

2006 President's Report to NOCI AGM Feb 2007

by Doris Ames, President

Mr. Chairman, Members and Guests

It is a pleasure to speak to you once again and to deliver my annual report on Native Orchid Conservation's activities in 2006. I always think the members who attend our Annual General Meetings are some of our most dedicated members. You are the solid core of environmentally-minded people who are NOCI's best representatives. Many of you have spent a lifetime admiring, studying and helping to preserve the natural world and this presents a bit of a problem. Because you are so knowledgeable anything I might say sounds a bit like "preaching to the converted". However, I am going to give it a try just the same.

This evening I would like to talk a bit about legacies.

First of all as you know NOCI works to conserve native orchid habitat. So far we have managed to get some degree of protection for more than 1000 hectares and our work continues. These protected areas containing orchid habitat and orchids are a legacy for the citizens of Manitoba.

The native orchid seed capsules that we are now collecting for storage in the national seed bank are an environmental legacy that will permit future generations to enjoy orchids as we do. The seedbank project is especially important to the five species of Manitoba's native orchids that are most liable to be seriously affected by global warming. According to Dr F W Case in his book "Orchids of the Western Great Lakes Region", these orchids all require cool soil to grow. They are *Amerorchis rotundifolia* (small round-leaved orchid), *Cypripedium passerinum* (sparrow's-egg lady's-slipper), *Cypripedium arietnum* (ram's-head lady's-slipper), *Platanthera obtusata* (blunt-leaf rein-orchid), and *Listera cordata* (heart-leaved twayblade). What is more, four of these five species grow in the far north, an area of Manitoba that is being most severely impacted by climate change. The other species, ram's-head

lady's-slipper, is both rare in Manitoba and uncommon globally and is especially in need of protection.

A third kind of legacy is private land that is protected by individuals. Last summer we were invited to visit an area of deciduous forest, part of an old farm near Woodlands, that contained large populations of lady's-slippers and other rare plants. It has never been plowed and our plant inventory revealed many interesting species. Shortly after our visit the owner phoned me and said he was going to make a conservation agreement with the Nature Conservancy or the Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation to donate it in perpetuity with a conservation agreement in his will. This means that even if it is sold it will remain intact years after he has passed on. We have many examples of landowners in Manitoba who have done just that or have donated the land outright and if you are able I would urge you to do the same and leave a wonderful gift to your grandchildren and ours. Tax receipts are issued in both cases for the fair market value of the land.

Members who would prefer to leave a gift of money in their will to be used for orchid conservation may do this in two ways. You can leave a donation directly to NOCI for general conservation work or dedicate it to a specific project, or you can leave it to Debwendon Inc. a new non-profit corporation we are setting up to collect funds for the construction of a boardwalk and interpretive trail in the Brokenhead Wetlands. Some of you who have joined us for many happy excursions to see the dozens of orchid species in that wetland might want to do just that. Debwendon means "trust" in Ojibway and we trust you to help us keep them safe. A tax receipt will be issued for all donations of \$10.00 or more.

Now I will review NOCI's activities over the past year; both those that we conducted alone and those in conjunction with other conservation organizations.

March 15 we started off 2006 with a display at the Whiteshell Cottage Owner's AGM

March 24-26 we had a display at the Manitoba Orchid Society's "Orchid Show". We met many fellow orchid lovers there and won

first prize in the educational displays for "The Legend of the Ladyslippers".

On April 26, NOCI was awarded the Premier's Volunteer Service Award for our conservation work. We were very honoured to receive this recognition from the Province and the plaque they gave us is here tonight. This award encouraged us to work even harder to conserve Manitoba's orchid species and their habitat.

May 6 we had our first fieldtrip to see spring flowers. It was the first of what would turn out to be a fun series of fieldtrips that our members signed up for in record numbers (74) thanks to Iris Reimer our fieldtrip coordinator and our excellent fieldtrip leaders.

In May we also made three survey trips to see new populations of native orchids.

May 19 we went to Woodlands and Lake Frances, May 24 we went to the Senkiw part of the Crow Wing Trail and from May 26-28 we visited the area around Grand Rapids.

On May 27 we conducted a fieldtrip to the Tall Grass Prairie Preserve and the Crow Wing Trail near Senkiw Manitoba.

June 3 and 4th we held an orchid festival in conjunction with Oak Hammock Marsh Interpretive Centre at Oak Hammock.

June 10 we led a fieldtrip to Woodridge and initiated our seed bank project that day with Dr Richard St-Pierre by putting cages on selected orchids in that cedar bog.

June 17th and 24 we conducted fieldtrips to the Brokenhead Wetlands.

June 29th the MNS and NOCI conducted a fieldtrip to Bunn's Creek in memory of Morris Sorenson.

July 8 - we led our last fieldtrip of the year right after the fire travel restrictions were lifted. In spite of the heat and drought we managed to collect the first seed capsules from early blooming orchids that day.

August 17 we had a display at TGPP "Prairie Days".

From mid-August to mid-September we collected the last of the orchid seed capsules and sent them to the seed bank.

Sept 30 - we had a display at the Woodlot Association of Manitoba's AGM

Oct 27 was Members Night and we broke all previous attendance figures mostly due to Peggy Bainard Acheson's excellent planning and our guests Carl and Lawrence Smith from the BON.

Nov 8 - As part of an ongoing series of management courses, I attended a Conflict Management workshop at the Volunteer Bureau.

Finally on Dec 4 - We had a table at the Manitoba Naturalist's Society "Market Night" and sold lots of pins and books while networking with our naturalist friends.

We appreciate the friendship and support of our fellow environmental organizations and the Manitoba Eco-network very much. We couldn't accomplish the things that we do without them. The Manitoba Naturalist Society has been especially kind to us. They buy and give away many of our orchid books as speaker gifts and this is wonderful publicity for us. They have asked us to make a presentation to their members on orchid conservation as part of their indoor program on Monday, Feb 26th at 7:30pm at the Franco-Manitobain Cultural Centre on Provencher. Come out and support us if you can. John will let you know about some of the displays and events coming up in the near future.

In closing I would like to thank our members who support all our initiatives and especially our board members who make everything possible. They are a multi-talented and dedicated group and we are very lucky to have them. Let's give them a big hand!

Enjoy the evening and thanks again for coming out.