that was held in Quebec City from August 5th to 12th of this year. The following report is an overview of their findings at this conference.

This event, hosted this year by the Government of Quebec, is sponsored annually by a different country around the world and is the largest of its kind dealing specifically with wetlands. The theme this year, "Sustaining Our Peatlands", attracted scientists from 60 countries and over 2000 delegates.

After local interest was generated because of our Gull Lake Wetlands display, it was suggested to NOCI that our attendance would be valuable at the Quebec 2000 conference. This is our second international display illustrating the Gull Lake Wetlands that NOCI is trying to save. So far, two organizations that have been supporting us in this goal are Nature Saskatchewan and Ducks Unlimited. Delegates from the Smithsonian Institute, attending the conference, applauded our efforts to save the Gull Lake Wetlands and praised our displays. The laser prints of botanical specimens were particularly enjoyed by visitors to our booth. Other members of the scientific community supported our efforts. For instance, Dr. Galen Smith, a taxonomist from the University of Wisconsin, remarked that in view of the large number of plant species found there, the fen may well have world class status. He expressed a wish to visit it himself and we hope he will. The editor of The Wetland Journal (published in St. Michael's, Maryland) asked us for an article on how we used the native orchid to get the support of the general public in preserving the Gull Lake Wetland. Doris has submitted the article and we should know in about a month if it will be accepted for publication. The many comments in our guestbook from conference delegates were generally positive and supportive of our goal to save the Gull Lake Wetlands.

Our time spent in Quebec City consisted of manning our display for the first few days, and then we were able to take field trips to observe the efforts of the Quebec government in designating and maintaining ecological reserve sites along the St. Lawrence River. There were 38 tour buses in all used during these excursions.

The itinerary of the tour we chose included visits to several protected areas including ecological reserves and parks as follows:

The Leon-Provencher Marsh in Neuville - a marsh covering 19 ha, which contains some undeveloped grounds and woody zones surrounded by trails to allow observation of flora and fauna representative of Quebec's ecological reserves. Saint-Quentin Island Park, near Trois Rivieres - an Island harbouring plant and animals consistent with the annual phenomenon of spring flooding. This is accessible, also, through a network of boardwalks (some as high as 10 feet) and trails funded by the Trois Rivieres Chamber of Commerce. The developing of walkways is important in permitting the access of exploring these fragile environments without damaging them.

Ile-aux-Sternes - an island and ecological reserve built on dredged material. As the only man-made island in the world, it demonstrates the evolution of plant and bird communities. Over 100 plants have propagated naturally since its creation.

The RAMSAR site of Lake Saint Pierre - the flood plain surrounding this lake is a spring staging area for aquatic birds.

The Tourbieres-de-Lanoraie Ecological Reserve - 600 metres of board walks guide you through a vast expanse consisting of ombrotrophic and minerotrophic elements representative of the west section of the St Lawrence lowland wetlands. The site is covered by a thick peat layer 5,000 to 10,000 years old, and is home to a unique type of vegetation normally found in the James Bay region. The plan to have this peatland declared an ecological reserve was started by local residents who wanted to preserve their supply of spring water.

We had the benefit of being accompanied on this trip by a number of local government officials, botanists and biologists who gave insight to the development of these areas. We are especially grateful to Leopold Gaudreau and Real Carpentier, from the Quebec Ministry of the Environment, for answering our many questions and encouraging us in our efforts to get Gull Lake declared an ecological reserve.

During the long bus ride, we had a chance to observe the Quebec countryside along the St. Lawrence river. It was beautiful, and quite different from Manitoba. For instance, most of the conifers have been logged out of that area and have been replaced by deciduous trees like maple, poplar and beech.

All of these ecological reserves are influenced by the St. Lawrence River. This system, which drains more than 25% of the world's freshwater reserves, is large enough to be divided into three main hydrographic and ecological sectors, each with their own specific features:

- 1.) The river area (from Cornwall to Gentilly)
- 2.) The river estuary (from Gentilly to Pointe-des-Monts/Les Capucins)
- 3.) The gulf (sector east of Point-des-Monts/Les Capucins)

Quebecers are heavily dependent upon the St. Lawrence for both industry and domestic use. 46% of the population draws drinking water directly from the river. Recreation and tourism is an expanding industry, and its inland access sees over 10,000 ships/freighters transporting goods through it every year. By the end of the 1950's, increased marine traffic, industrialization, growing populations and changing agricultural practices incorporating pesticides and chemical fertilizers had serious impact on the river's ecological balance. Indicators of deterioration by toxins today are waste effluents, contaminated sediments, and deformed and cancerous marine life.

However, determination by both the federal and provincial governments during the late 80's has started to reverse that trend through the St. Lawrence Action Plan. Some of its promises are to implement restoration plans to contaminated federal sites and wetlands, protect 5,000 hectares of wildlife habitats, create a marine park, reduce by 90% toxic liquid wastes from priority industries, and implement recovery plans for threatened species.

We are impressed by the commitment of the Quebec government in providing and managing a vast number of ecological reserves (62 established with a goal for 100) for the protection of our natural heritage. Also, the Quebec government is able to declare and protect lands as designated ecological reserves within the short span

of two years. It's encouraging to see what political will can bring about, and we hope that this may set an example to other government bodies entrusted with our resources.

We also hope that the Gull Lake Wetlands is recognized as deserving of the same type of commitment from local government to enhance its development thus ensuring its preservation for the education and enjoyment for future generations of Manitobans.

* Information on the protected areas came from the publication F28 Education in Protected Areas, published by the Quebec Ministry of the Environment.

2001 Calendar:

Native Orchid Conservation Inc. has been working closely with Manitoba Public Insurance on the production of the 2001 MPI calendar which will be distributed by insurance brokers across Manitoba. The calendar, titled "Wild Orchids of Manitoba", features twelve native Manitoba orchids with photographs and information on each. Photographs were provided by Bud Ewacha and Richard Reeves of NOCI. We hope that the calendar will help make Manitobans aware of our province's native orchids and the work of NOCI in the preservation of orchids and other plant species.

The calendars are now in the hands of the brokers. If your broker uses MPI calendars, be sure to get your copy soon to avoid disappointment.

Orchid of the month See cover photo
Sparrow-Egg Lady's Slipper (*Cypripedium passerinum*)

This 8-10" lady's slipper is primarily found in northern Manitoba. Growing at the edge of streams or gravel outwashes, it is sometimes referred to as Franklin's lady's slipper. Plants occur in scattered clumps, usually associated with spruce trees. The stems and 3-4 leaves are very hairy. A solitary flower at the top of the stem is usual, but it may have several blooms. The flower has a white, translucent, bulging lip with purple spots inside. The petals are pale green to pure white. A distinctive feature is that the blunt, green middle sepal hangs down, covering the opening of the pouch. Side petals and sepals are much shorter and blunter than those of the small white lady's slipper (*C. candidum*), and of course the habitat is markedly different.

It blooms in mid July in Churchill, Manitoba. Another peculiar feature up north, is that the ovary is often very swollen while the flower is still in bloom. I wonder if this early ripening is an adaptation to the short northern summers.

Scattered populations have been found in Quebec and, in Ontario; near Thunder Bay, and also years ago, near Lake of the Woods. The blooming period in Ontario and Quebec is June and July. Just possibly, you may come upon this unusual orchid on one of your field trips. If you do, please let Bud know right away so he can positively identify it.

If you are interested in attending a NOCI board meeting, you are welcome to join us the first Wednesday of every month at 7:30 p.m. at Powerland Computers, 170 Marion Street. The next meeting is on Wednesday, January 10, 2001. (There are no meetings in July or August.)