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**John Klymko after trying to rescue water shoes from deep mud on the Algonquin Orienteering Field Trip. Credit: E. R. Thompson**

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## President's Message

It is winter in most of Ontario. Even in southern Ontario, where winter comes and goes, field botany virtually comes to a standstill. Winter twig identification is an essential skill for a field botanist, but does anyone want to read about numbers of bud scales and leaf scar patterns outside a botany textbook?

What is left but to consider but the conifer? There is perhaps no taxon that is so meaningful to humans. Perhaps you will argue that there are so few species they are not worth undue contemplation, but the conifers remind us that life goes on even in the worst of winters. They provide the character and contrast within our winter landscape, and the resinous fragrance that links outdoor experiences in our brains. If you had the misfortune to be in danger of getting scurvy, a vile tea made from the leaves of cedar would protect you. They provide bedding if you forget your Thermarest. The sound of pine trees in the wind has inspired poetry, and the larch has inspired humour. A field botanist could do worse than contemplating conifers in the darkest and dreariest part of the winter. 🌲

Sarah Mainguy, President

### Addendum

In Campbell and Woodman's article "An Update to the Pteridophytes of Waterloo Region" in Vol. 20.2 (Summer) of the *Newsletter*, I inadvertently deleted the far right-hand column of the second part of Table 1 on page 5 showing provincial ranks. The provincial ranks for these species are: *Polystichum braunii* - S3; *Deparia acrostichoides*, *Diplazium pycnocarpon*, *Dryopteris clintoniana*, *Dryopteris filix-mas*, *Dryopteris goldiana* and *Polystichum lonchitis* - S4; all others on the last part of Table 1 on page 5 are S5. Please refer to this table for the common names of these species. — *Editor*

### Standard source for most scientific names and authorities of vascular plants:

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*The FBO is a non-profit organization founded in 1984 for those interested in botany and conservation in Ontario.*

#### President

Sarah Mainguy  
RR #3 Guelph ON N1H 6H9  
mainrod@sympatico.ca  
(519) 822-5221

#### Vice President

Bill Crowley  
19 Burnham Blvd Port Hope ON L1A 4H5  
(905) 885-2123

#### Treasurer

Bill Draper  
35 Hepbourne St. Toronto ON M6H 1K1  
william.draper@sympatico.ca  
(416) 534-2892

#### Secretary

Dan Barcza  
PO Box 1510 Bradford ON L3Z 2B8  
danbarcza@hotmail.com  
(905) 775-7633

#### Past President

Mary Ann Johnson  
301-188 15 Ave SW Calgary AB T2R 1S4  
mjohnson86@shaw.ca

#### Membership

Bill McIlveen  
13200 Nassagaweya-Esquesing Town Line  
RR1 Acton ON L7J 2L7  
wmcilveen@sympatico.ca  
(519) 853-3948

#### Field Trips

Jim Lane and Carol Brotman  
583 Beresford Avenue Toronto ON M6S 3C2  
fbotrips@sympatico.ca  
(416) 767-4878

#### Newsletter Editor

Cheryl Hendrickson  
6152 4th Line E, RR 1 Ariss ON N0B 1B0  
hendrickson@landsaga.com  
(519) 846-1255

#### Associate Editors

Michael J. Oldham, Natural Heritage Information Centre  
MNR PO Box 7000 Peterborough ON K9L 1C8  
michael.oldham@ontario.ca  
(705) 755-2160  
Allan Harris (807) 344-7213  
aharris@tbaytel.net  
Lesley McDonell  
68 Steffler Drive, Guelph, ON N1G 3J9  
Lesley.mcdonell@natureconservancy.ca  
(519) 780 - 0153

#### Contributing Editor:

W.D. McIlveen  
(see Membership above)

#### Website

Melinda Thompson  
plantgirl2002@hotmail.com



# Field Trip Reports

## **No Botanizing Allowed! Orienteering in Algonquin Park**

Slowpokes in general, botanists can have a hard time keeping pace. Who can blame us when we have so much to look at, be it on an urban sidewalk keeping an eye out for rare weeds, or a woodland trail seeking interesting native species? Well, it turns out there is someone who sees folly in our ways, and his name is Paul Rothfels.

Paul, an experienced woodsman, has tread countless kilometres with map and compass. Paul was our leader for this September 5, 2008 FBO outing. He likes to keep a brisk pace in the woods, a pace that leaves little time for distraction or slowpokes. He also claims that armed with knowledge of orienteering techniques, and a little practice, it is impossible to get lost, a position that was initially met with scepticism from the group.

Before heading out, we were taught some basic orienteering skills. Paul showed us how to set the declination on a compass. This is important to correct for the magnetic variance between true north and magnetic north. In Algonquin Park the magnetic variance is 12 degrees west. This is a sizeable number when considering that one degree error in bearing will result in being 17 meters off the mark over a distance of one kilometre. Declination is always indicated on a topographic map, and is an important consideration before heading out.

We were also taught how to set a bearing using the map and compass. A bearing is the direction, in degrees that one must travel to reach a destination point. After he

went over the basics, Paul gave us a destination and we each had to come up with a bearing. The first couple of times, we came up with some significantly different numbers, but by the end of the day everyone was able to come up with number that differed by no more than a degree or two.



**Peter Simonyi follows a bearing. Credit: Sarah Hendershot**

Once comfortable with the basics, we set out. Given that we had more than 10 kilometers to bushwhack by dinner time, we had to keep moving. This is where the “No botanizing allowed!” rule came in. Every time something interesting was spotted, whether it was New York Fern (*Thelypteris noveboracensis*), Citron Amanita (*Amanita citrina*) or a moose skeleton, the pace would slow so everyone could have a look. And every time that happened, Paul would exclaim “No botanizing allowed!”, or something to that effect, and the group would be brought back to the task at hand.

The route started on the Chit Lake Trail. The Chit Lake Trail is an old logging trail now used by researchers at the Wildlife Research Station to reach research plots. The trail passes by an old logging camp, where the frame of an old log cabin can still be seen.

Once we reached the top of Lake Sasajewun, we veered off the trail and the real orienteering began. Paul picked a common destination for the group (the first destination being the east end of Kathlyn Lake), and had each participant come up with the bearing needed to reach the target. Once the group had agreed upon a bearing, the compasses were set and we were off. Upon reaching Kathlyn Lake, another destination was given



**Paul Rothfels and Peter Simonyi traversing the Madawaska River. Credit: Sarah Hendershot**

and a new bearing was set.

These basic steps were repeated as a large loop was walked. As challenges arose, such as obstacles like swamp and cliff, Paul would share his expertise and help us troubleshoot. He showed us how to use clues along the way, such as creeks and other prominent features, to find our approximate location on the map and gauge our progress. He also demonstrated how, using an assumed average walking speed of around 2 kilometers an hour, one could estimate with a fair degree of accuracy how long it would take to reach a destination. This is a useful technique, for if you end up reaching a destination early it is possible you have reached a feature similar to your destination along the route but you have yet to reach your final goal. Conversely, if you find you are well over time you may have missed your mark, and you should try to figure out where you are on your map using either the features around you or a GPS, and then take the appropriate corrective action.

Over time the confidence of the group increased. Finding bearings got easier and faster. Following a bearing through the woods required less effort and almost became second nature. Participants began to believe that what Paul had said is true, with map and compass, and now experience, one really couldn't get lost in the woods. This comfort let the participants relax a little, and gave them a bit more time to look around and...then Paul would interject "No botanizing allowed!" 🌿

Sarah Hendershott and John Klymko

## Altberg Nature Reserve

A small group gathered for the field trip to the Altberg Nature Reserve on May 25, 2008, led by Mike McMurtry and Maria Papoulias. The weather was perfect and Bill Crowley soon scouted out the local "Tims" or rather, a few rickety old tables and a dubious looking outhouse near the entrance. After a quick round of introductions and a brief presentation by Mike, we began the walk along an existing trail.

The Reserve is located about 7 km west of Norland and at 470 hectares (1163 acres) is the largest nature reserve in Ontario Nature's reserve system. Rudolph Altberg donated the northern portion of the property to Ontario Nature in 1983. The Altberg Nature Reserve straddles the contact between the granitic rocks of the Canadian Shield and the limestone of the Great Lakes - St. Lawrence forest.

The property hosts a range of community types due to its topographic variability, in addition to the combination of both granitic shield in the southeastern areas, and limestone sections in the north and western portions. The habitats are made up of open marsh, meadow, Eastern White Cedar (*Thuja occidentalis*) and Alder (*Alnus sp.*) swamp (largely fed by Corben Creek) and Sugar Maple (*Acer saccharum*) and Ironwood (*Ostrya virginiana*) forest communities, Pine (*Pinus sp.*) plantations, and some regenerating old field habitat. The Reserve provides habitat to a host of fauna and flora and we were fortunate enough to have seasoned birders and botanists with us on the trip.

The fauna were generally reflective of the high quality habitat found on the property and included signs of Black Bear (*Ursus americanus*), Moose (*Alces alces*), and a number of forest interior birds. A sighting of one male Scarlet Tanager (*Piranga olivacea*) after lunch resulted in a great deal of discussion as it had an unusual amount of white on its breast.

The walk started off with a discussion around a Butternut (*Juglans cinerea*) that was showing signs of decline as a result of infection by the fungus - *Sirococcus clavignenti-juglandacearum*.

Quite a large number of fern species were seen over the course of day including: Cinnamon Fern (*Osmunda cinnamomea*), Interrupted Fern (*Osmunda claytoniana*), Maidenhair Fern (*Adiantum pedatum*), Northern Lady Fern (*Athyrium filix-femina var. angustum*), Bulblet Bladder Fern (*Cystopteris bulbifera*), Fragile Fern (*Cystopteris fragilis*), Spinulose Wood Fern (*Dryopteris carthusiana*), Evergreen Wood Fern (*Dryopteris intermedia*),





**Painted Trillium (*Trillium undulatum*) Credit: Kate Hayes**



**White Trillium (*Trillium grandiflorum*) Credit: Kate Hayes**



**Hobblebush (*Viburnum lantanoides*) Credit: Kate Hayes**

Marginal Wood Fern (*Dryopteris marginalis*), Oak Fern (*Gymnocarpium dryopteris*), Ostrich Fern (*Matteuccia struthiopteris* var. *pennsylvanica*), Sensitive Fern (*Onoclea sensibilis*), Long Beech Fern (*Phegopteris connectilis*), Eastern Bracken-fern (*Pteridium aquilinum* var. *latiusculum*), and, New York Fern (*Thelypteris noveboracensis*).

Throughout the walk, Hobblebush (*Viburnum lantanoides*) and various honeysuckles including, Fly Honeysuckle (*Lonicera canadensis*) and Glaucous Honeysuckle (*Lonicera dioica*) were documented and added to the inventory list.

A number of orchids were also seen including an abundance of Stemless Lady's Slipper (*Cypripedium acaule*) in amongst the Mullein. Common Mullein (*Verbascum thapsus*) had sprung up in the path of a windstorm blowdown of some very mature trees resulting in what Maria had affectionately named the "Mullein forest". While Common Mullein is not native to Canada, it tends to prefer sunny areas so Maria is optimistic that as they forest regenerates, the Mullein will die back.

We were fortunate enough to still capture a number of trilliums in bloom including: White Trillium (*Trillium grandiflorum*); Painted Trillium (*Trillium undulatum*); and Red Trillium (*Trillium erectum*).

The walk also included the identification of mosses and lichens including the aptly named Pin Cushion Moss (*Leucobryum glaucum*), Schreber's Moss (*Pleurozium schreberi*), and Snakeskin Liverwort (*Conocephalum conicum*).

Quite a few individuals in the group delighted in turning over salamander boards, many of which revealed the Eastern Red-backed Salamanders (*Plethodon cinereus*) underneath. These amphibians are aptly named for the red stripes down their predominantly grey/black bodies. Although a number had been heard, shortly before lunch, a Gray Treefrog (*Hyla versicolor*) was spotted perched midway up a tree and this became the subject of many photographs.

Near the end of the walk, there was quite a hike down a steep incline that was a bit challenging but rewarded by lots of interesting plants seen in among the cracks and crevices. At the bottom of this was quite a large cattail (*Typha* sp.) marsh and from there, the group made our way back to the entrance.

The entire walk documented over 200 plants and over 50 species of fauna and was considered a great success by all participants. 🌿

Kate Hayes

## What Do Muskoka and the Atlantic Coastal Plain Have in Common?

Members of the FBO met on September 14, 2008, at the Torrance Barrens Conservation Reserve, west of Gravenhurst, off of Muskoka Road 13 or Southwood Road, to find out the answer to this question. We were to learn about the flora of the Muskoka region, particularly those species whose main distribution is on the Atlantic Coastal Plain. We would also enjoy fall composites (asters and goldenrods) and many other plants and animals. Torrance Barrens is not far from Morrison Lake, the location of another recent FBO trip. We were led by George Bryant, experienced outdoor trip leader and naturalist, who recently served as treasurer of our organization. Some of his other talents would become apparent as the day went on.

The Torrance Barrens has become well-known to Ontario residents as a “dark sky reserve”, one of the few places in southern Ontario where one can observe the stars and other heavenly bodies without the interference of stray light from our roads, residences and other buildings.

Exposed granite bedrock with little or no soil dominates the Torrance Barrens; it supports sparse herbaceous vegetation and scattered trees and shrubs capable of withstanding the harsh conditions. George explained how glaciers scoured the Torrance Barrens area, removing much of the soil overburden. About 13,000 years ago, meltwater from retreating ice sheets flowed from the then Lake Algonquin through the Trent-Severn area towards Lake Iroquois, now in the area of Lake Ontario, and thence to the Atlantic Ocean (Chapman and Putnam 1984). One theory is that this flow of water towards the eastern seaboard and associated waterfowl movements made it possible for vegetation to be transported from the Atlantic Coastal Plain (ACP) to the area of our walk. For a more in-depth discussion of the possible means of dispersion of ACP plants, see Reznicek (1994).

The weather was not particularly promising. It was overcast and we were expected to get heavy rains at some point in the day from disturbances caused by Hurricane Ike. Fortunately we were spared a deluge and it was pleasant most of the day. We first concentrated on goldenrods at the roadside and in the rock barrens. Close to the parking lot we found Grass-leaved Goldenrod (*Euthamia graminifolia*), Gray Goldenrod (*Solidago nemoralis* var. *nemoralis*), Rough Goldenrod (*Solidago rugosa* ssp. *rugosa*), Hairy Goldenrod (*Solidago hispida* var. *hispida*) and Bog Goldenrod (*Solidago uliginosa*) (in the acidic wetter areas). Flat-top White Aster (*Doellingeria umbellata* var. *umbellata*) and Large-leaved Aster

(*Eurybia macrophylla*) were found near the goldenrods; Semple and his colleagues have also published the authoritative work on asters in Ontario (Semple *et al.* 2002). Other herbaceous plants of the rock barrens were Eastern Bracken-fern (*Pteridium aquilinum*), Canada Blue Grass (*Poa compressa*), Narrow-leaved Meadow-sweet (*Spiraea alba*), Slender Wheat Grass (*Elymus trachycaulus* ssp. *trachycaulus*), Poverty Oat Grass (*Danthonia spicata*), Sheep Sorrel (*Rumex acetosella* ssp. *acetosella*), Rough Hair Grass (*Agrostis scabra*) and the orchid Case's Ladies' Tresses (*Spiranthes casei*). This Ladies' Tresses orchid has cream-coloured flowers in a “long, rather loose spiral”, and the lower flowers of the inflorescence are 4-7 mm long (Whiting and Catling 1986). The more common Nodding Ladies' Tresses (*S. cernua*) has white, slightly drooping flowers, the inflorescence is usually densely flowered and the lower flowers are 8-11 mm long. For a detailed treatment of Ontario orchids, refer to the keys and drawings of floral parts in Whiting and Catling (1986).

Typical trees and shrubs were Common Juniper (*Juniperus communis*), Staghorn Sumac (*Rhus typhina*), Red Oak (*Quercus rubra*), White Oak (*Quercus alba*), and Eastern White Pine (*Pinus strobus*). Low Sweet Blueberry (*Vaccinium angustifolium*) was common, but no berries were left to pick. Northern Wild Raisin (*Viburnum cassinoides*) was found in a moist depression.

George indicated that the Torrance Barrens area is important for providing habitat for such breeding birds as Field Sparrow (*Spizella pusilla*), Brown Thrasher (*Toxostoma rufum*), and Common Nighthawk (*Chordeiles minor*) and many reptiles and amphibians. Someone spotted Ring-necked Snake (*Diadophis punctatus*) and later Smooth Greensnake (*Opheodrys vernalis*) and George adeptly caught each of them in his hands so as to show us more closely. Bill McIlveen coined the term “snake wrangler” to apply to George due to his skill. A few minutes later we also saw Five-lined Skink (*Eumeces fasciatus*), a species identified as being at risk in Ontario.

The group stopped for a few minutes looking at a beautiful fen separating a small lake from the rock barrens. The species included Leatherleaf (*Chamaedaphne calyculata*), Virginia Chain Fern (*Woodwardia virginica*), Swamp Loosestrife (*Decodon verticillatus*), Sweet Gale (*Myrica gale*), Black Chokeberry (*Aronia melanocarpa*), Pitcher-plant (*Sarracenia purpurea*), Winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*), Swamp Loosestrife (*Lysimachia terrestris*) and Tamarack (*Larix laricina*). Nearby in another wetland pocket, we identified Reed-like Three-way Sedge (*Dulichium arundinaceum*), White Water Lily (*Nymphaea odorata*), Bulrush (*Scirpus*





**Nodding Ladies' Tresses (*Spiranthes cernua*).**  
Credit: M.J. McMurtry



**Virginia Meadow Beauty (*Rhexia virginica*), an Atlantic Coastal Plain species in Muskoka.**  
Credit: M. J. McMurtry



**Torrance Barrens.** Credit: M.J. McMurtry



**Three-way Sedge (*Dulichium arundinaceum*).**  
Credit: M.J. McMurtry



**Marsh St. John's-wort (*Triadenum virginicum*).** Credit: M.J. McMurtry



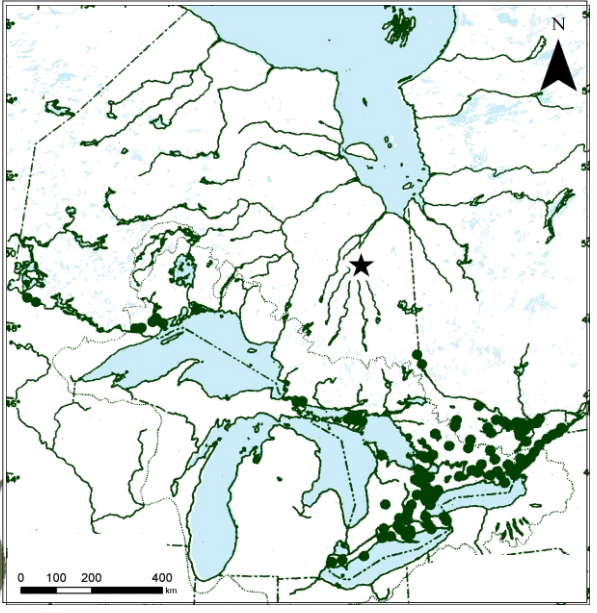
## Canada Plum (*Prunus nigra*) New to Ecoregion 3E (Abitibi River, Cochrane District)

Canada Plum (*Prunus nigra*) is considered common throughout southern Ontario, becoming infrequent to rare north of Highway 17. In northeastern Ontario, this species has been collected or identified from Manitoulin Island, the north shore of Lake Huron, and Lake Timiskaming. In northwestern Ontario, this species has been collected or identified in Thunder Bay and Rainy River Districts. Canada Plum was observed and collected on June 19, 2008 at the site of an historic Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) trading post. "New Post" was established on the Abitibi River, downstream from (north of) the Abitibi Canyon hydroelectric generating station. The identification was confirmed by Bill Crins, after reviewing a photograph of the specimen. This occurrence of Canada Plum in the Cochrane District represents a northward range expansion of approximately 300 km based on available sources (Meades *et al.* 2004; Soper and Heimburger 1982; Baldwin 1958).

Traditional knowledge, limited surveys, and incidental discoveries of artifacts indicate this location was occupied by aboriginal people prior to the arrival of Europeans, including Cree, Ojibway, and Northern Algonquin peoples (OMNR 1986). The HBC post was established in 1867; in 1925, the post was abandoned, a family subsequently occupied and farmed the site until 1936. Prior to and during these occupations, the site was also occupied seasonally by members of the Taykwa Tagamou First Nation (Finlayson 2005). Archaeological assessments uncovered the remains of several HBC structures, a number of tepee frames, and a garden on the site. A small cemetery marks the resting place of at least thirteen people who lived at the post (OMNR 1986; Finlayson 2005).

Canada Plum is typically found in thickets, bottomlands, and hillsides, and also along forest edges, fencerows, and abandoned fields (Soper and Heimburger 1982). It is adapted to fine and medium texture soils, growing best in alluvial and calcareous soils (Powell and Beardmore 2007). The calcareous soils of the Abitibi River valley, and of the northeastern corner of Ontario in general, are a result of a late-glacial surge of thin ice known as the Cochrane Advance. The advance deposited a thick blanket of very fine-grained calcareous till over the landscape. Postglacial lakes and rivers also resulted in the deposition of a thin blanket of silt, clay, and gravel over the area (Frey and Duba 2002).

The plum shrubs were found growing amongst the understory of regenerating Trembling Aspen (*Populus*



Dot map showing distribution of Canada Plum (*Prunus nigra*) in Ontario. The new record is indicated by a star. Reprinted from Soper and Heimburger (1982).

Branch specimen of Canada Plum (*Prunus nigra*) collected from the New Post section of Little Abitibi Provincial Park.

*tremuloides*), White Spruce (*Picea glauca*), Balsam Fir (*Abies balsamea*), and Balsam Poplar (*Populus balsamifera*). Other species observed (also typical of boreal mixedwood forests) included Mountain Maple (*Acer spicatum*), Speckled Alder (*Alnus incana*), Raspberry (*Rubus idaeus*), Wild Rose (*Rosa acicularis* ssp. *sayi*), and a variety of asters (e.g. *Symphotrichum*, *Doellingeria*, *Eurybia* spp.) and goldenrods (*Solidago* spp.) taking advantage of the relatively open forest canopy.

A few remnant cultivated species still exist at the New Post HBC site. Wild Parsnip (*Pastinaca sativa*) grows abundantly throughout the open area, Forget-me-nots (*Myosotis* sp.) may be found under Choke Cherry (*Prunus virginiana*) thickets, and two rhubarb (*Rheum* sp.) plants are so well-established, they have multiplied several times and a gardener would be tempted to divide them. However, the site is rapidly being colonized by old-field and boreal mixed-wood species. Raspberries and Parsnip dominated a large opening along the river's edge nearby.

While only one Canada Plum specimen was collected, other individuals were captured in habitat photographs; the full extent of the species at the site is unknown. Canada Plum bears edible fruit that are commonly used



*hatterianus*, included by some authors in *S. atrovirens*), Rattlesnake Manna Grass (*Glyceria canadensis*), White Beaked-rush (*Rhynchospora alba*) and Spatulate-leaved Sundew (*Drosera intermedia*). Water-shield (*Brasenia schreberi*) grew in the shallow, open water; it can be separated from other ovoid-leaved floating plants by the slimy lower surface of the leaf. We found Marsh St. John's-wort (*Triadenum fraseri*) and checked the length of the style to confirm that it was *T. fraseri* and not *T. virginicum*, an ACP species. We also saw Black Huckleberry (*Gaylussacia baccata*) and Swamp Dewberry (*Rubus hispidus*) and Teaberry or Wintergreen (*Gaultheria procumbens*). George pointed out a disjunct occurrence of Three-toothed Cinquefoil (*Potentilla tridentata*). The principal range of this species is much further north on rocky cliffs of the boreal forest. For example, the author saw it this summer on the cliffs overlooking Old Woman Bay on Lake Superior. We also observed Sand Cherry (*Prunus pumila*), a low shrub that is beautiful when it blooms, earlier in the summer. Peter Beckett, of Laurentian University, pointed out a number of *Sphagnum* species, among them the flame-red Red Peatmoss (*Sphagnum rubellum*).

We were passed several times by large groups of mountain bikers participating in an organized rally. They were courteous but we wondered about the impact of this many bikers on the trails and vegetation and whether this activity was compatible with the goals of a nature reserve.

After a lunch consumed in our vehicles to escape the rain, we headed to a gravel pit further down Southwood Road that was known to contain ACP plants. Close to the entrance to the pit, we found Glossy Buckthorn

(*Rhamnus frangula*), a shrub that is an increasingly problematic invasive. Near it was Spotted Knapweed (*Centaurea biebersteinii*), another aggressive invasive, and White Heath Aster (*Symphotrichum ericoides*). Shining Aster (*Symphotrichum puniceum* var. *puniceum*) added another composite to our list. In the lower portion of the pit with a sandy bottom, George pointed out Carolina Yellow-eyed-grass (*Xyris difformis*), an ACP representative, and Lance-leaved Violet (*Viola lanceolata*) (in leaf only). Other associated species were Creeping Spike-rush (*Eleocharis palustris*), Wool-grass (*Scirpus cyperinus*), and Shining Willow (*Salix lucida*), as well as more Ladies' Tresses (*Spiranthes* sp.), this time Nodding Ladies' Tresses, *S. cernua*. George caught yet another animal in his hands, this time a Meadow Jumping Mouse (*Zapus hudsonius*, no white tip on tail).

Our final stop was the Hardy Lake Provincial Park, on the other side of Highway 169. The trail into the lake was shaded by lovely mature Sugar Maple (*Acer saccharum*), American Beech (*Fagus grandifolia*), Red Oak (*Quercus rubra*) and Eastern Hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*) and the trail was lined with New York Fern (*Thelypteris noveboracensis*). Several saprophytic species were observed, such as Beech-drops (*Epifagus virginiana*) and Indian-pipe (*Monotropa uniflora*). The trail eventually circles the lake and we made our way to a boardwalk looking over a marshy edge. Here George pointed out a number of additional ACP species including Bayonet Rush (*Juncus militaris*), a stout plant with red-tinged stems, either not in flower or browsed off at the time of our visit, Purple Bladderwort (*Utricularia purpurea*), Robins' Spike-rush (*Eleocharis robbinsii*), Marsh St. John's-wort

... cont'd on p. 8



*The Board of the Field Botanists of Ontario invite you to attend the 25th Anniversary Luncheon on Sunday, April 5, 2009 at the Royal Botanical Gardens from 11am to 4pm.*

*The programme will include several speakers, a catered lunch and the presentation of the Goldie Award to Dr. George Argus for his outstanding contribution to field botany in Ontario.*

*Further details will be included in a separate announcement and on the FBO website.*

in jams and jellies. The species was likely introduced—intentionally or incidentally—by European or aboriginal people inhabiting the site. The species may have been introduced prior to the arrival of Europeans to the area. Canada Plum may also occur in other locations along the Abitibi River; the area remains under-explored by botanists, and further investigations are warranted.

The discovery of Canada Plum on the terraces of the Abitibi River was unexpected, as it was so far from the nearest known location (Lake Temiskaming), which itself appears to be an outlier. The discovery of Canada Plum at this location, an HBC post, adds a small piece of insight into the lives of people who lived at or traveled to the site. ❁

Anna Sheppard and Edward Morris

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Ontario Parks, Northeast Zone, 199 Larch Street, Suite 404, Sudbury Ontario, P3E 5P9

... cont'd from p. 6

(*Triadenum virginicum*), Carolina Yellow-eyed-grass (*Xyris difformis*), Virginia Meadow-beauty (*Rhexia virginicum*) and Snail-seed Pondweed (*Potamogeton*

*bicupulatus*). Floating-heart (*Nymphoides cordata*), another ACP species, has been observed in Hardy Lake but we didn't find it. Hardy Lake is known as one of the richest ACP sites in Ontario (Keddy and Sharpe 1994). Lance-leaved Pickerel-weed (*Pontederia cordata*), Spotted Touch-me-not (*Impatiens capensis*) and Eastern Buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*) were also present in the wetland and we found another composite in flower: Bog Aster (*Oclemena nemoralis*). Some members of our group continued to explore the area for ferns but the author had to return home. I was impressed with seeing a part of Muskoka that isn't readily apparent when driving the busy roads and visiting the better-known lakes. It's reassuring that Muskoka still contains areas that are relatively undisturbed and provides a home for a diversity of plants and animals. On behalf of the group I'd like to thank George Bryant for sharing a bit of wild Muskoka with us. ❁

Michael McMurtry

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## Request for plant images from Victoria

My son and I have a great nature web site and we are currently working on the provincial and state flowers. I would like to ask if any of your members would have an image of Ontario or other provincial flowers that they would allow us to use for which we will give credit. The image does not have to be big, 300 pixels wide would be great. For more information, please visit our site at [www.dereilanatureinn.ca](http://www.dereilanatureinn.ca); we would appreciate it if you would inform your members about it. Thank you for your time,

Derrick Ditchburn



# Botanical Roots

## A Royal Oak at Speyside

W.D. McIlveen

**Just north of Speyside, located on Highway 25 between Milton and Acton, there is a tree with special designation. It is described as a “Royal Oak” owing to its history. It has been designated as a Heritage Tree by the Town of Halton Hills in recognition of its cultural past.**

The tree is not even a native species (English Oak, *Quercus robur*) and it is not really that old either (currently only 70 years of age) but its story is nevertheless interesting. It dates back to 1937 when acorns from the Royal Park in Windsor England were distributed throughout the British Commonwealth to commemorate the coronation of H.M. King George VI and Queen Elizabeth.

Windsor Park, the source of the acorns used in the program, has its own very old history. It is located near Windsor Castle that was founded in the 11th century by William the Conqueror. The site of the castle offered a good defensive point over the River Thames. The forests to the south of the castle were reserved by the King for personal hunting and also to supply the castle with wood, deer, boar and fish. The first “parker” was appointed for the lands in 1129. The park is currently managed, as it has been from the start, with the focus not on immediate use of the trees, but for a very distant horizon in time. Large oaks can date back 500 years. It cannot be determined if the parent tree of the Speyside oak was young or old but at least it is reasonably certain that it had an ancient pedigree.

An attempt was made to document the fate of many of the acorns used in the coronation commemorative program. The information was compiled into a large book entitled *The Royal Record of Tree Planting, The Provision of Open Spaces, Recreation Grounds and Other Schemes Undertaken in the British Empire and Elsewhere, Especially in The United States of America, in Honour of the Coronation of His Majesty King George VI*, and printed by Cambridge University Press. Not every acorn record made it into the record book and it is not known if the Speyside acorn is listed.

I have not seen a copy of this book to know if its record was included.

The acorn that reached Speyside was cause for a celebration and the teacher at the Dublin School organized a public planting ceremony at the school. Fortunately, the acorn sprouted and grew into a tree in the schoolyard. The school too had been growing and was replaced by a new school that was built just north of Speyside in 1960. At that time, the 20-foot tree was transplanted to its present location at the new school.

By 1986, the decision had been made to close the new school. All was not lost for the tree was now nearly fifty years old. At that time, acorns were taken from the tree and planted at each of the four schools that now serve the student population. These schools include ones at Limehouse, Brookville, Stewarttown, and Pineview located north of Hornby. The Royal Oak lives on at the closed school and its progeny have been dispersed.

In 2008, the historical significance of the tree was recognized by the Town of Halton Hills. It was designated as a significant cultural feature under the *Ontario Heritage Act*. The designation places the responsibility for protecting the tree in the

hands of the Halton District Board of Education, which is the owner of the former school property. The tree itself is not completely healthy and shows a small amount of dieback in the central crown. It is expected that the tree will live on for many years yet, perhaps achieving the same age as its forebears in Windsor Park. No doubt, other trees with interesting stories will be similarly recognized by other municipalities throughout Ontario. Their stories should provide more material for articles to include in FBO newsletter. ♣



**The Royal Oak at the Speyside Public School, autumn 2007. Credit: W.D. McIlveen**

## Editor's Corner

A month or two after I took over as Editor last year, FBO President Sarah Mainguy said, "We'll have to arrange to get the filing cabinets to you. *Filing cabinets?* I thought. *Nobody said anything about filing cabinets.* A few more months went by and finally with Sarah's energy and assistance, we unloaded the two green metal filing cabinets and one box from her vehicle into the back hall of my cavernous farmhouse.

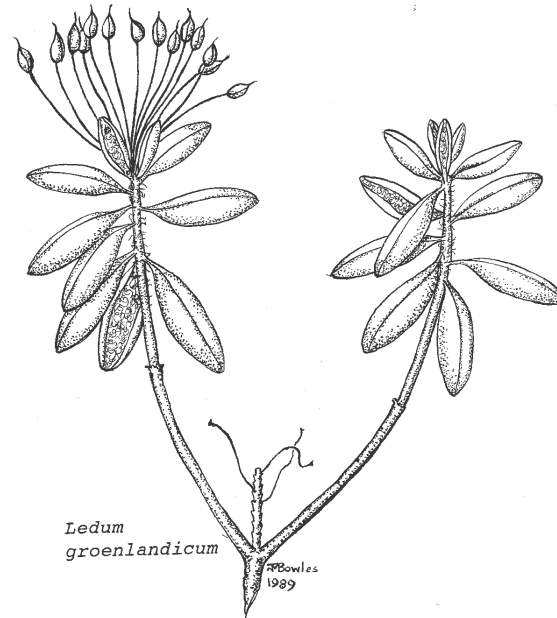
When I had the chance, I sat down and had a look at the contents of these interlopers. I expected them to be disorderly as the records of most volunteer organizations are; but no. Back issues were filed and labelled with meticulous care.

The first issue available was Fall 1989 – short of our full 25 year history - but that may have something to do with the rise and fall of the fabled *Plant Press*, original copies of which are coveted by long-time FBO members and spoken of in hushed and reverent tones. That 1989 issue is here beside me now.

Although she gets no credit in the masthead, it appears that Jane Bowles was the editor at the time. The covers under her editorship had beautifully rendered and accurate ink drawings of a selected native species; this issue featured *Ledum groenlandicum* (Labrador Tea) on the front. 1989 was the dawn of desk-top publishing (do they still call it that?) and so the newsletters were typed, but it must be owing to Jane's artistic sensibility that they are tidy, well laid out, with appropriate amounts of white space on each page. Photographs of plants do not occur in these early newsletters. All together it is an elegant publication that the FBO could be proud of.

And the content? Hmmmmm, some topics are surprisingly familiar. For example, still no name for the *Newsletter*, despite copious clever and thoughtful submissions. *Polypodium* was one suggestion, however the Executive thought it was "too ferny". With no clear winner, the issue was pushed to the back burner, where it continues to simmer on low.

On the first page, members are reminded that fees are due at the beginning of the year. Still true! - as



evidenced by the colourful renewal notice in most copies of this current issue. It was in 1989 that the fees were raised to \$12.00, where they stayed until 2006. Membership then was 225 plant-loving souls, while the mail out for this issue is 211 addresses or 262 members.

There was a review of the groundbreaking and newly released *Ferns of Canada*, co-authored by William J. Cody and last year's Goldie Award winner, Don Britton. And strangely coincidental to the field trip report in this issue, a report about another Atlantic Coastal Plain community at Axe Lake, 25 km north of Huntsville.

Like most plants, this *Newsletter* that connects us is remarkably consistent over the long term.

On our move to our new farmhouse in October, in a precipitous event, the green filing cabinets took a tumble off the moving truck, innocent victims of weary movers exhausted from moving our potted green associates. Our local stationary store phoned today with news of the arrival of our new filing cabinet. But before they settle in for another 25 years, copies of back issues will be available for a nominal fee at our 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration in April, many of which were produced under the long editorship of Ed Morris, and more recently, Leslie Collins, Mary Ann Johnson and myself. They are well worth coveting. 🌿

Cheryl Hendrickson, Editor