

Marble Ridge Field Trip - Interlake Forest Centre, Manitoba Forestry Association
Native Orchid Conservation Inc. – June 7, 2014

The Marble Ridge alvar is a protected area and one of the few alvars known west of Ontario. Alvars consist of naturally open habitat with sparse, prairie-like vegetation growing on unbroken limestone or dolostone bedrock, with either a thin covering of soil (10 cm or less) or no soil. In the Interlake region, the effects of glaciation and Glacial Lake Agassiz have resulted in an undulating topography, with exposed limestone bedrock in some areas. Over time, the bare rock was colonized by lichens, then mosses, and eventually plants as soil slowly built up. What makes alvars so unique and rare is the unusual combination of species found in them as they may contain a mix of boreal and prairie species not usually closely associated with each other. Alvars are rare all across the world, found in only a few countries in Europe and only a few provinces and states in North America. In Canada, the distribution of alvars are fragmented and loosely follow the edge of the Canadian Shield. In 2012 the Nature Conservancy of Canada, Manitoba Conservation Data Centre and Manitoba Association of Plant Biologists formed an initiative to identify and map the locations of the rare vegetation community of alvars. While its presence has been suspected for some time, this was the first time that alvars have been positively identified and documented in Manitoba, Marble Ridge being one area.

The three rare rock ferns:

Gastony's Cliffbrake (*Pellaea gastonyi*) - very rare (S1) provincially, rare-uncommon (N2N3) nationally and globally, and this is the only known site in Manitoba.

Western Dwarf Cliffbrake (*Pellaea glabella* subsp. *occidentalis*) - rare (S2) provincially and nationally (N2).

Prairie Spikemoss (*Selaginella densa*) - northern limit of its range here in Manitoba.

Species List for Spruce Grove Trail

Wood anemone (<i>Anemone cinquefolia</i>)	Meadow rue (<i>Thalictrum</i> spp.)
Poison ivy (<i>Rhus radicans</i>)	Early blue violet (<i>Viola adunca</i>)
Yellow lady's-slipper (<i>Cypripedium parviflorum</i>)	Morel (<i>Morchella esculenta</i>)
Twining honeysuckle (<i>Lonicera dioica</i>)	Ram's-head lady's-slipper (<i>C. arietinum</i>)
Fringed milkwort (<i>Polygala paucifolia</i>)	Dwarf scouring rush (<i>Equisetum scirpoides</i>)
Bishop's cap (<i>Mitella nuda</i>)	Fairyslipper (<i>Capypso bulbosa</i>)
Wild Lily-of-the-Valley (<i>Maianthemum canadense</i>)	Currant (<i>Ribes</i> spp.)
Labrador tea (in bud) (<i>Ledum groenlandicum</i>)	Nettles (<i>Urtica dioica</i>)
Red-osier dogwood (<i>Cornus stolonifera</i>)	Coltsfoot (<i>Petasites sagittatus</i>)
Black poplar (<i>Populus balsamifera</i>)	Common Yarrow (<i>Achillea millefolium</i>)
Star-flowered False Solomon's-seal (<i>Smilacina stellata</i>)	
Low Bush-Cranberry (<i>Viburnum edule</i>)	
Small-leaved Pussytoes (<i>Antennaria microphylla</i>)	
Soapberry (aka Canada Buffaloberry) (<i>Shepherdia Canadensis</i>)	

Species List for The Megwaakwaang Trail

Creeping juniper (<i>Juniperus horizontalis</i>)	Three-flowered avens (<i>Geum triflorum</i>)
Hoary Puccoon (<i>Lithospermum canescens</i>)	Shrubby cinquefoil (<i>Potentilla fruticosa</i>)
Field Chickweed (<i>Cerastium arvense</i>)	Bur oak (<i>Quercus macrocarpa</i>)

Prairie Crocus (finished) (*Anemone patens*) Camas (*Zygadenus* spp.)
Bearberry (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*) Bastard toadflax (*Comandra umbellata*)

Species List for Marble Ridge Boulder Field and Cliff Area

Three-flowered avens (*Geum triflorum*) Field chickweed (*Cerastium arvense*)
Wild Strawberry (*Fragaria virginiana*) Creeping juniper (*Juniperus horizontalis*)
Early blue violet (*Viola adunca*) Small-leaved Pussytoes (*Antennaria microphylla*)
Hoary Puccoon (*Lithospermum canescens*) Smooth cliff-brake (*Pellaea glabella*)
Gastony's cliff-brake (*Pellaea gastonyi*)

Forest below:

Yellow Lady's-slipper (*C. parviflorum*)
Ram's-head Lady's-slipper (*C. arietinum*)
Bishop's cap (*Mitella nuda*)



Calypso Fairy-slipper



Ram's-head lady's-slipper



Colt's foot



Exposed limestone of alvar



The ridge