

Native Orchid News:

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CE Award

NOCI Wins Silver at the Canadian
Environment Awards

Plant of the Month

Early Purple Orchid
(*Orchis mascula*)



Richard Reeves

Early Purple Orchid



Ruby Tekauz

Peggy Bainard Acheson And Doris Ames at the CEA Gala

President's Report

By Doris Ames

What an exciting month it has been since our last newsletter!

I was asked to give a presentation on orchids to Nature Regina on May 21. Eugene and I travelled to Regina to meet the group and give our PowerPoint presentation entitled "Orchids: Beauty in Diversity". Many of their members bought "Orchids of Manitoba" and told us they enjoyed the presentation very much. They also told us about good orchid locations in Saskatchewan and we explored some of these places. The Cypress Hills and Grasslands were especially beautiful and we saw many strange and wonderful plants and animals before our return on May 27.

On June 2 Peggy and I flew to Montreal to attend the CEA Gala and accept a Silver award in the Community Conservation category for our role in protecting native orchid species and their habitat. We met Ruby Tekauz our nominator there and spent a very enjoyable few days in Quebec, returning on June 5. Peggy's terrific driving skills, our orchid friends, and the fact that Ruby knows interesting people everywhere allowed us to make the most of our trip and have fun in the usual NOCI tradition.

Please read more about our trip and the Awards ceremony elsewhere in the newsletter.

Now the orchid season is in full swing and the plants are doing well with the cool, wet weather even if the rest of us are getting sick of it! People are signing up for field trips and remember we go rain or shine so don't let a rainy forecast stop you from coming along too. If we need to cancel a field trip for any reason you will be notified in advance.

I hope to see many of you at our second annual orchid festival on June 17. We need a good turnout to make this event a success. The location is lovely and perfect for a family outing on Father's Day.

Have a wonderful summer and don't forget to attend Tall Grass Prairie Days on August 11.



Plant of the Month

Early Purple Orchid (*Orchis mascula*)

by Richard Reeves

During my visit to England my cousin Michael introduced me to one of Britain's colourful orchids. It was the afternoon of April 28, 2007. Michael took me to a moist woodland near a small stream at Strawberry Hole near Northiam, East Sussex. There, standing proudly among the well-known English Bluebells were the beautiful Early Purple Orchids.

The Early Purple Orchid (*Orchis mascula*) is an early-flowering orchid that is common in Britain, Europe, parts of Asia and northern Africa. The plants I saw were approximately 30 cm tall but the height range can be 10-60 cm. There are two or three stem leaves and several blunt basal leaves. The basal leaves are usually darkly spotted although some plants have basal leaves that have no spots. Each flower spike has 20 to 50 flowers. The pale centre of the three-lobed lip has dark spots. A conspicuous feature of the flower is its stout, upturned spur. White-flowered plants are not uncommon but I did not see any.

The genus name "Orchis", from the Greek word for testicles, refers to the two tubers on the roots of the orchid. The species name "mascula" is from the Latin word meaning "male". Another common name for the Early Purple Orchid is Male Orchis. This must be the most masculine of all plants!

A powder called "salep" is made by grinding the roots of the Early Purple Orchid. Salep is thought to be very nutritious. It is used to make a drink or is added to other foods to enhance nutrition. It is said that an ounce of salep can sustain a person for a day. Medicinally, salep is astringent, expectorant and demulcent.

I will not be using the striking Early Purple Orchid for food or medicine but I am very happy that I had the opportunity to see it in the English countryside. Thank you, Michael!

NOCI Wins Silver at the Canadian Environment Awards

By Doris Ames

The Canadian Environment Awards Gala was held at the Montreal Science Centre on June 4, 2007. Native Orchid Conservation Inc was honoured to be the recipient of a Silver award in the Community Conservation category for our work protecting unique mini-ecosystems and their plant communities in Manitoba. The prizes included a beautiful plaque commemorating the 2007-2008 Polar Year as well as \$2,500 to be used for the environmental cause of our choice. NOCI will donate the money to the newly-formed Debwendon Corporation towards the construction of boardwalks and interpretive trails in the Brokenhead Wetlands.

The Canadian Environment Awards (CEA) is Canada's only national, bilingual awards program and was established by Canadian Geographic in partnership with the Government of Canada in 2002. Shell Canada is the founding and leading corporate sponsor of the CEA and this is the sixth year that the awards have been presented.

NOCI board members, Doris Ames and Peggy Bainard Acheson, along with Ruby Tekauz, our nominator, attended the Awards Gala in Montreal. We were very impressed with the hospitality and friendliness shown to them by the event organizers especially Laurel Aziz, Tina Hutchinson, Dianne Chaperon-Lor and Steve Watts. These professionals were patient and willing to answer our many questions and to go that extra mile to make the Awards Gala a very enjoyable event for us. During the time Peggy, Ruby and I were there we also managed to see some of the historic city's many attractions including the amazing Biodôme with its thousands of species of plants and animals, historic Mount Royal Park with its panoramic view of the city, and the old port and harbour. Ruby and her friend Merleen took Peg and me to see the Lachine Rapids on the St. Lawrence River in LaSalle, Quebec. The carp were spawning and many kinds of fishermen of the human and bird variety were taking advantage of that fact and catching them in abundance. It is a birder's paradise with herons, ducks and red-winged blackbirds everywhere. The charming sight of the rushing rapids, lovely trees, red roses and Queen Anne's Lace was so refreshing and memorable. To spend an evening with good friends in such a lovely and historic part of Canada makes you feel what it really means to be a Canadian.

Naturally, for orchid enthusiasts, we also went looking for native orchids in the hardwood and mixed wood forests of Gatineau Park near Hull, Quebec with good friends and orchid experts Marilyn Light and Michael MacConaill. This park is located at the junction of the Canadian Shield and the Saint Lawrence Lowlands and contains a wide variety of ecosystems and exceptional biodiversity. There are at least one thousand vascular plant species including 50 tree species. Naturally many of the species were new to us three Manitobans and poor Marilyn was overtaxed with questions. Among all those species we saw four different kinds of orchids that day including Downy Rattlesnake Plantain (*Goodyera pubescens*).

During our time in Quebec and especially at the Awards Gala we had the opportunity to meet many of the leading environmentalists in Canada and to network and discuss our projects with them. We came away encouraged and energized by those outstanding people; people whose love for the environment moves them to protect, explore and restore it for future generations.

To read more about the awards, projects and award winners please look at the CEA website at <http://www.canadiangeographic.ca/cea2007/winners.asp>.