ON THE FRINGE

NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY OF NORTHEASTERN OHIO

Founding Chapter of

THE OHIO NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

Thomas A. Sampliner, Local President & Editor

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As previously announced, James K. Bissell, Curator of Botany and Director of Natural Areas for the Cleveland Museum of Natural History will be our annual banquet speaker, Saturday evening, November 13th, 1993 at the Garden Center of Greater Cleveland.

Jim, a mentor to many of us, will speak on "Rare Plants of Ohio, Including Their Habitats." The records reflect that Jim annually is one of the most significant contributors via field data to the State Heritage List. Those who have heard Jim know

and appreciate his enthusiasm and encyclopedic knowledge.

Furthermore, the annual dinner is the one time of year we hope all members turn out to enjoy fine food and spirits and to exchange experiences over the last year.

Your board keeps the price as low as possible to enable as many as possible to attend this event. Note the location this year! Please get your reservation in early and bring a guest or two.

Obviously the state organization has not followed through on their promises. It is likely the entity will not survive much longer. At the next local board meeting, I will recommend we withdraw further support. When they first began to call upon local chapters for financial assistance, we suffered a local loss of funds and members. In light of their performance to date, it is best we go it alone locally. This year is the first since ONPS went on line that our new and renewal of members has become healthy again. We owe it to the local to remain so.

In November or December your board will meet to begin plans for the year. If you wish to be heard or have programs, lecture, field trip or other activity suggestions, please communicate with me. Also, if you are willing to serve the society in any capacity, please let me know.

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PYMATUNING CREEK FEN

By Tom Sampliner

On Saturday, August 7, 1993, Jim Bissell's group of volunteers, known as the Northeast Ohio Naturalists, (N.E.O.N) traveled to Pymatuning Creek Fen in Ashtabula County.

Cool overcast weather provided ideal conditions for hiking. We were to explore that portion of the creek west of Creek Road where the creek flows between glacial gravel deposits. In this area numerous springs and seeps form fascinating fens. According to Jim, the last time anyone recorded the alkalinity, it measured 7.7.

To keep as dry as possible for as long as possible (often difficult to do on a Bissell hike) we entered the fen by proceeding west from the road and then southwest across an alfalfa field to the edge of the field. Again according to Jim, alfalfa is a uncommon crop in Ashtabula; however, here very successful due to the alkalinity of the glacial till deposits.

At the southwest edge of the field, just prior to entering the woods, we stopped to interfere in one of nature's little dramas. It seems that a brown bat became trapped, more accurately pinned, by the sharp bristles of a Burdock head (Arctium minus). No doubt the bat became impaled sometime during the prior evening. It chattered away as it struggled to free itself. Obviously, the creature was near complete exhaustion. The approaching of our motley crew presumably mustered a final flurry of escape attempts. The creature was pathetic with it's small pink snout and tiny "hands" located about midway along the front edge of it's diaphanous wings, all the while chattering it's misery to all the world. It took three pairs of hands to hold the wings, lift up on them to remove the wings from those impaling Burdock bristles and bend away other potential trouble. For a few seconds we bridged the gap of inter-creature communications as it peacefully accepted our help. One of our group lifted the freed creature to a limb safely above the Burdock ramparts at the field border. Hopefully, the creature now clinging desparately to a branch would regain stength and live to fly away for better things.

As we entered the wet areas it became obvious the morning would be a contest between thick growths of Swamp rose, (Rosa palustris) Spiraea (Spiraea alba) and stamina. There were many occasions the roses were the clear winner. Another foe to contend with was the mud of the sucking variety. If your shoes or boots weren't on tight, you would find yourself lifting a foot up without footwear, the latter starring back up at you from the depths of your fresh footprint. We would have made a troop of kindergartners proud with our traveling sound of slurps, gurgles and kathumps.

Among the hikers that morning, were some members of the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy. They were interested in and knowledgable about invertabrates such as the muscles inhabiting the creek. In fact, they were along to search for and identify several rare and endangered species. The son of their leader was particularly amusing. He was delighted to share his knowledge and really enjoyed mucking about in the creek to locate interesting bivalves.

Not too far into the muck in early going we located a beautiful flowering small purple fringed orchid (Platanthera psychodes). Nearby was the smaller of two populations of the federally listed spreading globe flower (Trollius laxus) for which the site is well known.

It was interesting to see how robust and grown-up were the Trollius leaves this late in the growing season. In early spring during flowering, the deeply cleft buttercup-like leaves are much smaller and lower to the ground.

As we left the Trollius and began to follow the creek from southeast towards the northwest (towards Woodard Road) we resumed our contest of wills with the roses, spiraea and our constant companion ground cover, Poison Ivy (Toxicodendron radicans). It was not only always underfoot and often knee high or better, but also every tre you intended to use as a handrail seemed to have that forbiding vine as an adornmant. If this wasn't enough, we also encountered population of stinging nettles (Urtica dioica).

Lest you think we weren't enjoying the glorious weather and adventure, we found several interesting plants, we found several Green Dragons (Arisaema dracontium) still in the flood plain. Also both along the creek and into the flood plain wsas the striking fire engine red of Cardinal flower (Lobelia cardinalis). Having moved through the flood plain back to the creek looking for riffles in the water, our Pennsylvania friends went to work in the creek by hand and with seine they located severaldifferent muscle species and fish to show us.

I learned there are variations in the shapes, colors (both exterior and interior shell) teeth and ridges that distingusih species. Some are quite handsome.

We were told that making buttons from muscle shells was a cottage industry of local import at one time. Tough plastics and high tech killed the industry, the Japanese still prefer our local muscle species for use in growing fresh water pearls back in the Orient.

One species that was particularly handsome was identified as "Lady finger". It was an exquisite shade of purple the entire inside of the shell. We did not find the endangered 'Clubshell' species, though we were taught what to look for and our friends looked extensively in one promisng area.

On a recent prior trip, our guests found a granite rock shaped just like several of the muscle species. it was their opinion that due to shape and texture they had indeed located a tool used by our Native Americans.

This wasn't the only surprise given up by the creek. One of our local members picked up a small obviously hand blown glass bottle.

Having reached Woodard Road, we hiked back east and then re-entered the wetland to gain access to the fen again. This re-entry was for the purpose of viewing both the largest of the two populations of (Trollius laxus) and also the still in prime bloom, Hooded Ladies' Tresses (Spiranthes romanzoffiana). Some 20 different flowering scapes on hammocks arose from openings amidst gravelly seeps. The hammocks were also host to Round Leaved Sundews (Drosera rotundifolia) several with flowering stalks in tight bud. Several noteworthy sedges and rushes were

also present. One (Carex flava) was a knee high perimeter border to the open springs area. The yellow-brown fruits, with imagination, do give an impression of yellow sedge. It was as if they were sentinels guarding the fen from tree line to open springs area.

The Ladystresses are State listed as potentially threatened and the Sundew are also potentially threatened. For this first, for me, view of Hooded Ladystresses, I finally understood the common name. The dorsal petals do connive to form a keeled hood like structure. Another trait I observed was the blush of greenish - yellow color in the throat of each flower.

Certainly this was an enjoyable productive day for all participants. Next opportunity more of you may wish to take advantage of a hike to this unusual habitat.

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LET'S TALK ABOUT THE LADIES - TRESSES THAT IS

By Tom Sampliner

In the Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area just off the hike and bike trail, perhaps one quarter mile from the Boston Mills Road parking lot, there stands a magnificient population of Great Plains Ladystress orchids, (Spiranthes magnicamporum). They grow with such September visual delights as the Large Fringed Gentian (Gentiana crinita) and Rose Pink or Bitterbloom (Sabatia angularis); frequent but readily visible companions are false Dragonhead, also called Obediant Plant (Physostegia virginiana) both white and rose color forms. In a few spots the obediant plants grew side by side with gentians of similar height. My Camera Guild members were astounded to be able to fill photographic frames with pastels ranging from blues to rose and white.

Turning to orchid traits, the Great Plains Ladystress is distinguished by having no leaves visible at flowering time, yellow on the inside of the lower petal (the lip) and having a gaping appearance to the flower due to a deflexed (downward pointing) lip.

Also, setting this orchid apart from other Ladystresses is the fragrant spicy odor; please see Fred Case's "Orchid of the Western Great Lakes Region". This species is one of several in recent years separated out of the (Spiranthes cernua) complex. It was Sheviak who described this species first in 1973. Other recognized species separated out of (Spiranthes cernua) are Ochroleuca and Casei.

Once you have seen both cernua and magnicamporum, you are not likely to confusethem again. Cernua will be crystalline in texture and white throughout with no yellow on the lip. Odor will not be apparant nor will it have the gaping

appearance. It often does have leaves at flowering time. While Fred Case is a superb orchid authority, his habitat descriptions in his "Orchids of the Western Great Lakes Region" are not particularly helpful separating the various Spiranthes.

(Spiranthes orchroleuca) grows in Northeastern Ohio. I am aware of a population at the North Kingsville Sand Barrens. This species, commonly called the Yellow Ladystress, does have leaves at flowering time, as well as a distinctly two-lipped appearance. This is caused by the lateral sepals and petals as well as the dorsal sepal coming together and recurving in contrast to the downward pointed lip. Flower color is described in Case's key as varying from pale cream to yellowish or faint creamy green tones with the under side of the lip sometimes deeper yellowish cream. Even I can see the thickened central creamy yellow lip pad without a hand lens.

I've never seen (Spiranthes casei) so I'm totally reliant upon text descriptions of this species. The description certainly seems to set this species apart nicely from the preceeding. The dorsal sepal and lateral petals are growing forward with little upward curvature. Flowers are formed in a single loose rank giving the impression that the spiral consists of groups of 2 or 3 flowers. Leaves wither from the bottom but upper bracts usually persist at flowering time.

At the spot we investigated, immediately adjacent to the raised bed of the trail some 75 yards wide to the Cattail/tree -shrub line, the orchids were well mixed amidst gentians, sabatias, coreopsis, horsetails, Virginia Mountian Mint (Pycnanthemum virginianum) and Grey Goldenrod (Solidago nemoralis). The gentians were especially robust this trip (9-25-93) and varied greatly in color from a pink-purple hue to pale blue to very dark sky blue. The gentians were especially tall and multiflowerheaded nearest the Cattails.

The ground is very exposed, shielded by only occasional small trees. It must bake like a furnace in the summer. Disturbance probably won't be as great in future years since the trail has been completely finished and no utility access seems to be nearby. I suppose unless managed, the spot will deteriorate for purposes of viewing this current magnificient assemblage of wildflowers.

If making the trip, just north of the overpass of the path across the Ohio Turnpike, at the northeast corner, take a quick look at what appears to be a vine with little pumpkins as fruits. The shrub is commonly called Climbing Bittersweet, (Celastrus either scandens if native or orbiculatus if alien), with my reference books, I can't determine which.

In any event, do take a fall pilgrimage to see what I'll call a pastel paradise during fall in one of the next few years - It's well worth the effort.

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NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY TRAVELS

Brecksville - Metroparks Naturalist, David Dvorak, Jr. and myself have joined together to provide what we believe to be a unique concepts in nature trips. While we compose "stock" trips, we also design to order nature outings of any duration or destination. We want to service small groups who wish to see, enjoy, and photograph nature up close. For those destinations we can't currently service, we have a network of experts we can refer to.

Where else can someone call to request a trip to see and photograph Eagles and Osprey on their nests or 20 orchids in bloom during a one week trip?!

Here is a sample of the current "inventory" of trips we have to offer; please keep in mind, trip lengths and exact itinerary can be altered in any desired way and times changed.

NESTING BIRDS AND BOTANICAL DELIGHTS OF SOUTHWESTERN FLORIDA
SATURDAY FEB. 5, - MONDAY FEB. 14, 1994

Visit rookeries and nesting areas of egrets, herons, eagles, osprey, and burrowing owls. Explore the botanical wonders of parks, wildlife refuges, preserves, and gardens.

ARIZONA DESERT IN SPRING
SATURDAY APRIL 23 - TUESDAY MAY 3, 1994

Blooming cactus, desert and mountain vegetation, wildlife, and the Spring bird migration will be featured in this trip.

ORCHIDS, WATERFALLS, AND LIGHTHOUSES OF MICHIGAN
SATURDAY MAY 21, - SUNDAY MAY 29, 1994

Natural areas loaded with rare wildflowers, picturesque fall andlighthouses in the upper and lower penninsula will be featured including a trip to visit the Kirtland's Warbler.

WILDFLOWERS AND WILDLIFE OF THE BRUCE PENNINSULA
FRIDAY JUNE 10, - SUNDAY JUNE 19, 1994

Twenty plus species of orchids as well as many other species of flowers,trees, and shrubs will be seen. The warblers nest here and waterbirds are everywhere.

TALLGRASS PRAIRIES AND WILDLIFE PRESERVES
SATURDAY JUNE 25, - SUNDAY JULY 3,1994

Visit the two largest tallgrass prairie preserves, one located in Kansas the other in Oklahoma. Also explore two world class wildlife areas in Kansas known for abundant bird and other wildlife populations.

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ANNUAL DINNER REGISTRATION FORM

Calculation of Amount You Pay . . . . . _____

1 Person in the Party 1 X$12. . . . . _____
Each Additional Person @ $10/ticket . . . . . _____
Total Amount Enclosed. . . . . _____

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( ) Life Membership $500.00

Make check payable to the **Native Plant Society of Northeastern Ohio** and mail with this form to :

Thomas A Sampliner, President
Native Plant Society of Northeastern Ohio
2651 Kerwick Road
University Hts., Ohio 44118

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