

# Native Orchid Tour

by Shel Zolkewich -- July 2nd, 2010



Northern Star, Photo: Shel Zolkewich

***Get up close and personal with Manitoba's prized native orchids with a guided tour by members of Native Orchid Conservation Inc.***

We're smack dab in the middle of a jack pine forest, faces pressed deep into the sprouting undergrowth, and our bums high in the air. It really is the best way to get up close and personal with the *Cypripedium acaule*.

I feel I can toss around the botanical names of Manitoba's prized native orchids now that I've been on a tour with Doris Ames, enthusiastic president of **Native Orchid Conservation Inc** and all-around great gal.

Doris and I share the belief that street cred trumps formal education. "Whatever strengths I have as a field trip leader have more to do with my love of nature and of people and my enthusiasm for the out-of-doors than the depth of my scientific knowledge," she says. Right on, sista!

### **Go On Tour**

You too can take Doris's tour and learn that *Cypripedium acaule* also goes by the name moccasin flower or pink lady's slipper and that it's one of the most spectacular, peculiar, rare and interesting blooms you've ever laid eyes on.

If you take the field trips offered by Native Orchid Conservation, you might even get to see all 37 of Manitoba's native orchids.

In my budding botanist opinion, these are flowers that look more suited to the Amazonian riverbank than the shadowy floor of a Prairie province, but perhaps that's what makes them so special.



### **From Blooms to Berries**

Sure, we came out here to see orchids and yes, they are truly stunning. But it would be wrong to only glance at the other plants in bloom.

Take, for example, the red-berried *Gaultheria procumbens*, commonly known as teaberry. Pop a few berries in your mouth. The flavour could easily pass for a stick of Wrigley's Doublemint gum.

Look for tiny purple-black berries on the low-growing juniper. Crush a few between your teeth and you'll be wishing you had a tall glass filled with ice, a splash of tonic water and a slice of lime nearby. Juniper berries, as it turns out, are used to make gin.

## The Stars of the Show



On our early June field trip to the Belair Provincial Forest (about 30 minutes north of Winnipeg), we spot many purply-pink moccasin flowers. Heck, we almost step on a few, they are so plentiful in this neck of the woods.

We also fall in love with the creamy pink twinflower (*Linnaea borealis*), the snow white northern starflower (*Trientalis borealis*) and the spiky but delicate wild lily of the valley (*Maianthemum canadense*).



As we cruise a windy stretch of Manitoba highway, Doris spots another orchid. This time it's the glossy-bloomed small yellow lady's slipper (*Cypripedium makasin*) and we all rush the ditch with cameras in hand.

## **Take the Tours**

Doris and the other 160 members of Native Orchid Conservation Inc can't wait to don their hiking boots and Tilley hats for the next field trip.

The group happily takes visitors to the very spots where Manitoba's elusive orchids grow. The best part? They do it for the rock-bottom fee of \$10 per adult and \$5 for each child.

Do check them out on one of their upcoming outings:

**July 10** - Manitoba Tall Grass Prairie Preserve

**July 17** - Wildflower Festival at Senkiw

For more information, head to the organization's [website](#), or call field-trip coordinator John Dyck at 204-222-7188.

## **Map**



1. **Belair Provincial Forest**
2. **Native Orchid Conservation Inc**  
Winnipeg, MB  
117 Morier Ave  
(204) 222-7188  
[www.nativeorchid.org](http://www.nativeorchid.org)

**Note:** NOCI's address is now PO Box 40057 Lagimodiere PO, Winnipeg, MB, R2C 4P3, Phone: 204-223-8209.

## Author



Shel Zolkewich's latest obsessions include Mexican street food, fishing trips in Northern Manitoba and reading novels about great Canadian adventures on her iPad. She writes about travel and food for *The Globe & Mail*, *Going Places*, and *EnRoute*. Her home base is in Winnipeg.