

Native Orchid Conservation Inc.
Bittersweet Ski Trails Field Trip, June 13, 2015

The Bittersweet trails are the inspiration of Hartley and Margaret Woodward. Maintained by the Woodward and McMaster families with the support of the Bittersweet Ski Club, the system ranks among the finest trails in Manitoba. Accessible from several starting points, the system includes about 20 km of classic and 14 km of skating trails that traverse prairie, woodland and river forest. Neighbours have helped by extending trails across their properties, providing an opportunity to enjoy Manitoba in winter. The Bittersweet Ski Club is grateful to the following landowners whose lands the trails cross: Hartley and Margaret Woodward, David and Jennifer Henry, Don and Ardythe McMaster, Roland and Carol Deleurme, Agricultural Crown Lands and Whitemud Watershed Wildlife Management Area.

Located in the Assiniboine River Valley, the area consists of a river-bottom forest, mixed grasses, spring flowers, rolling prairie terrain and woods. The American Bittersweet vine (*Celastrus scandens*) embeds itself in the bark of trees and may eventually kill the supporting tree. The bittersweet uses the tree to gain access to sunlight it cannot get on the forest floor. Their orange berries are poisonous to humans.

The Assiniboine River is a 1,070 km long, flowing through Saskatchewan and Manitoba (about 60% of its basin is located in MB). It is a typical meandering river with a single main channel; its main tributaries are the Qu'Appelle, Souris and Whitesand rivers. The river takes its name from the Assiniboine First Nation and may be derived from the Ojibwe words *asin* (stone) and *bwaan* (the Sioux), possibly because the Stony Sioux used heated stones in cooking their food. The Assiniboine River was the ancestral boundary between the Cree who hunted north of the river in the land of small sticks and the Dakota/Assiniboine (Sioux Nation) who hunted south of the river in the land of no sticks, i.e., the prairie. In ca. 1744 La Verendrye established Fort de la Reine near modern Portage la Prairie. In 1818 the townsite of Brandon was established in the Assiniboine River valley as a major divisional point for the Canadian Pacific Railway.

Species list - #1 Stop (ditch beside Highway #1)

Saline shooting star
Yellow lady's-slipper
Bladder campion
Snowberry
Blue-eyed grass
Common milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*)
Birdfoot Trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*)
Seneca snakeroot (*Polygala senega* L.)
Heart-leaved alexander (*Zizia aptera*)
Silverberry/Wolf-willow (*Elaeagnus commutata*)

Ski Trails

Yellow lady's-slipper
Long-bracted orchid
Spotted coral-root

Striped coral-root (*Corallorhiza striata*)
Ram's-head Lady's-slipper (*Cypripedium arietinum*)
5-leaf bedstraw
Wild Sarsaparilla
White creamy peavine
Seneca snakeroot
Nodding trillium
Meadowrue
Carillion flower
Highbush cranberry
Bracken fern
Red-Osier dogwood
Canada anemone
Hazelnut
Golden alexander
Wild strawberry
Baneberry
Blunt-leafed sandwort
Canada mayflower
Wild ginger
Water hemlock
Downy arrowwood
Ostrich fern
Columbine
The bittersweet vine
Leaves of bloodroot
Dogbane
Bluets
Western Canada violet
Giant Hyssop
Twining honeysuckle (*Lonicera glaucescens*)
Creeping juniper (*Juniperus horizontalis*)
Hairy prairie-clover (*Dalea villosa*)
Purple avens (*Geum rivale*)
Alumroot (*Heuchera richardsonii*)
Blue-eyed grass (*Sisyrinchium montanum*)
Common milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*)
Fleabane (*Erigeron* spp.) - not yet in bloom
Hoary puccoon (*Lithospermum canescens*)
Indian hemp (*Apocynum cannabinum*)
Bishop's cap (*Mitella nuda*)
Spreading sweet cicely (*Osmorhiza depauperata*)

Baltimore oriole
Black & white warbler
Canadian Tiger Swallowtail (*Papilio canadensis*)

Boreal chorus frog
Eastern bluebird (*Sialia sialis*)