

## 2005 President's Report to NOCI AGM 2006

by Doris Ames, President

Madame Chairperson, Members and Guests,

One of the privileges of being the president of a volunteer organization like ours is being able to give the members a report of the club's activities over the past year and to show you how our activities helped us to carry out our mission and related objectives. The annual general meeting also gives me a chance to discuss our plans for future projects with you and to let you know about upcoming events.

Most of you know from seeing our membership brochures that **our mission is to protect unique mini-ecosystems and their plant communities**. Our **six** objectives are:

1. To identify areas containing rare native plant species that are at present unprotected.
2. To work alone and with other conservation bodies, governments and private corporations to conserve native plant species in Manitoba and throughout Canada.
3. To perform research and field studies and to preserve data on, and specimens of native plants.
4. To foster an awareness and appreciation of rare native plant species through education and display.
5. To provide an association and a voice for those interested in the conservation of native plants and the natural environment.
6. To provide fieldtrips and opportunities for study for students and others interested in learning more about our native plant species.

Over the past year we made survey trips to Nopiming Provincial Park, Hecla and Grindstone Provincial Park, Churchill and southeastern Manitoba during which we identified new areas containing native orchids and other rare plants. We collected data, photographed plants and collected specimens, which were turned over to the Manitoba Conservation Data Centre.

In June of 2005, we were on hand to see 563ha of the Brokenhead wetlands protected as an Ecological Reserve. We worked on this project for seven years with the Brokenhead Ojibway Nation, Manitoba Model Forest, Manitoba Conservation, Riverside Gravel and others to finally see this rare wetland which contains 28 orchid species and 23 rare plants protected.

We continued to foster appreciation of rare native plant species and to educate people about the need for their conservation by holding displays at the following **thirteen** venues: slide show on orchids of the Bruce Peninsula at the Forty Nine Plus Club last February, the Whiteshell Cottage Owners Annual General Meeting and the Manitoba Orchid Society orchid show in March 2005, a slide show on orchid identification to the Agassiz Horticultural Society's Annual General Meeting, Arbour Day at the Conservatory and a Manitoba Naturalist Society workshop on orchid identification in May, a slide show on northern orchids for Indian and Northern Affairs Canada in June and a slide show about our conservation activities to the Native Orchid Conference held in Winnipeg last July, the Tall Grass Prairie Preserve Prairie Days in August, a slide show on our conservation activities to the Woodlot Association of Manitoba in September, we showed our educational DVD at the Science Teacher Association of Manitoba SAG conference in October, Manitoba Association of Plant Biologists Annual Meeting in November, and the Manitoba Naturalists Society members night in December.

As well, we published our field guide "Orchids of Manitoba" and our educational video "Zoom in on Native Orchids" in July. We have sold 953 books to date and handed out 200 of the educational DVDs. The response to both has been very positive and I think we can be very proud of these accomplishments.

As far as providing a voice for those interested in the conservation of native plants, we published **five** newsletters over the past year and had **five** articles on conservation published in newspapers and scientific journals. As a member of the Native Orchid Conference we continue to further orchid conservation throughout North America. This summer we conducted fieldtrips for researchers with the McAllen International Orchid Society and for orchid enthusiasts

from Belgium. We especially enjoyed being out in the field with three orchid taxonomists, Dr. Bob Ferry, Dr. Chuck Sheviak, and Bill Summers from Missouri; we learned a lot from them. Through our website [www.nativeorchid.org](http://www.nativeorchid.org), which averages over 1000 hits per month, we reached many other people worldwide who are interested in native orchids and other rare plants including medicinal plants. For instance we have a fellow called Hasim from Turkey who e-mails us regularly with wonderful photos of Turkish orchids and sends his regrets about not being able to attend our meetings because he lives a bit too far away.

Finally in May and June, we conducted three fieldtrips for our members in southeastern Manitoba to see native orchids, as well as fieldtrips for the Native Orchid Conference delegates in July and a field trip for the Whiteshell Cottage Owners Assoc in June. On these outings we provided interpretation of the plants and animals living in those mini-ecosystems as well as identification of native orchids. We also had a lot of fun as these trips seem to bring out the unconventional personalities of our field trip leaders.

Board members also found time to attend two capacity building workshops: a funding forum and a workshop on board excellence. As a result of these workshops we sent out a questionnaire to the members asking for their input on future strategic planning for NOCI. The response was good and Peggy has prepared a summary, which we will mail out to you with the next newsletter. After all the members have had a chance to look over the material we can schedule a special meeting to discuss strategic planning if a sufficient number of you are interested. I want to thank all of you who took the time to give us some feedback, we looked it over carefully, and I urge any of you who decide they would like to provide some input after reviewing the material to please send us your remarks. It's never too late to get involved!

We have now started on another project with our Brokenhead Wetland partners to construct trails and boardwalks in a portion of the wetlands so that schoolchildren and others can visit the area safely without damaging the plants. This is a major project and will take some time, because for one thing, we will need to raise over

\$500,000. You will surely be hearing more about this exciting new project in the future.

We plan to run fieldtrips as usual for our members this summer and hope to include a new location or two.

You can see by the number of activities that we are a busy group, all our work is done by volunteers and we would appreciate any help you can give us. I want to thank our board members and volunteers who worked so hard to promote native orchid conservation and to make the past year a success and also those members who support our work with their donations. I also want to encourage any guests here tonight to join our group and help us to protect Manitoba's beautiful native orchids.

The Manitoba Orchid Society is holding its annual orchid show March 24-26. The theme is "Orchid Fantasy" and we will have a new display there as usual. Please sign up to work a shift or two with our display. It is always a very interesting show and I know you will enjoy it. The sign-up sheet is at the back of the room along with some handouts about the show.

Elections will take place after the business meeting and I want to thank the special people who agreed to let their names stand for election to our board. This is a real commitment and shows your dedication to our mission.

If any of you have any announcements the time to make them would be just before the break.

This evening we have an excellent speaker, David Danyluk, the coordinator of Save Our Seine. I know him to be a very strong advocate for preservation of the natural environment. Save Our Seine is an organization, which has distinguished itself in this regard, and in 2004 I believe they won a Canadian environmental award for restoration and rehabilitation of the Seine River and its adjacent forest. I live very near the Seine and am really looking forward to David's presentation.

We have a silent auction, raffles, books and pins for sale and door prizes for your enjoyment. Thanks to all of you who donated items for the silent auction. There is a list of donor's on the wall. All money raised tonight goes towards **NOCI projects** so please buy some tickets.

In closing I want to say that I know those of us who work hard to protect the natural environment are sometimes discouraged by some of the things we see when we look around us. I want to leave you with a quote from anthropologist Margaret Mead that I always find inspirational. She said "**Never believe that a few caring people can't change the world, for indeed, that's all who ever have**".