

2003 President's Report to NOCI AGM April 14, 2004

by Doris Ames, President

This past year was one of growth and change for NOCI. Because we believe that, ultimately, public education is the only thing that will save the native orchids, we need to grow and reach out to the rest of the community. To get effective protection for environment, we urgently need to get the public on side. I was reminded of this again recently when Peggy and I attended a seminar on Voluntary Simplicity put on by Mark Burch. He gave us many suggestions about how we might live "lighter on the land" and at the same time have a higher quality of life. One of the interesting things he said was that you didn't really need radio or television ads to get your message out. He said what you needed to do was tell others about the things you, yourself do, to protect the environment. Of course, I believe this includes joining NOCI. He said if only 10 people told 10 others it would have a profoundly beneficial effect. To this end, we have moved to become part of the larger environmental community by joining the Manitoba Eco-network. This has allowed us to participate in more events and displays and to raise our profile in the province; that is to tell more people about the need to protect native orchids and their habitat, and how they might help us to achieve that. For instance, I attended the Manitoba Eco-network annual members forum recently, and was invited to give a little talk about our organization and the work that we do, to representatives of the many environmental organizations who were in attendance. Cabinet ministers Steve Ashton and Jim Rondeau were there and I was able to bring our message to them as well.

We also plan to have a display at the upcoming Manitoba Earth Day on Sunday April 18th 11-3PM at the Assiniboine Conservatory. The theme is biodiversity. Admission is free and there are free events and fun for the entire family. We can reach more people there. Come out and join us.

We have strengthened our ties with the Manitoba Orchid Society and we met many new people at our display this month during their annual Orchid Show. I want them to know how much we appreciate the opportunity to be part of their wonderful show. More MOS

members have joined our group, and our members theirs, and this is a great benefit to us. Also we know where to look for more great fieldtrip leaders now because, boy, do they know orchids!

Peggy has arranged for the Manitoba Naturalist's Society to take out a group membership in NOCI so their members can come on our fieldtrips for only \$10. This sort of cooperation between environmental organizations helps to save the orchids and their habitat, because it means less trampling by multiple people on different trips to the same sensitive areas, in the same short blooming-time period. We can also benefit and learn more about the natural world, from their experienced members, on these trips.

This year for the first time we have been working with young people from Katimavik. 17-21 year olds participate in this program for a year where they learn about the environment and culture of Canada by doing volunteer work in different regions of the country. These energetic young people worked our display booth for a while at the MOS orchid show and we hope to involve them in some of our outdoor activities as well this year. We need to reach young people; they have high ideals and great energy. They are the ones who will need to carry on our work in the future

To help with education expenses, we are taking part in a fund raising lottery with the Ft. Whyte Nature Centre. We are entitled to 50% of the profits from any tickets we sell for them. Our goal is to sell 20 books of tickets and raise \$500 for our educational displays. The tickets sell for 3 for \$10.00. The prizes are some really wonderful trips, including one to Churchill. I know after you see Lorne's presentation tonight you will want to buy some tickets and win that trip. As an added bonus each ticket entitles you to one free admission to the exciting Ft. Whyte Centre. Please help us out with fund raising by buying some tickets tonight and selling some too, if possible.

Our projects are winding down; The Effects of Selective Cutting on Understory Plants in the Sandilands area is over at the end of this month. The orchid count was up this year for the first time in 3 years. The total count in our test plots was 110, very nearly what it was when we started, but the species mix has changed. There are

fewer large round-leaved orchids and more lesser rattlesnake orchids after selective cutting in 1997. Indeed this project has posed more questions in a way than it answered. It would be interesting to see what happens in the next five years should this project continue.

Work on our book "The Orchids of Manitoba" is going well and all the book committee members are making a terrific effort to make it the most useful orchid field guide ever. My sincere thanks to all of them. We have extended the preordering deadline to Sept 1st. Before this date you can buy the book for \$15. After Sept 1st the price will be \$17.95. Please order one tonight if you have not already done so.

Soon we will be conducting fieldtrips once again. The schedule will appear in our next newsletter. We will have a couple of new locations this year. It's fun to see people's attitude towards wetlands change when they see beautiful orchids growing in them. We need volunteers to lead these trips. Perhaps some of our "regulars" who enjoy coming along on every trip and are familiar with the routine, could help us lead them. There is much interest in these trips and there are many other projects and activities we could participate in, but we need more volunteers to take advantage of these opportunities. We can only participate to the extent that our members are willing to help us. We still need a volunteer coordinator and someone to organize refreshments. The board members don't have enough time to give these areas the attention they need. Please come forward and help us if you can. There is a sign-up sheet at the front.

At this time I would like to thank the board members who work so hard to make NOCI a successful organization. Peggy, Alice, Eugene, Richard, John and Bob, thank you so much. You have had so many demands on you and you have done such good work just the same. I am very grateful for your support and you should feel proud to have done so much for the environment, with your efforts this year. My sincere thanks as well to all our members who volunteered to help us with meetings, displays and fieldtrips, and to those who made donations large and small. We couldn't do it

without you. Thanks again for coming out to the meeting and enjoy yourself this evening!