

**NOCI Trip to Tobermory**  
**Bruce Peninsula Orchid Festival**  
**2003 May 30-June2**

**by Doris Ames**

**Friday May 30, 2003** - Peggy Bainard Acheson, John Neufeld, Eugene Reimer and Doris Ames flew to Hamilton via Westjet. Our flight left 6:15 AM and we arrived in Hamilton 9:31 AM local time. (They are one hour ahead of us.) We picked up a Ford Taurus John had rented from Hertz and at 10:15Am set off for the Bruce. We tried to follow Hwy#6N but promptly got lost. Ontario doesn't believe in large, clear signage apparently. The car had an onboard GPS but no instructions with it. Peggy got it working so it would tell us our location and the direction we were heading which was helpful. Unfortunately they had not left instructions with it so we couldn't really use the "go to" features properly. When we got near Guelph we began to see some Dame's Rocket blooming in the ditch and the dried seed heads of last years Teasel (*Dipsacus sylvestris*) and Queen Anne's Lace (*Daucus carota*). It took us so long to get through Guelph. They make you drive right through town and so slowly. We stopped and had lunch at some sort of Bar and Grill and carried on. Around Alvany about 3kms south of the Shenstone Motor Inn on the east side of 6N we saw a ski trail going into the bush with many gorgeous Large flowered Trillium (*T. grandiflorum*) in bloom. This is Ontario's provincial flower and it's a real beauty with its large white flowers that turn pink when they get old. There we also saw Trout Lily (*Erythromion americanum*) plants with their green and mottled brown leaves. They had already finished blooming and had a large seed pod. They were growing in a hardwood forest made up of Beech, Maple and Birch. We stopped at Warton (the home of Warton Willy, the groundhog that predicts spring) and bought some groceries and liquid refreshments.

We arrived at Dyer's Bay on Georgian Bay where we had rented a cottage called "The Big Kahuna". The weather was getting cold and it had started to rain. A nice couple called Ken and Marilyn Finucan own the place on a large amount of property. They also have a maple syrup farm. He is a sculptor and she makes fancy candles and all kinds of crafts. Their website is <http://www.northbruce.cck.ca/cottage4rent/dyersbay.htm>; their phone number is 1-519-795-7395; e-mail address is [sculptor@amtelecom.net](mailto:sculptor@amtelecom.net). The cottage was very large with a Franklin fireplace, another wood stove, electric heat, five beds etc. It was right on Georgian Bay. All dishes and appliances were included and we were very comfortable. All this for \$100 per night in the off-season. It is very close to one of the Alvar formations with lots of the rare Lakeside Daisy and Dwarf Lake Iris. We drove to Tobermory for supper and on the way saw a black bear,

a raccoon, Rose breasted Grosbeaks, Goldfinches, Chipping Sparrow, Raven and Turkey Vultures. There are also lots of tame goats, cows and horses. When we came home we made up our beds. Eugene slept in the glassed-in porch, John had a bedroom with one bed and Peg and I shared a room with two beds. There was still another double pull-out sofa bed in the living room we could have used. We lit the fireplace and turned on the heat because by this time the weather was cold and rainy with a stiff wind from the northwest. The lake was choppy and steel grey. The day before it had been 28C in Winnipeg so it was kind of a shock. I knew it was cold there because I had checked the forecast for Tobermory before leaving on the web but it was still kind of surprising. There were lots of Ring-billed gulls around. We did our journaling and went to sleep.



Large-flowered Trillium

**Saturday May 31, 2003** - We drove to Singing Sands on Dorcas Bay, arriving 8AM. The weather was very cold, windy and raining. I was wearing two shirts and a rubber slicker with a hood and was still very cold. We stood around for about an hour until 9AM and set off in two groups in kind of a car caravan. They didn't make any attempt to reduce the number of cars nor did they have a bus but took about 30 people in each group with about 2 dozen cars. Pretty hard on the environment I would think. Jack Wellington the Parks Canada naturalist and Ethan Meleg the festival coordinator were both there. They said they are having a lot of trouble with people digging up plants and huge amounts of people coming in the summer and not staying on the trails. I wonder why they don't make an effort to take smaller groups in a bus to lessen the impact. There were several professional photographers there, one called Willy Waterton I remembered in particular because his name seemed so close to Wiarton Willie, the famous groundhog! Jack mentioned that the Bruce Peninsula has the largest number of orchid species in North America (44) outside of Florida. I was unaware of this. He also explained the name

Singing Sands. Apparently on some windy days the sand blows over the dunes and makes a steady hum. It wasn't doing that this day because things were far too wet. We looked at the "fern wall" first. This little cliff had a number of interesting ferns growing in the cracks. I saw Sensitive Fern (*Onoclea sensibilis*), Fragile fern (*Sistopteris fragilis*), Slender Cliff Brake (*Cryptogramia stellar*), Maidenhair Spleenwort (*Asplenium trichomanes*), Bulblet Fern (*Sistopteris bulbifera*) with its red stem was present as well.

Next we went to The Crane River Trail and saw Jack in the Pulpit (*Arisaema triphyllum*), Purple Virgin's Bower (*Clematis virginiana*) as well as Ostrich fern (*Matteuccia struthiopteris*) and more Sensitive fern. The leaves of the Large leaved Aster (*A. macrophyllum*), an invasive species were everywhere. Apparently they have trouble with the many non-indigenous plants that have moved there over time. There is even a variety of small snail that is getting out of control. As a result the number of species found on the Bruce Peninsula is huge around 800 I think Jack said. We saw Striped Coral Root (*Corallorhiza striata*) just coming up but it was small and very few were in bloom.

Next we went on the Cyprus Lake Trail and saw Early Coral Root (*Corallorhiza trifida var flavida*) and Yellow Lady's-Slipper (*C. parviflorum*) and Ram's head Lady's-Slipper (*C. arietinum*). We went back to the cottage for hot soup and a sandwich and more clothes! I also brought a pack with some field guides, extra water and my binoculars etc. What a mistake! The next outing was to be a hike along the Niagara Escarpment to see the old growth Eastern Cedar trees. I asked about the level of difficulty and the young guy there told me it was easy to moderate. Well it wasn't for me, with a pack, no hiking boots and no walking stick! It's uphill over loose rock for a long way and the weather was windy as well. The Parks Canada guide, a nice young lady called Julia, carried my pack halfway and the others gave me their hands over the rough spots or I wouldn't have made it. Most other people who were old or fat or both turned back at one place but I carried on having come that far and was glad I did. There were Eastern Cedar trees growing way up near the top of the cliff in cracks. We saw a "bonsai" tree that was 500 years old and only about two feet tall. The view from the cliffs is wonderful, the underwater grottos and caves and secret passages are amazing. We saw a sinkhole near Horse Lake where the water is sucked down into the holes in the Karst formation and comes up again at Marr Lake. The whole area is made of Dolomite ( $MgCaCO_3$ ) which is easily hollowed out by water. The surface is covered with old glacial striations in places and also round holes called pitkarren. Lake Huron and Georgian Bay are connected by an underwater passage that you can scuba dive through. These geological details were newly discovered in 1998 by a seismic survey which is ongoing. We found blooming Birdseye Primrose (*Primula laurentiana*) and Dwarf Canadian Primrose (*P. mistassinica*) on those rocks on the cliff. On the trail back we saw more Early Coral Root, Morel mushrooms and Menzies Rattlesnake Plantain (*Goodyera oblongifolia*). We recognized it by its leaves because of course it is not blooming yet.

We came back to the cottage, changed, had supper and went to the Tobermory Community Centre for wine and cheese and a slide show by Michael Runtz. He is a former Parks Canada naturalist who is a wonderful photographer and an amusing speaker. He spoke about the amazing pollination mechanisms that plants employ. He has a new coffee table type book out called Beauty and the Beast - The wondrous world of wildflowers. He also has a TV show called "Wild by Nature" on the Discovery Channel. We had come the farthest to attend this festival but there were people there from Schenectady New York too. We met Don Brough from the Southern Ontario Tourist Bureau and he was very glad to see us; he said tourism is really suffering with the SARS outbreak and the cold weather this spring. He also showed slides of some animals among them the Eastern Canadian Wolf and Moose. He says moose eat water lilies for the salts in them. We saw a cormorant on the way back home that evening. I was really tired and we went to bed early.



Yellow lady's-slipper



Ram's-head lady's-slipper



Striped coralroot

**Sunday June 1, 2003** - The next morning John went to take a photography course with Willie Waterton and others at Dorcas Bay but the rest of us slept in a bit. When he came back we had lunch and set off for Tobermory to take the boat to Flowerpot Island. The weather had improved. It was sunny and perhaps 17C. The lake was still a bit choppy but then it usually is. The water was a lovely milky green. We bought tickets on the Seaview III and left for the island at 1PM. The boat was 50feet long and 40 tons. The captain let me steer it a bit. The first thing we did was go to see the sunken ships in Fathom 5, Canada's first National Marine Park. There are 23 old, sunken ships down there and the water is so clear you can see them as you go over them. There was an old 2-masted schooner from 1895 called the "Sweepstakes". I guess its number came up alright. There was another called "The City of Grand Rapids" that went down in 1900. We then headed for the island but before we got there we had to transfer in mid lake to a 12-man Zodiac rubber boat. I was never on a Zodiac before and found it pretty exciting especially transferring between the two. We went on the Marl Lake trail to see orchids because we hadn't got time to see the lighthouse as well. We saw *Calypso bulbosa* in bloom along the trails, Heart leaved Twayblade (*Listera cordata*), Menzies Rattlesnake Plantain (*Goodyera oblongifolia*) and Dwarf Rattlesnake Plantain (*G. repens*). We also saw American Fly Honeysuckle (*Lonicera canadensis*), Early Coral Root (var. *flavida*) and *C. maculata*. We saw a Swainson's Thrush on the trail and a black spotted Northern Water Snake on the rocks. They were late picking us up and we didn't get back to Tobermory until around 4 PM. On the way home we stopped at the Emmett Lake Alvar formation. Alvars are areas of thin soil over

limestone and are home to many rare plants among them the rare Lakeside Daisy (*Hymenoxys acaulis var. glabra*) also known as Rubberweed. They didn't tell us why it's called Rubberweed but the leaves feel like they are made out of rubber. The blackflies were horrible as there was standing water with a high pH and it was around 5 PM by this time. The Emmett Lake site is 2.9 kms east on Hwy 6N. The road goes further past this but no need to go. Then we went to another Alvar Formation that Ethan had told Peg and I about. It was only about 300 meters north of the Dyers Bay road on 6N east side. There is a sign almost covered by trees. You walk in on the trail and there are thousands of Lakeside Daisy as well as the very rare Dwarf Lake Iris (*Iris lacustris*). They have lots of boardwalks there. The iris is very rare and only found on the shores of Lake Huron and Lake Michigan. The Iris is so pretty; purple with yellow and white patches and only about 3 inches high. There was no standing water and subsequently no blackflies there. We had supper at the Rocky Raccoon restaurant at Dyers Bay. The people there are from Nepal and serve Indian food. Later we had a marshmallow roast on the beach. The men made a beautiful fire and there were no bugs. We went to bed late with plans to leave by 11 AM. The only time we ran into bothersome insects was those black flies on the Alvar Formation and a certain flying ant that found its way somehow into John's pyjamas and delivered a painful bite on a private place. We only know this because we heard him scream. He never did produce a body.



Fairy-slipper



Eugene Reimer 2003

Flowerpot



Eugene Reimer 2003

Lakeside Daisy



Dwarf Iris

**Monday June2, 2003** - We got up at 8 AM and Doris made us pancakes and bacon for breakfast. After a leisurely breakfast we fed the Ring-billed Gulls off the deck and enjoyed the view of the lake on that lovely sunny day. A Herring Gull came and landed on the deck to get food. Then he couldn't figure out how to fly up and leave. For the longest time, he kept trying to go between the bars of the deck railing. The Ring-billed gulls stood around and laughed at him. Finally he made it and we packed up and left by 11Am. We decided to take the scenic drive to Cabot Head to see the lighthouse there. The others climbed it but my knees were sore and I talked to the volunteer lighthouse keeper instead. He said he gets to stay in the house there for the whole summer free if he shows people around. He shares this job with another man. The lighthouse was very old and had been restored completely. There is now an electronic beacon on the site as well. We then set off for Hamilton and didn't get lost this time, but John embarked on a frantic search for a present for his wife. This apparently had not occurred to him when we were staying in a place where there was a craft or gift shop every half block. Unfortunately Monday seems to be a day off in southern Ontario and one after another of the gift shops we stopped at were closed. We stopped to have lunch in Carlyle at a place called the Texas Grill. Never again! It turned out to be a biker place. Harley Davidson motorcycles were parked outside. We sat down and I asked for the coleslaw on the menu. The waitress said it was not available because the cook put in too much pepper and people didn't like it. So we asked why he didn't just put in less pepper and leave it on the menu. She seemed shocked as if this couldn't possibly be an option. We ordered something else and I guess she must have told him, because the cook, a



large and beefy man, heavily tattooed, peered out of the kitchen with a large shiny knife in his hand. We never asked any more questions after that. The food tasted funny and it didn't seem to be cooked properly, and John suddenly felt nauseated. I developed cramps but when I tried to use the washroom there was a large biker man there using the washroom with the door wide open! I left hastily. We made it back to Hamilton and waited for our plane, never straying too far from the washrooms. John finally found a present for his wife. We arrived home about 10 PM Winnipeg time. I had a great time and the cost was very reasonable because we shared expenses.

All in all we saw nine species of orchid (all except two in bloom) as follows: *Calypso bulbosa*, *Corallorhiza trifida*, *Corallorhiza maculata*, *Corallorhiza striata*, *Cypripedium arietinum*, *Cypripedium parviflorum*, *Goodyera repens*, *Goodyera oblongifolia* and *Listera cordata*.



Peggy, John, Doris, Eugene, Jack Wellington & Julia