

Native Orchid News:

THE NEWSLETTER OF NATIVE ORCHID CONSERVATION INC.

Volume 7 Issue 1 February 2005

ISSN 1499-5468



Eugene Reimer

Native Orchid Conservation Inc.

117 Morier Avenue
Winnipeg, MB
R2M 0C8

Annual General Meeting

Friday, February 25, 2005
1212 Dakota St., St. Vital

Orchid of the Month

Calypso (*Calypso bulbosa*)

NOCI Website:

www.nativeorchid.com

For more information contact

Doris Ames.

Phone: 231-1160

E-mail: adames@mts.net

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Native Orchid Conservation Inc. will hold its Annual General Meeting on Friday, February 25, 2005 at 7:30 PM at the Dakota Lawn Bowls Club, 1212 Dakota Street in St. Vital. Elections to the board of directors will take place at that time.

Peggy Bainard Acheson, Bob McGillivray and John E. Neufeld have agreed to let their names stand for election to the Board of Directors. Some information about each candidate is found on page 4. Nominations will also be accepted from the floor. If you have questions please contact the nominations chair, Richard Reeves, at 661-0879.

For more information about the AGM, please read the President's Report on Page 2.



Stained glass by Bob Joyce to be raffled at the AGM.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Doris Ames

The cure for cabin fever and the winter blues has arrived! Come out to our Annual General Meeting on Friday, February 25th; we have an agenda planned that will both inform and regale you. We will begin with the business meeting.

Our long-time secretary Alice Warren will read the minutes from last year's AGM and will ask for your ratification. After that Alice will step down as secretary and Ellen Johannesen will take over for the one-year remaining on the term. When Alice submitted her resignation, the NOCI board appointed Ellen, as per our constitution, on January 5, 2005. She is an active and young member of our organization; an outdoorswoman with a degree in Urban Studies. Ellen, as our new secretary, will bring enthusiasm and new ideas to our board and we are very glad to welcome her aboard.

I will review our activities over the past year and talk about our plans for the future. Eugene will present the financial report and we invite your questions, comments and suggestions about any of NOCI's business.

I will also talk more about our latest plans for a new and different project to enhance public awareness and promote orchid conservation. It involves the production of television public service announcements and a DVD to be used to inform members of the public about our native orchids and the need for their conservation, and will feature popular local entertainer Al Simmons, so famous right now for his recent starring role in the musical "A Year with Frog and Toad". Al is an avid supporter of environmental protection and orchid conservation and is particularly fond of Showy Lady's-slippers. I know he could be very effective in promoting orchid conservation to both children and adults in this way. We are applying to Manitoba's Sustainable Development Initiative Fund and to the Federal Eco-action Fund for financial support for this project and need other sources of non-governmental funds to get this project off the ground. Please help us with a donation if you can. If you want more information please contact me at 231-1160. The board strongly believes that there is great potential in this project for improving conservation of Manitoba's native orchid species and their habitat and I appeal to you for your support.

Following the business meeting, I will call upon Richard Reeves, our nominations chair, to conduct the election of officers to the board. There are 3 vacant positions to be filled. If you would like to let your name stand for election to the board please contact Richard at 661-0879. Nominations will also be accepted from the floor. A candidate sheet will be sent out along with this newsletter that includes a short biography on the people who have agreed to stand for election so far. Although we welcome guests at this meeting, only members in good standing will be allowed to vote so please renew your membership, if you have not already done so.

After the business meeting comes the fun part. Our focus that evening will be on Churchill. Dr. Graham Young, Curator of Geology and Paleontology at the Manitoba Museum will speak on the bedrock geology of Churchill and the Ordovician fossil beds which contained the world's largest trilobite. Eugene Reimer and John Neufeld will give a PowerPoint presentation on our trip to Churchill last summer. They will show many wonderful photos of native wildflowers, including of course native orchids and other rare northern plants and animals. They are both very amusing speakers and I have no doubt you will be well entertained. Peggy and I are preparing a display board with more photos of northern orchids for your enjoyment.

As well there will be a Silent Auction and sale of orchid-related items followed by socializing with our friends and refreshments. A beautiful yellow lady's-slipper stained glass window-hanging by Bob Joyce will be raffled. See you all there!

ORCHID OF THE MONTH

Calypso (Calypso bulbosa)

By Eugene Reimer

The genus *Calypso* consists of a single species. It was named for the sea nymph Calypso, of Homer's *Odyssey*, who kept Ulysses on her island for seven years; the species name *bulbosa* refers to the bulb-like corm. Several whimsical English common-names, such as fairy-slipper and Venus'-slipper, have been used for this species, and yet the "common man" seemingly prefers to call it *Calypso*.

Calypso blooms early, usually around late May. In southern Manitoba, moist cedar forests are the best places to look for this uncommon orchid; further north, it is found in a wider variety of coniferous forest underlain by limestone.

The flowering plant is about 15 cm tall, and the remarkable flower gets more interesting upon closer examination. The solitary flower has pink petals and sepals; the slipper-like lip is about 20 mm long, and is covered with narrow stripes of pink and purple. A glistening white apron covers the lower part of the lip, with a bright-yellow bristly beard near the opening. Two small teeth or horns protrude below that apron. A flower will occasionally be white instead of pink, though the yellow parts (beard and teeth) remain yellow and the pouch remains striped. The candy-striped seed-capsule matures in July, is much more erect than the flower, and also makes for a great photo.

The single oval basal leaf is distinctively pleated, and has an unusual growing cycle. The leaf appears in the fall, stays dormant but green all winter, grows again in early spring, but then dies soon after the flower opens. This means the plant is leafless for most of the summer.

Several NOCI members, including myself, were part of a group that visited Churchill in July of 2004. We were intent on following up a tip about small pink calypso-like flowers being seen there, although aware that Churchill is many hundreds of kilometers outside of published range-maps for *Calypso*. Morris Sorenson, who returned from Churchill shortly before we left, told us of meeting a fellow named Paul Ratson, of Nature First Tours, who reported having seen *Calypso* in 2002. So Doris phoned Paul to get directions, and Lorne expertly followed these directions that called for him to spot fox dens near willows. We spent some time looking near the described spot for seed-capsules as well as for flowers. I was walking away from the group, seeking cover behind trees or shrubs which were sparse and spare, when I came across a patch of these pink flowers which made me forget fullness of bladder for about an hour. After shouting to the rest of the group, but before they got there, I snapped a photograph which appears on the cover.

INFORMATION ON CANDIDATES

Peggy Bainard Acheson is a graduate in Environmental Science from the University of Manitoba. She has been a director for the past six years and is our Membership Chair. She is a lover of the outdoors, a dedicated volunteer and field trip leader. She and John have arranged some very successful Members Nights for our organization.

Bob McGillivray has some academic training in the biological sciences, but his main interests include climate change, loss of wildlife habitat and, of course, plants. He is a lifelong learner and will be completing his Education degree later this spring. Science is his passion, which perhaps helps explain why his idea of a good time is investigating a cedar bog to look for fungi, moss, ferns, horsetails, orchids, and wildlife.

John E. Neufeld is a lawyer and has served as a director for the past 6 years. He has been on the constitution amendment committee and has worked with Peggy to arrange the successful Members Nights. He is the current Vice-president. John is a frequent field trip leader with a great interest in orchids and photography.

Kauri trees

By John Neufeld

Together with my wife Chris, I recently had occasion to visit New Zealand. It was an exciting experience for many reasons, but one was the fascinating flora and fauna that are found there. Before we left someone told us that there was no reason to go to New Zealand because it was just like British Columbia. Nothing could be further from the truth. The native flora of New Zealand have evolved in isolation for millions of years, because they are found on an isolated group of islands thousands of miles from their nearest neighbour. As a result more than 80% of their trees, ferns, and flowering plants are unique to New Zealand.

One of the more interesting trees we encountered was the Kauri tree (*Agathis australis*). All species in this genus are among the largest and longest growing trees in the world. The New Zealand kauri tree is the largest of the genus. The largest one in New Zealand today is 169 feet tall, and has a girth of 45 feet and is an astonishing 2,100 years old. In other words it started growing at about the time that Jesus Christ was born. That is very hard to comprehend. When Columbus sailed to "discover" North America this tree was already 1,500 years old. They claim that the oldest known Kauri tree grew for 4,800 years. On this planet only the Redwoods are larger or older, other than the bristle cone pine. Even at that, the kauri trees provide more timber than redwoods or any other tree of similar size. A Kauri tree can provide enough wood for 10 dwellings.

Kauri trees are a lot like redwoods. Interestingly, they start to grow crookedly as young trees but straighten out as they get older.

Chris and I stopped at a store where we could purchase products created from Kauri wood. We learned to our astonishment that much of the wood is actually from 30,000 to 50,000 years old! That is because many kauri trees were preserved in peat bogs. As a result these logs even escaped the effects of the last ice age.

These preserved trees are called swamp kauri. Swamp Kauri are found where majestic forests of these trees once stood. Interestingly, the leaves of the Kauri take a long time to decompose and form a barrier around the timber after a tree has fallen. The weight of the huge tree caused them to sink into bogs or soil where they lay buried for thousands of years. When they emerged they were a marvellously hard and beautiful wood. Swamp kauri is highly prized for its rich color enhanced by natural chemicals applied during its long period underground.

There are also some farms where Kauri trees have been buried. The reason for that is that originally the Europeans wanted only the middle part of the tree. So they left large parts of the bottom or top of trees buried in the ground. Some lucky landowners have now got a big bonus when they find these trees on their land and dig them out.

I found some of the items in the store appalling. Imagine coasters made from such trees. Or toilet paper rollers. The list could go on. In the store, we sat in a "sofa" made of Kauri wood. It was beautiful. To buy it unfinished cost \$20,000 dollars NZ (about \$16,000 CAD). To buy it finished cost an amazing \$60,000 dollars NZ (about \$48,000 CAD). We also saw a fantastic table and chair set, made of Kauri wood, that was bound for Canada. The reason it is so expensive, besides its rarity of course, is that it took 80 hours to be carved with a chain saw, and 300 hours of finishing after that. Then after finishing it had to sit for 2 & 1/2 years to dry.

Sadly, humans have destroyed 99.3% of these magnificent trees. They were valued as masts for ships and furniture. So their devastation did not take long. Less than 100 years in fact. And it will take millennia to replace them. Destruction is always so much easier and faster than growth. Now New Zealanders realize their folly. And in fairness the tree is now protected. No more can be cut, even on private land. But again, is it too late? It will take millennia to replace what has already been destroyed. Around the world, the story of sorry human destruction is the same. When will our species ever learn?