

Native Orchid News:

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Annual General Meeting

Friday, February 15, 2008

Plant of the Month

Whorled Milkwort
(*Polygala verticillata*)

10th Anniversary Annual General Meeting



Native Orchid Conservation Inc is holding its tenth Annual General Meeting at 7:30 pm on Friday, February 15, 2008 at the Manitoba Lawn Bowling Centre, 1212 Dakota Street in St. Vital. Please join us for this tenth Anniversary Celebration! In addition to the annual board-of-directors' election we have put together a jam-packed program in honour of our tenth anniversary, including two presentations, the ever-popular silent auction, door prizes, and special refreshments!

All are welcome but only members in good standing may vote in the election. For more information or to donate something for the silent auction contact Peggy at 261-9179 (leave message) or email bainardp@mts.net. We look forward to celebrating this tenth anniversary milestone with you!

Additional information is found in the President's Report.

Plant of the Month

Whorled Milkwort (*Polygala verticillata*)

by Laura Reeves

At first glance, whorled milkwort bears a close resemblance to its relative, Seneca snakeroot (*Polygala senega*). The small, white to pinkish flowers are packed into pointy-tipped clusters at the ends of divergently branched stems. Individual flowers have 5 petal-like sepals – two larger “wing-like” sepals enveloping three smaller ones. Flowers appear in late July and August. A closer inspection of the plant will reveal linear to narrowly oblong leaves, 1-2cm long, arranged in whorls of 2-5. Plants can reach a height of 6-12 inches (10-40cm), though local plants seem to fall in the short end of the range.

These annual plants love sun and can be found in moderately moist to moist savannah prairies, meadows or fields in the southeastern parklands region. They tend to be associated with sandy, sterile soils. Whorled milkwort has been found in the north block of the Manitoba Tall Grass Prairie Preserve in an “upland” site as well as in the vicinity of western prairie fringed orchids. It has also been found in the Interlake area, growing in sandy ditches with rough agalinus (*Agalinus aspera*), another rare annual.

Whorled milkwort is currently ranked as S2 (imperiled) in Manitoba. It is one of those small, inconspicuous little jobs that is easily overlooked and is likely more common than records currently indicate. Manitoba Conservation Data Centre records show that there are at least 12 occurrences in Manitoba and that it is most likely to be found in the southern fifth of the province. Whorled milkwort is ranked S1 in Saskatchewan and S4 in Ontario. It is currently unranked or under review in North Dakota and Minnesota.

Little seems to be known about the medicinal qualities of whorled milkwort. The Cherokee are reported to have used an infusion of the plant for “summer complaint”. A similar report is made of the Iroquois, who gave the tea to babies for the same reason.

The name *Polygala* is of Greek origin, meaning “many or much” (polys) “milk” (gala). It was thought that pastures that sported some of these species resulted in increased milk yields. *Verticillata* simply means “whorled”.

Plant of the Month Update

Northern adder’s-tongue fern (*Ophioglossum pusillum*)

by Laura Reeves

Two more populations of adder’s-tongue fern have been discovered since it was featured in Native Orchid News (April, 2004). This brings the total number of known sites to three! One population was found in 2006, just 3 miles east of the original Manitoba Tall Grass Prairie Preserve site. It is on Crown land that is currently used as pasture. The other site was discovered in 2007 by Dr. Richard Staniforth while he and a friend were “botanizing” in a ditch near Richer. Dr. Staniforth reported that the plants he found were quite tall (approx. 30 cm) compared to the 15 cm plants found around the Tall Grass Prairie Preserve.

President's Report

By Doris Ames

We are celebrating the Tenth anniversary of Native Orchid Conservation Inc. in 2008 and we have a special Annual General Meeting planned on Friday, February 15th to help us celebrate.

We will start with the business meeting as usual including elections to the board of directors. John Neufeld has agreed to be our nominations chair. There are four vacancies to be filled. Four members have agreed to let their names stand for election so far and a short biography appears on each one elsewhere in the newsletter. We welcome nominations from the floor at the meeting and if you would like to run for election to the board and require more information please contact John at 204-326-2357. It is especially exciting being a board member of an environmental organization at this time when there is such a focus on the environment. We really need to get more people involved in running this organization. We especially need people to help us who have experience in fundraising, publicity and designing school programs for environmental education. If you feel you cannot serve on the board you can still help us in these areas so please let us know how you would like to be involved.

After the election we will have a screening of the new dvd on the Brokenhead Wetlands called EKO produced by Debwendon Inc. The video is beautifully done and I am sure it will help us to educate the general public about the necessity for wetland conservation and to fundraise for the interpretive trails and boardwalk. We are especially pleased to have educator and artist Nora Reid, a long-time NOCI member, make a presentation about "Artistry in Nature". We will also have a silent auction, a special cake and other fun activities. But most of all we will have a wonderful time visiting with old friends and new and making plans for the next ten years. I invite all NOCI members, donors and volunteers both current and past, as well as new people who are interested in our organization to come out and join us for this special event.

There are big changes happening in the way people view the environment and in the environment itself and NOCI has a role to play in public education. I was reminded of this yesterday when I saw pussy willows in bloom on the Brokenhead Ojibway Nation in the middle of January!

Information on Candidates

Doris Ames:

Doris has been an enthusiastic member of the organization since 1998 and has served in many capacities including president. She has been in charge of project management for NOCI since 2003 and a large portion of the Brokenhead Wetlands finally received Ecological Reserve Status in 2005 during her tenure. She has continued to work to protect these wetlands and is Vice Chair of Debwendon Inc, a non-profit corporation set up by the Brokenhead Ojibway Nation, NOCI and the Manitoba Model Forest to promote and preserve the Brokenhead Wetland Ecological Reserve. She enjoys educating others about native orchids and their environment and most recently worked on the texts for our Tenth Anniversary calendar and for the Debwendon educational video and brochure on the Brokenhead Wetlands. Known for her quirky sense of humour, she enjoys spending time with others “out in the bush”.

Huguette Calvez:

Born and educated in Winnipeg, Huguette spent several years working for the Federal Government in Ottawa. Following her return to Winnipeg 5 years ago, she had been working in the area of project management for Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. Huguette is now retired. She was initiated to the native orchid cause through friends and is enthused with the fact that so many people are dedicating part of their free time to this worthy cause. She is currently secretary of NOCI and handles on-line sales. Huguette is bilingual and is able to exclaim in both official languages when she sees a particularly pretty orchid or even a clubmoss!

Richard Reeves:

Richard has been a member of NOCI since 1998. He has served as treasurer and is currently the editor of the newsletter. He is an excellent photographer and educator with computer skills, and did the layout for “Orchids of Manitoba”. He has been an amateur naturalist and environmentalist for as long as he can remember and is an outstanding field trip leader. His extensive knowledge of the Brokenhead Wetlands is a great asset to NOCI and the Brokenhead Wetland Committee. Richard is very knowledgeable about native orchids as well as other plant species in the Prairie Provinces and has a quiet sense of humour. If there is time to kill on a field trip he can always be counted on to relate entertaining facts about wood ticks!

Eugene Reimer:

Eugene grew up on a farm near Giroux, Manitoba. He is a life-long naturalist, and another excellent photographer with a special interest in orchids and insects. Eugene has been a member of our organization since 2000 and is currently our webmaster. He did the technical editing on our field guide as well. He has served on the Brokenhead Wetland Committee for the past two years and his logical mind, engineering knowledge and computer skills helped the committee to develop plans for the Brokenhead Wetlands Ecological Reserve and he is a director of Debwendon Inc. Those of us who work with Eugene know he works best after 3:00pm and it's best not to phone him before that!