

Native Orchid News:

The Newsletter of Native Orchid Conservation Inc.

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Annual General Meeting
Friday March 3, 2017

Plant of the Month
Labrador Tea
(*Rhododendron groenlandicum*)



Eugene Peimer



Richard Reeves



Peggy Bainard Acheson

**Annual General
Meeting**
Friday March 3, 2017

President's Report

By Peggy Bainard Acheson

The long fall that we have been experiencing has been amazing -- even as the days have grown shorter we have been able to get out and enjoy them. Every day without snow makes the coming winter seem shorter. But this unusual weather is a reminder of something more ominous -- that climate change is really here and that we must continue, or perhaps step up, our efforts to do our part. While we all contribute to climate change, in the long run my hope is that by drawing attention to the plight of our environment it will encourage our political leaders to increase their efforts to make fossil fuels redundant.

In the meantime, we have been carrying on with our work. On September 22nd Peggy and John Dyck attended a public consultation of the Roseau River Integrated Watershed Management Plan, which involves the RMs of Piney, Stuartburn, Franklin and Montcalm, as well as other stakeholders. Following presentations by Sustainable Development and the Conservation District on their work to manage water resources to mitigate overland flooding and drought, we were able to provide input to the watershed management plan from NOCI's perspective.

On September 30th we launched the second edition of our book at McNally Robinson Booksellers. We were pleased to see about 60 people attend the launch. Please see Peggy's abridged remarks on page 4. The book may be purchased from a board member or on the shopping page of our website which will be launching in the next couple of weeks. Makes a nice gift for the orchidophiles on your Christmas list!

The annual NOCI Open House was held on October 28th with about 40 people in attendance. By all accounts everyone enjoyed our two guest speakers, Richard Staniforth and Ryan Wakshinski. We were also pleased to have Dawn Kitching from Natural Fragments with her wonderful soaps. A special thanks to Denny Smith for organizing the event and to all the volunteers that helped to make this event a success!

On November 3rd Peggy represented NOCI at a Public Hearing of the Brandon and Area Planning District. A proposal, to change the zoning of a parcel of land just outside the Brandon city limits from agricultural to rural residential, was under discussion so that the owner can sub-divide and develop the land. Land to the south and west are designated as Critical Habitat in the Recovery Plan for the small white lady's-slippers (*Cypripedium candidum*) under the federal Species at Risk Act. NOCI is concerned that underground springs, critical to this orchid, may be impacted by the installation of private potable water wells, septic fields and an increase of overland surface drainage. We were recently informed that the issue has been referred to the provincial Minister of Indigenous and Municipal Relations. NOCI will update the website once a decision has been made. Peggy's remarks at the public hearing and a further submission made to the Minister will be available on our website in a couple of weeks.

A year goes by very quickly and if you haven't already done so, it is time to renew your membership and perhaps think of making a small donation to encourage us in our work. The membership renewal form is attached to this newsletter.

Also, please mark your calendars for **Friday, March 3, 2017** for **the Annual General Meeting**.

Further details will be made available in the February newsletter. At that time we will be electing five members to the Board of Directors. NOCI has been fortunate over the years to have individuals step up to take on the work of running the organization. In fact it is critical for us to continue our work. If you believe in our mission and are interested in taking a turn on the board, please contact the Nominations Chair, David Toop at dave.toop@gmail.com.

Plant of the Month

Labrador Tea (*Rhododendron groenlandicum*)
formerly *Ledum groenlandicum*

By Doris Ames

Ledum was a genus in the family Ericaceae, including 8 species of evergreen shrubs native to cool temperate and subarctic regions of the Northern Hemisphere and commonly known as Labrador Tea. It is now recognized as belonging in the genus *Rhododendron*.

The genus name *Rhododendron* literally, “rose-tree”, comes from the Greek words *rhodon* meaning 'rose' and *dendron* meaning 'tree' and refers to any ericaceous shrub in the *Rhododendron* genus having rose, white, pink, purple or red flowers.

The species name *groenlandicum* refers to Greenland where Labrador Tea is also found.

The common name “Labrador” refers to a place where the plant is found and “Tea” refers to its traditional use as a medicinal beverage.

Labrador tea is an evergreen, aromatic shrub in the *Ericaceae* (Heath) Family. It is found in the wetlands and moist woods of the Boreal forest growing in shade or partial shade. The 30-40 cm tall shrub has alternate, 1-5 cm long leaves. The leaves are smooth and deep-green above and leathery and drooping with rusty woolly hair below. The edges of the leaves are rolled under.

The plant blooms in early to mid June and loose umbrella-shaped clusters of small, white, 5-petaled flowers are found at the tips of the branches. The flowers have protruding stamens.

Bees are believed to be the pollinators.

The fruits are a 5-parted, dry, hairy capsule found in long clusters at the branch tips.

The leaves are used by indigenous people and others to make a medicinal tea used to treat multiple ailments. The tea is very high in Vitamin C and was said to have cured the explorer Jacques Cartier's men from scurvy. At one time it was collected by the Hudson's Bay Company, shipped overseas in wooden casks, and marketed in England.

Leaves can be collected at any time of the year but caution is advised in selecting the right plant. It is easily confused with Northern Bog Laurel and Bog Rosemary which are very toxic. The reddish-brown fuzz on the underside of Labrador Tea leaves is distinctive. Strong tea and prolonged usage of the tea is to be avoided as in large amounts it can cause severe diarrhea and vomiting. Do not over-collect from any one plant.

The aromatic leaves have been used to repel insects. Sachets of leaves hanging in the closet can repel moths, lice and fleas.

Upcoming Events

NOCI AGM: Friday, March 3, 2017 at Dakota Lawn Bowls Centre, 1212 Dakota Street, Winnipeg.

Seedy Saturday: February 11, 2017 at the Canadian Mennonite University.

Gardening Saturday: March 18, 2017 at Victoria Inn and Conference Center.

Manitoba Orchid Society Show: March 24-26, 2017 at the Conservatory, Assiniboine Park.

Native Orchid Conference: June 5-9, 2017 in Winnipeg.

Book Launch

NOCI President Peggy Bainard Acheson addressed approximately 60 attendees at the September 30, 2016 launch of *Orchids of Manitoba, 2nd Edition*. Her address captured the history of the organization and the history of its flagship publication as she set forth a rich overview of the biological status of the province's 37 species of orchids. The inspirational highlights of Peggy's lecture are offered to the wide membership of Native Orchids of Manitoba.

The first edition of this book was published in 2005. One might wonder why such a small organization would put together such a book. Well, first of all there was no book on Manitoba native orchids so, with the encouragement of Jim Duncan from the Manitoba Wildlife Branch, we decided to write a field guide.

Being a relatively new organization we were eager to advance our mission of conserving native orchids and other rare plants and their habitats. Most of our orchid species grow in, or adjacent to, wetlands which have been reduced by 70% since 1900. Some orchids are associated with the tall grass prairie, a habitat that is only 1% of its original area. We needed a forum to talk about the impacts of habitat loss from agricultural and housing development, resource extraction such as logging and peat mining, and wetland drainage. Because of the many habitat types in the province our orchids come in many shapes, sizes, and colours and lend themselves to photography. This variety enhances the biodiversity of the plant life, nature's way of ensuring that plants and animals can respond to changing environmental conditions on a fragile planet. In his 2002 book, *The Future of Life*, E. O. Wilson warned that more than half of the species on our planet may be lost in this century.

We also wanted to showcase Manitoba's wonderful natural legacy—37 wild orchid species—and to fulfill our mission to preserve these orchids for future generations. As it is, Manitoba has three orchids on the endangered species list, all of which grow in the Tall Grass Prairie Preserve in southern Manitoba, and one of those— the Western Prairie fringed-orchid— grows only there. The other two are the small white lady's-slipper and the Great Plains ladies'-tresses.

We wanted a scientifically-correct field guide that could be used to help identify orchids and to learn of their wonderful diversity. We hoped that people would enjoy the book and become informed. Many people have described the book as a very informative field guide -- small enough to tuck into a backpack, but also pretty enough to sit on a coffee table; exactly what we wanted.

The original book had sections on orchid history, conservation and biodiversity, protection of species and ecosystems, biology, and habitat types. In addition, there was a key to aid identification and a table of blooming times. There was also a page on what the public can do to conserve native orchids. However, the core of the book was the species accounts. Each account provided details about a specific species including the origins of the Latin name, how abundant the orchid is in Manitoba, a habitat description of where it might be found, the flowering time, a description of the plant itself, and aids to identification to distinguish one species from similar species. Finally, the book provided interesting facts such as the insect pollinators, and a range map.

So, why did we write a second edition? Well, in ten years we had sold all 2400 original copies. We sold most here in Manitoba, but it was also bought by people from around the world who are interested in orchids. Who knows, it may have been instrumental in generating a small piece of the eco-tourism business here.

Continued on next page

Another factor: in 2008 a City of Winnipeg Naturalist Services employee discovered an orchid new to Manitoba, the broad-leaved helleborine, a pretty little thing that grows about two-feet tall. It was introduced to the eastern United States in 1879 and then it took more than 100 years to work its way to Manitoba. Of course we wanted to include it in the second edition.

We had received feedback on the first edition. “Why not have a quick reference guide?” “Please include information about Native Orchid Conservation Incorporated.” We have incorporated those suggestions, and others, into this second edition. It includes a quick reference guide, tips for photographing orchids, references to the Brokenhead Wetland Interpretive Trail and the Agassiz Trail in the Tall Grass Prairie Preserve, safe places where, in season, people can see a number of different orchid species in bloom. At Brokenhead alone there are 28 of Manitoba’s 37 species. There is information on how to report a rare plant to the provincial Conservation Data Centre. The first five chapters have been updated. The blooming timetable is now in chronological rather than alphabetical order to provide quick reference to orchids in season. We added some new habitat pictures and designed new front and back covers.

If you are inspired to help the environment, I ask you, please, do not dig or pick wild orchids, but also consider supporting us in our work by either buying an annual NOCI membership, or by making a small donation -- or both! We need the support of the community to fulfill our goals and we would be very pleased to have you as part of our group.

I would like to acknowledge and thank a few people who helped to make this little book a valuable asset for anyone who loves to study and enjoy orchids. First, the authors of the first edition for their support and expertise during the production of this new second edition: Doris Ames, Lorne Heshka, Bob Joyce, John Neufeld, Richard Reeves, the late Eugene Reimer, Ian Ward, and Peggy Bainard Acheson. These authors’ works continue to serve the second edition of the book, work that has been meaningfully extended by the labours of Doris Ames, Richard Reeves, and David Toop who served with me. Dr. Richard Staniforth, Professor Emeritus of Botany, University of Winnipeg undertook the technical review of the second edition and Dr. Paul Catling, a plant taxonomist with Agriculture and Agri-food Canada wrote the Foreword.

NOCI members-at-large submitted new pictures for the second edition, photos which Dennis Fast adjudicated. Donna Danyluk reviewed the draft. David Johannesen designed the cover and helped with many technical matters, and Petra Martel helped with the InDesign program. Kromar Printing created the material reality of the book which is enhanced with faithful color reproduction.

I speak for the Native Orchid Conservation membership in hoping that the second edition of *Orchids of Manitoba* will inform its readers about orchids, and of the enormous natural heritage we have in this province, and that it will inspire each one to help preserve that heritage. Most importantly, I hope that you will use and enjoy this book when you are out walking or hiking in the summer.

We need pictures! We still need pictures for the NOCI website (this will be ongoing). See the description of our requirements in the October newsletter.
Don’t forget to LIKE us on Facebook!
If you need a new Air Miles card please contact Heather at Heather.Miltenburg@gmail.com .