

Native Orchid News:

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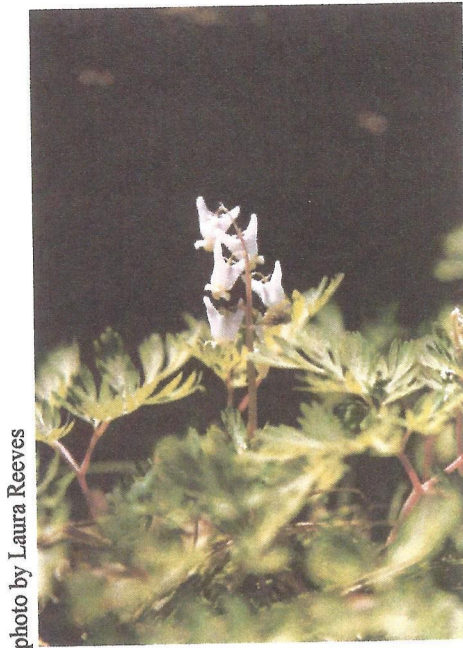


photo by Laura Reeves

Native Orchid Conservation Inc.
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Rare Plant of the Month
Dutchman's Breeches
(*Dicentra cucullaria*)

Member's Night
Wednesday, January 29th, 2003

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT - DORIS AMES

Seasonal temperatures being back in play, we have begun our winter timber sale surveys under the SETS project. It is lovely to be out in the bush, driving on the narrow bush roads and walking on snow covered trails. The evergreen trees are so lush and scented. As you brush by them, powdery snow like icing sugar sifts down on your head. Its fun to see how many animal tracks and how many little life and death dramas between predator and prey you can recognize while looking at the understory.

There have been many indoor activities as well. Board members have been working on amendments to the NOCI constitution, the book committee, and displays. Former board member, Richard Reeves has kindly agreed to be appointed to the board to fill the vacancy until our next AGM. Thank you Richard. Peggy Bainard Acheson and John Neufeld have been preparing for the upcoming Members Night on Wednesday, January 29th. This promises to be a fun evening with interesting speakers, a silent auction, and project information and displays. See Peggy's notice elsewhere in this newsletter.

Our Annual General Meeting will be held on Friday, April 4, 2003, 7:30PM at the Dakota Lawn Bowling Centre 1212 Dakota Street. Elections to the board of directors will take place at that time. Please contact nomination chair Eugene Reimer at 237-7783 if you are interested in having your name stand for one of these positions. As well, proposed amendments to the NOCI constitution will be presented for your review and ratification.

Thanks to all of you who have sent in donations. We appreciate your generosity and early membership renewal very much.

NOCI Members' Night

Mark your calendars for January 29th for our second annual Members' Night! We are planning a great night with presentations, displays, a silent auction and refreshments.

Ian Ward, a member of NOCI, will make a presentation on the Tall Grass Prairie Preserve, which will include many of his more recent orchid slides.

From Nature Conservancy Canada, Mike Moore will make a presentation about the Nature Conservancy (Manitoba region) and their work in the Duck Mountain area.

Date: Wednesday, January 29, 2003
Time: 7:30 p.m.
Place: Dakota Lawn Bowling Centre
1212 Dakota Street, Winnipeg
RSVP Peggy Bainard Acheson, 261-9179
(evenings or leave message)

Everyone is welcome including guests. We are extending this invitation to the general public through public service advertisements in community newspapers, on Shaw Cable, on our website (www.nativeorchid.com) and at the new Greenspace website that posts local environmental events and news (<http://greenspace.emergeknowledge.com/cgi-bin/myemerge.pl/>).

RARE PLANT OF THE MONTH (SEE COVER PHOTO)

Dutchman's Breeches (*Dicentra cucullaria*)

By Laura Reeves

Last spring, a small excursion organized by Carey Hamel and Elizabeth Reimer of the Manitoba Conservation Data Center along with Dr. Karen Johnson headed out to the Whitemouth Lake area to monitor Manitoba's only known population of Dutchman's Breeches (*Dicentra cucullaria*). After catching wind of the plan, I was fortunate enough to be invited along (read: I begged and pleaded to be included, promising that I wouldn't take up too much space in the vehicle).

The temperature was still cool, and the strong headwinds that we had to endure to get to the site made me thankful that I'd brought my toque. Upon arriving at the site, Dr. Johnson was quick to locate the first pants . . . uh, I mean . . . plants. They were not yet flowering, causing concerns that we might be too early, but as we walked deeper into the patch, the density of plants increased, along with the number that sported the unmistakable pantaloons-shaped flowers. Before long, the forest floor was literally covered by a soft, thick carpet of breeches. During the hike to her permanent research plots, Dr. Johnson continued to spout information about these most adorable flowers (the power of suggestion!), their habitat, and the associated vegetation, including the rare Blue Cohosh (*Caulophyllum thalictroides*), which was just budding out.

Dutchman's breeches are ranked S1 (very rare) by the Manitoba Conservation Data Center. They are associated with the rich soils of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence forest region, which reaches its western extent in the southeastern corner of Manitoba. The plants appear in early spring as spherical clusters with finely divided leaves that resemble those of the closely related and commonly cultivated bleeding heart (*Dicentra eximia*). The clusters are composed of very delicate stems that are quick to wither upon the slightest bruising. The number of stems in each cluster increases with the age of the plant. As Dr. Johnson pointed out, Dutchman's Breeches are ephemeral, meaning that their life cycle (from first sprout to seed set) is very short. Once the plants have set seed, the above-ground portion dies back, leaving no evidence of their existence. It was hard to believe that in just a couple of weeks, the lush carpet of plants at our feet would be gone.

It was a great field trip with many exciting new discoveries.

One last word of advice. Those of you who like to secure the possibility of being included in subsequent field trips of this sort, I strongly recommend that, should your party leader fall into a dense patch of stinging nettles, you *do not laugh*.

**Membership renewals are now due.
See the December 2002 newsletter for details.**