

Native Orchid News:

The Newsletter of Native Orchid Conservation Inc.

Vol. 3 Issue 2 April 2001



Native Orchid Conservation Inc.
35 St. Michael Road., Winnipeg, MB
R2M 2K7

Board Meetings:

First Wednesday of every month
7:30 P.M.

Location: Powerland Computers
170 Marion Street
(No meeting July and August)

Orchid of the Month

Small Purple Fringed Orchid
(*Platanthera psycodes*)

NOCI Website:

www.nativeorchid.com

For more information on NOCI,
please contact Bud Ewacha at 253-4741
or email <bud_ge@escape.ca>

Annual General Meeting:

NOCI held its Annual General Meeting on April 11, 2001. Peggy Bainard Acheson, John Neufeld and Bob Joyce were elected to the board by acclamation. After the election, Carla Zelmer, botanist and NOCI member, gave a talk on orchids and their relationship with fungi. We all learned a lot from her enjoyable presentation.

Thank you to all the members who helped put the meeting together and came out for it. We are grateful to Wes Penner for allowing us to hold the meeting in his shop.

News:

We will be undertaking a new project this summer; a survey of the timber sales area in the southeast for native orchids and other rare plants. We secured funding from the Federal Department of the Environment, the Province of Manitoba and Premier Peat Moss. As well, we have other partners to help us with it. Once identified, these areas can be set aside from clear cutting and the plants protected. You will be hearing more about this project when details are finalized.

Displays:

NOCI will have a display at Oak Hammock Marsh on June 9th and 10th.

wildflowers, animals and birds. This trip will provide an occasion to share information over lunch, about the many interesting things we have seen over the summer and, for you to give us your suggestions for next years field trips.

This list will be posted on our website at <www.nativeorchid.com>. Please contact Bob Joyce 256-8113 if you wish to participate in any one of them.

Orchid of the Month (See cover photo)

Small Purple Fringed Orchid (*Platanthera psycodes*)

This rare and lovely orchid is found in the extreme southeast corner of Manitoba. It grows there in deciduous woodlands and along roads that cut through them. It is usually found growing in sites that have a lot of rotted leaves or other organic material on the forest floor, but it can grow in wet meadows or ditches.

The plant is tall, up to 90cm., in open areas and 60cm in the woods. The leaves are linear, broader near the bottom and smaller towards the top, until finally there are only bracts between the flowers on the spike. There are many reddish-purple flowers near the top of the spike. The flowers have fringes at the edges of the petals with the prominent lip being fringed and three-parted. There is a short curved spur.

This orchid has a long blooming period in July and August. Some people confuse it with Fireweed at a casual glance, leading to false reports. I've noticed that flowers found in the open are more colorful and larger than those in the shade. One of the pollinators is believed to be a small Skipper butterfly. Other experts think it may be a moth at night. The pods, when formed, are small and clustered close together near the top of the spike. It's hard to find pods; maybe partially because they are fragile, but also because the plant seems to be a great favourite of deer and rabbits.

One time Bud and I found some great specimens of this plant in Minnesota. It was late in the evening, so we thought we would just mark them with survey tape and return to photograph them the next day when the light was better. When we came back early the next morning, the deer, which thrive in great abundance there, had bitten the flower spikes right off. Nothing like making life easy for Bambi! Although common enough in parts of the adjacent United States and Ontario, the Small Purple Fringed Orchid, like its relatives, the Western Prairie Fringed and the Ragged Fringed Orchids, is not common in Manitoba. This orchid needs to be protected. Please contact Bud Ewacha if you come across this orchid, so the location and number of plants can be recorded.