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# FIELD BOTANISTS OF ONTARIO NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 25(1) ISBN: 1180-1417

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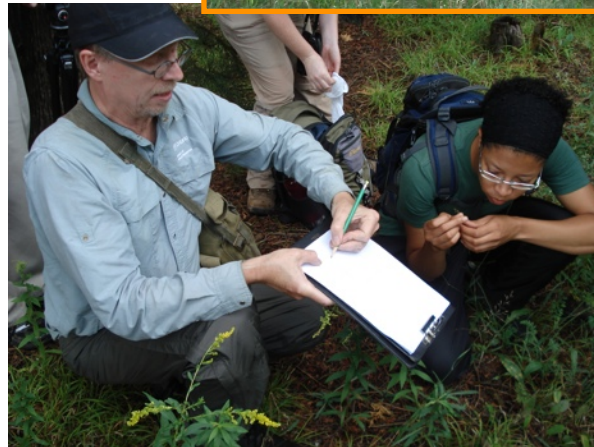
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# President's Message

Winter may not be the busiest season for botanists in Ontario, but it can be a productive time. Perhaps like me you are reviewing your field notes from the previous field season and entering them into a database. Or you may be studying and labelling pressed specimens to ready them for a recognized herbarium. Or perhaps you are updating your knowledge of the rapidly changing scientific names of plants using excellent resources like the *Flora of North America* or *Field Manual of Michigan Flora*. Maybe you are spending the winter months reading about notable Canadian botanists such as John Macoun, Catherine Parr Traill, or A.E. Porsild. Look for references to the former two botanists in articles later in this newsletter. You may also want to consider a new biography of renowned northern botanist Porsild, written by Wendy Dathan and published by Northern Lights Press, entitled *The Reindeer Botanist: Alf Erling Porsild, 1901-1977*.

The FBO executive typically meets in November and February to review our activities and plan for a full schedule of field trips in the coming season. Field Trip Coordinator Sarah Mainguy is working hard, with input from the executive, to arrange leaders and locations for our 2013 field trips. She will soon be joined by Leah Lefler, who is returning from a four-month trip to Vietnam.

At our February meeting, a review of our income and expenditures was in order as we experienced a deficit of just over \$1,000.00 in 2012. Our Treasurer, Bill Draper, reported that several factors have influenced our annual income, including the gradual increase in expenses to run our trip program and produce our newsletter, and the year to year variability in donations, life memberships and donated honoraria. The Annual General Meeting and other special meetings are typically revenue neutral. Taking these factors into account, it is clear that our fees are currently not adequate to cover our expenses in every year. For this reason, we have decided to increase the annual membership fee for an individual from \$15.00 to \$20.00 and for a family from \$18.00 to \$25.00. Our life membership will increase from \$250.00 to \$350.00. These new rates will be reflected in the membership renewal notices to be mailed out soon. Our rates are still below those for comparable not-for-profit organizations run by volunteers and we continue to offer excellent value for members. This year we will be realizing savings by sending out newsletters to many members in electronic form.

It's my pleasure to welcome Julia Marko Dunn back to the executive in the role of Director. Julia previously served as Newsletter Editor for the FBO. I would like to thank all of our executive members for their work on your behalf. I anticipate a fine program in 2013.

Mike McMurtry

## On the cover:

A picturesque bay in the Elbow Lake area. Photo by Chris Zoladeski. FBO group in wet meadow in Egypt Crown Land area. Drawing upside down and left-handed - accomplished by Steve Varga. Both photos by Andrew Dean. Foxglove Penstemon (*Penstemon digitalis*) at Mt. Ararat. Photo by Mike McMurtry.

Sidebar artwork: Skunk Cabbage (*Symplocarpus foetidus*).

The standard source for scientific names and authorities of vascular plants is:

Newmaster, S.G., A. Lehela, P.W.C. Uhlig, S. McMurray and M.J. Oldham. 1998. Ontario Plant List. Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, Ontario Forest Research Institute, Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. Forest Research Information Paper No. 123, 550 pp. + appendices.

Membership forms can be found on the FBO website:

[www.trentu.ca/fbo](http://www.trentu.ca/fbo)

Annual memberships are \$20.00 for individuals and \$25.00 for families.

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

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## Editor's Note

The 2012 Annual General Meeting held at Elbow Lake, a half-hour's drive north of Kingston, gathered FBO members at a beautiful location: a former resort nestled amidst lakes and forests, clean air and water aplenty, and good food for the dinner promptly delivered from town by the Vice-President and his able personal assistant. Reports from two of the trips organized as part of the program already appeared in the previous issue; a third, from a trip led by field-fashionable Eleanor Thomson, is on the pages of the current one. It is good that we can now say with certainty that our activities span all across the south of the Province, from Essex to the eastern counties.

For those interested in history and literature and how they can be combined with botany, Pat Murphy reports on an outing in the footsteps of Catharine Parr Traill. Traill's floral compositions, held by the Royal Ontario Museum and the Canadian Museum of Nature, have both artistic appeal and scientific value. (We think that a few year's ago, during a visit to the ROM to study hawthorns, we had an opportunity to see originals of these beautiful arrangements.)

Well, plants can be presented glued on a canvass, but they can also be depicted drawn with the pencil. There is a person who can do that - and in a fashion similar to that of Leonardo da Vinci's: with his left hand and "upside-down" (perhaps not reversed like in the mirror, but just as impressive) - and that person is Steve Varga. We feature two of the trips he led last year, and both of the authors expressed their appreciation how helpful Steve's sketches were for the participants to understand important details of plant morphology.

We all tend to collect notes on plant species presence wherever we go. It is sad that these notes seldom find their way to official floras, unless the collectors find enough resolve to transfer their scribbles into a readable electronic document. If you do, though, and if your observations happen to be from Hastings County, Mike McMurtry asks you to contact him, as he launches a flora project for the County. You can read more about this initiative in Mike's article.

Finally, a technical issue: some of you (on your membership renewal forms) have indicated preference for receiving the Newsletter in electronic format. We are starting this option now, with the current issue. As it is normal with new procedures, there may occur some initial duplication, or difficulties in receiving the PDF versions (instead of hard copies, or the other way around), for which we apologize. To avoid disappointments and minimize errors, similar to ensuring that the physical mailing address information is up to date (if you receive paper copies), it is important that you inform us (both Mr. McIlveen and the Editor) of any changes to your email address. As a sure bonus, those opting for the electronic version will be able to enjoy the Newsletter in its full, cover-to-cover, colour glory.

# Field Trip Reports

## *Of Catharine Parr Traill, Mount Ararat, Canadian literature, and plants*

16 June, 2012

**By Patricia Murphy**

On most FBO outings, the history of the site might involve glaciers, post-glacial species migrations, or effects of the First Nations. This was the first FBO trip I have been on where the history, which made the site unique, was literary. On Saturday June 16th, we visited Mt. Ararat, near Gore's Landing, on the south shore of Rice Lake. This was one of the places where early Canadian author Catharine Parr Traill lived and wrote about her experiences as a settler. It was

long (1847-1849), and if Catharine had been a different sort of author, their home site here might be just an interesting footnote in Canadian literary history.

To a large degree, Traill's literary legacy is a description of the natural world she encountered. She lived, at Mt Ararat and nearby on the Rice Lake Plain, for a total of eleven years. Traill described the plain and its vegetation in many of her works, including *Canadian Wildflowers* (1868) and *Studies of Plant Life in Canada; or, Gleanings from Forest, Lake and Plain* (1885), both with illustrations by her niece, Agnes FitzGibbon. Traill collected grasses, mosses and lichens and pressed them, with wildflowers, into albums. The National Herbarium of Canada at the Canadian Museum of Nature, Ottawa, holds some of these albums, as does the ROM. In all, she recorded valuable



David, Sharon and Dale. Photo: M. McMurtry.

she who named the place, after the Biblical mountain, because it was the highest point on the south shore of Rice Lake. The Traills did not live here very

information about the vegetation of the oak savannas of the Rice Lake area, documenting an ecosystem that was rapidly changing.



A healthy Butternut (*Juglans cinerea*). Photo: M. McMurtry.

Our hosts, David Acoma and Sharon Keogh, have owned the 60 acre site for fourteen years. Under the direction of trip leader Dale Leadbeater, we were to help them in their admirable land management efforts by updating their plant inventory.

Dale used our assembled moment at the car park to show us the difference in root mass between a clump of Big Bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*), a deep-rooted prairie grass, and a clump of Smooth Brome (*Bromus inermis*), a European pasture grass. As in all restoration efforts, Dale cautioned us to reflect on objectives. In this instance, the suitability of dense, early-growing smooth brome for nesting bobolinks has to be weighed against the desire to restore the native grasses. Bobolinks' numbers have suffered from early hay cutting, but they readily nest in cool-season grasses. David and Sharon delay cutting in their hay field until these and other endangered ground-nesting birds have fledged. Chester, Sharon and David's amiable black lab, was not impressed by Dale's defense of smooth brome.

We then set off through the upland fields. The hilly field nearest the driveway has been retired from active haying. A bedstraw (probably *Galium mollugo*) was flowering in billowy masses among the grasses and bumblebees were busy in the flowers of Spreading Dogbane (*Apocynum androsaemifolium*). The first restoration effort we saw was a stand of Butterfly Milkweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) Sharon had seeded successfully. Another

restoration effort in the field is removal of Autumn Olives (*Elaeagnus umbellata*), a nasty invasive on Mt. Ararat, as elsewhere. We were to see some scarily dense stands of it during the day - but in the old field the programme of contracting spraying and cutting and painting the stubs with Roundup has made a big difference. We passed some sprayed Autumn Olives withering and dying. Dale suggested mulching the spray-effect circles with a high carbon mulch (such as, say, wood chips) to support the spread of natives. Generally, North American plants are more tolerant of the low-nitrogen situation that occurs when decay of high-carbon mulch binds the available nitrogen. Steve Smith cautioned about the danger of promoting Canada Thistle (*Cirsium arvense*) via wood chip mulch, which he has seen a lot of in the GTA.

We came to a low, damp spot, well supplied with Fringed Loosestrife (*Lysimachia ciliata*), where we paused to view a thriving clump of Great Blue Lobelia (*Lobelia siphilitica*), which Sharon had planted, and to have a discussion on identifying willows. For example, Bebb's Willow (*Salix bebbiana*) has rugose leaves (veins indented) while Heart-leaved or Missouri Willow (*S. eriocephala*), has lanceolate leaves with somewhat cordate bases and leafy stipules. Another young willow was tentatively identified as Pussy Willow (*S. discolor*), with oblanceolate leaves and glaucous undersides, but Dale cautioned against relying on juvenile foliage.

When we reached the historical plaque honouring Catharine Parr Traill on Lander Road, Sharon talked about the Traill family's time at Mt Ararat. Traill loved the open landscape of the plains and had hoped to settle permanently at Mt. Ararat. Her years spent here were productive and the landforms and vegetation featured in her work, notable in **Canadian Crusoes**.

From the plaque, we went a short distance back onto the property to scout around the actual site of the Traill's house. Not much is left. From David's account, a house of some sort burned down around 1960, and the burnt remains were pushed into the ravine. Few of the markers of old homesteads - lilacs, black locusts, windbreaks of Norway Spruce - were evident. There was a short dense row of White Cedars (*Thuja occidentalis*) on what would have been the northwest side of the home - clearly a planted windbreak. Catharine Parr Traill's daughter, Annie Atwood, has left a description of the homesite and, below it, the damp spot where we saw the willows.

In the vicinity of the old house site, we saw the first of what proved to be many young Butternuts (*Juglans cinerea*) on the property. The large parent Butternut was soon spotted nearby. It has some small cankers but is in relatively good shape still.

Taking a different path back, we veered off to see a spot where the Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority had undertaken a restoration effort. Five years ago, a patch in the field about 50 square feet had been cleared and seeded with species native to



the Rice Lake plains. We could clearly see where the dominance of Smooth Brome had been interrupted and some Round-headed Bush Clover (*Lespedeza capitata*) and Showy Tick-trefoil (*Desmodium canadense*) had established. One very fine Foxglove Penstemon (*Penstemon digitalis*) was in full bloom. Some clumps of big bluestem, planted about the same time, were now thriving along the driveway.

We lunched on the shady porch of David and Sharon's house, with a fine view of Rice Lake and the mouth of the Otonabee River through the trees. The view was framed by a stately White Oak (*Quercus alba*), just past the end of the lawn and garden. Dale's first stop after lunch was to measure its girth, which turned out to be 59 cm dbh.

As we headed gently downhill, the old pasture vegetation, which included a delicate vetch Dale called Bird, or Tufted, Vetch (*Vicia cracca*), melded into a greater diversity of native species. Thimbleweed (*Anemone cylindrica*), and Yellow Avens (*Geum aleppicum*) became common. We saw quite a number of young White Oaks. We were heading to a point of high land between the ravines. This steep-sided dry ridge and nearby spring feature in Traill's children book **Canadian Crusoes:**

**A Tale of the Rice Lake Plains** (1852) as the site where the lost children find refuge. Growing on this open, dry hilltop were: pussytoes (*Antennaria* sp.), Bastard Toadflax (*Comandra umbellata*), Poverty Oat Grass (*Danthonia spicata*), Blue-eyed Grass (*Sisyrinchium montanum*), non-native viper's bugloss (*Echium vulgare*), Heath Aster (*Symphotrichum ericoides*, formerly *Aster ericoides*), and Red Cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*) with cedar apple galls.

We backtracked a bit to get off the ridge and to find the path down into the ravine. As we descended, the shade of the woods was very welcome for the day had become very warm. An older cohort of open grown oaks amid a younger cohort of pines indicated that the now-closed canopy had once been more open and savannah-like. Some relic Red Cedars also told the same story. At a seep, we saw Jewelweed (*Impatiens capensis*), White Snakeroot (*Eupatorium rugosum*), non-native Heal-all (*Prunella*

*vulgaris*), Barren Strawberry (*Waldsteimia fragarioides*), Honewort (*Cryptotaenia canadensis*), and Fowl Manna Grass (*Glyceria striata*).

A baneberry by the path prompted some discussion on how red and white baneberries might be distinguished by the leaves. This plant had the dark cast to its narrowly pointy leaves, which suggested it was the Red Baneberry (*Actaea rubra*). Do Red Baneberries have hairy leaf margins and White Baneberries (*Actaea pachypoda*) do not? This specimen did have hairy leaf margins. It would be a worthy study to accumulate more data, to help distinguish the two species solely on vegetative characteristics.

Other interesting plants in the woods included Lopseed (*Phryma leptostachya*), White Avens (*Geum canadense*), Pennsylvania Sedge (*Carex pennsylvanica*), the non-native Stoneseed (*Lithospermum officinale*), and a small, non-flowering Bittersweet, whose narrow leaves suggested it was the native *Celastrus scandens*. Dale measured two massive White Pine trunks: 72 cm and 82 cm dbh.

At this point we went astray and let the path take us too far to the north and down toward the lake. Our mistake did allow us to see Black-eyed Susans (*Rudbeckia hirta*), more oak

regeneration, and a curious ochre-coloured fungus tightly cladding the stems of Orchard Grass (*Dactylis glomerata*). Dale was familiar with a white version of the fungus, which forms on manna grass (*Glyceria* spp.).

Back on track, we easily found the ancient and massive Red Oak Dale sought. Estimated to be over 300 years old, it had recently (two years ago) split off a huge branch, which had ripped off a section of the trunk and opened up a large gap in the canopy as it crashed down. The lower trunk was one the most senile-looking trunks I have ever seen, but an intact section of bark still served as a supply-line for a yet-living section of the canopy. Even missing a chunk, the ancient oak, which would have been a big tree in Catharine Parr Traill's day, measured 125 cm dbh. The fallen branch was a massive limb in its own right, as thick as many trees' trunks. Steve counted 105 rings. To complete its air



A very old Red Oak (*Quercus rubra*). Photo: M. McMurtry.

of shaggy senility, the prodigious oak was hosting an epiphytic Prickly Gooseberry (*Ribes cynosbati*), about 15 ft up.

In this part of the forest there were many Wild Geraniums (*Geranium maculatum*). A couple of weeks earlier, they must have presented a very pretty flower display. At the time of our hike, they were ripening their long “cranesbill” seed cases. We passed one dense patch of Virginia Waterleaf (*Hydrophyllum virginianum*). Dale thought this unusual distribution - Virginia Waterleaf is usually common and well-distributed in woods - reflected the site’s history as pasture, and the species starting to recolonize.

Returning to the vicinity of the house, our final excursion of the day was down the slope to where a spring gurgled pleasantly into a little pool. Inspired, as ever, by Catharine Parr Traill’s account of the wildflowers of Mt. Ararat, Sharon re-introduced Marsh Marigolds (*Caltha palustris*) to the pool’s edge, and they have successfully seeded themselves down the seepage slope. Then it was back to the porch for some very welcome ice water.

Although the vegetation has been much altered by the intervening century-and-a-half of farming since Traill’s time, Mt. Ararat, with its lofty situation and views of Rice Lake, is a lovely place. The dry hilltops and spreading oaks offer tantalizing hints of the open plains Catharine Parr Traill loved so much. Post-agriculture succession is not restoring the vegetation she documented: introduced species and, probably, greater availability of nitrogen, may be blocking the return of the Rice Lake Plains species. David and Sharon’s planting and restoration efforts provide valuable seed sources from which the distinctive savannah species may spread. 🌱

## *Steve Varga draws a line or two in Nonquon Crown Land Area*

14 July 2012

by **Natasha Gonsalves**

On the morning of Saturday, July 14, 2012, FBO members met along the side of Scugog Line 8, east of Hwy 7 in the Township of Scugog to explore specific sections of the Nonquon Crown Land Area. This is the largest tract of Crown Land in the Greater Toronto Area. It supports various wetland and forest community types, including open water, marshes, thicket swamps, treed swamps and upland forests.

Botanical information on the Nonquon Crown Land Area is limited. Initial surveys for the Area began on an FBO outing in the summer of 2011. This 2012 trip,

led by Steve Varga, a biologist for the Ministry of the Natural Resources, was a continuation of the first exploration trip and covered new and unexplored areas of the site. FBO members worked with Steve to document new flora and fauna records in order to compile a comprehensive site species list.

After a brief introduction, Steve led the group along the trail, pointing out different species of interest including various fescue (*Festuca* spp.) and rush species (*Juncus* spp.). To help improve our botanical knowledge, Steve stopped along the way to give us a short overview and explanation on the structure of grasses, sedges and rushes. His ability to draw upside down and backwards is quite remarkable. I, personally, learned a lot that morning.

Moving off the road, we headed south into the interior sections of the site, which consisted of shallow marsh and conifer-mixed forest. Participants were given the better part of the morning to discover and examine the various species that were found in these unique communities. Particular highlights included: Marsh Speedwell (*Veronica scutellata*), Starflower (*Trientalis borealis*), and Yellow Water Buttercup (*Ranunculus flabellaris*).

Participants stopped for lunch in midst of a lovely conifer-mixed forest dominated by Eastern White Cedar (*Thuja occidentalis*) and Eastern Hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*). The day was not without its mishaps; after lunch a few unlucky individuals (including myself) disturbed a ground wasp nest, inciting their rage. Despite our best efforts to evade their retaliation it was to no avail, we got stung (in some instances multiple times). Fortunately, the stings were not potent and it did not take long for the pain to subside and the red marks to disappear. With careful footing and a watchful eye the survey continued and as more and more new



Yellow Water Buttercup (*Ranunculus flabellaris*). Photo: N. Gonsalves.



and interesting plants were discovered the unpleasant experience quickly faded from most peoples' minds.

Steve led us through the conifer-mixed forest into a shallow marsh type community that was dominated by a variety of sedges including: Inland Sedge (*Carex interior*), Bristle-stalked Sedge (*Carex leptalea*) and Hop Sedge (*Carex lupulina*). After this portion of the outing, we returned to the main road and quickly jumped across to the marshland on the other side of the road. Nestled within the stands of cattails (*Typha* spp.) that dominated the wetland were Wild Calla (*Calla palustris*) and Broad-fruited Bur-reed (*Sparganium eurycarpum*). By the end of the morning, approximately 32 new species were added to the checklist.

In the afternoon we jumped back into our cars and travelled north to Scugog Line 10, stopping just east of Till Sideroad, near the education centre. As a group, we walked to a boardwalk that led us through beautiful open aquatic habitats where we discovered Northern Manna Grass (*Glyceria borealis*), Marsh Rose (*Rosa palustris*), and Marsh Cinquefoil (*Potentilla palustris*, or *Comarum palustre*). Moving inland, other botanical treats seen that day included Alder-leaved Buckthorn (*Rhamnus alnifolia*), Shining Willow (*Salix lucida*) and White Cut Grass (*Leersia virginica*). By the end of the tour, we had identified 58 new species for the site. It was truly a full day. 🌱

## *In the wilds of Elbow Lake, with Eleanor Thomson*

15 September 2012

By Christopher Zoladeski

We met on the shoulder of Opinicon Road and, thanks to accurate directions provided by our trip leader, Mrs. Eleanor Thomson of Merrickville, everyone arrived on time. Mrs. Thomson told us that she had not prepared any specific itinerary for our walk, rather, we would be more or less “bushwhacking”, as there were no trails to follow. A word of caution - ticks had been reported from the woods, an intelligence that prompted lots of folks to pull socks over their field trousers, or opt for wellingtons as preferred footwear. Eleanor encouraged active participation in the outing, such as asking questions about all things botanical, but she expressed preference for the use of Latin names of species over colloquial.

After introductions and the selection of the scribe, bushwhack we began. The first woodlot was a mixed stand of hardwoods, with some presence of White Pine (*Pinus strobus*). The leading deciduous tree was Sugar Maple (*Acer saccharum*), followed by

American Beech (*Fagus grandifolia*), Basswood (*Tilia americana*), White Ash (*Fraxinus americana*), White Elm (*Ulmus americana*), and Shagbark Hickory (*Carya ovata*). When a small Bitternut Hickory (*Carya cordiformis*) was located, Eleanor explained the differences between the two species – in their leaves, leaf buds and nuts. Lower in the forest’s horizontal structure, in addition to abundant saplings of the major canopy trees, we found Blue Beech (*Carpinus caroliniana*), with herbs represented by Zig-zag Goldenrod (*Solidago flexicaulis*), Round-lobed Hepatica (*Anemone americana*), and green patches of Long-stalked Sedge (*Carex pedunculata*).



Rich aquatic vegetation in a shallow lake bay. Photo: C. Zoladeski.



A small rock outcrop nearby harboured a different assortment of species, including Marginal Wood Fern (*Dryopteris marginalis*), Rock Polypody Fern (*Polypodium virginianum*), Bottle-brush Grass (*Elymus hystrix*) and American Prickly-ash (*Zanthoxylum americanum*), the latter locally quite invasive in cleared and disturbed places. Those in the group who fell on their knees in search of plants located Rock Spike-moss (*Selaginella rupestris*), growing within mats of *Polytrichum* moss. The major feature of this rocky knoll, however, were extensive patches of Common Juniper (*Juniperus communis*), many of which – unfortunately - showed signs of dieback due to the exceptionally dry summer. (One can imagine how parched this habitat must have looked in mid-July.) Another casualty of the summer heat was Pale Corydalis (*Corydalis semperivirens*), now barely hanging on as ground rosettes on the brow of the outcrop.

As we descended back into the forest we found other woodland plants, such as Wild Sarsaparilla (*Aralia nudicaulis*), Sweet-scented Bedstraw (*Galium triflorum*), Eastern Bracken-fern (*Pteridium aquilinum*) and a distinctive tall grass, Bearded Short-husk (*Brachyelytrum erectum*). Growing together with Maple-leaved Viburnum (*Viburnum acerifolium*) were several Large-flowered Bellwort (*Uvularia grandiflora*), with their stems piercing the leaves, a spring plant miraculously persisting so late in the season.

A small wetland on the narrow floodplain of a creek revealed a different vegetation. Starting at the edge of the feature, we saw Wood Horsetail (*Equisetum sylvaticum*), then Fowl Meadow Grass (*Glyceria striata*) and Marsh Purslane (*Ludwigia palustris*) growing in shallow stagnant water, Jewelweed or Spotted Touch-me-not (*Impatiens capensis*), Mad-dog Skullcap (*Scutellaria lateriflora*), a probable Mexican Satin Grass (*Muhlenbergia mexicana*), and Hog Peanut (*Amphicarpaea bracteata*). Walking downstream, we observed the wetland expanding in width, which enabled a small sedge meadow to form, that community being dominated by Lake-bank Sedge (*Carex lacustris*) and some Fringed Sedge (*Carex crinita*). These contrasted nicely with the tall Spotted Joe-pye-weed (*Eupatorium*, or *Eutrochium maculatum*) and Wood Reed Grass (*Cinna arundinacea*).

From there we turned around and followed the creek upstream, where it cascaded over boulders within a small valley. It is there that we found Plantain-leaved Sedge (*Carex*

*plantaginea*), a sighting that generated a brief discussion on how it differs from White Bear Sedge (*C. albursina*). Similarly, views were exchanged on how to tell apart the encountered Tall White Rattlesnake-root (*Prenanthes altissima*) from White Rattlesnake-root (*P. alba*), only using the flowers: involucre 5–6-flowered in *altissima*, compared to 8–12-flowered in *alba*. By that time, we were walking along a rock outcrop in a small lake bay and saw the always interesting White Goldenrod (*Solidago bicolor*). The long face of the rock, covered by mosses, disclosed



Draper, his loaded back in the foreground, ponders how to counter Thomson (behind the tree). Photo: C. Zoladeski.

a group of tall stems of Striped Maple (*Acer pensylvanicum*). At the sight of Black-fruited Mountain-rice (*Oryzopsis racemosa*) Eleanor explained a morphological peculiarity of this species, namely the leaves twisting over at the base so that what appears as the upper surface of the blade is, in fact, the lower one. At that location, we also spotted Beaked Hazel (*Corylus cornuta*), extensive carpets of either Pennsylvania Sedge (*Carex pensylvanica*) or (*C. lucorum* = *C. pensylvanica* var. *distans*), plus Barren Strawberry (*Waldsteinia fragarioides*) and Spear Wild Licorice (*Galium lanceolatum*).

By then, with the scenery so beautiful and the timing just right, we knew we had to break for lunch. So, there we sat in a shaded spot with a good view of the bay whose abundant aquatic vegetation begged for exploration. Hunger conquered, Eleanor went straight into the water to list to her attentive audience such species as Swamp Loosestrife (*Decodon verticillatus*), Eastern Buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*), Blue-joint Grass (*Calamagrostis canadensis*) and the poisonous Bulb-bearing Water-hemlock (*Cicuta bulbifera*), “touchable” now with





Miss Adamson surveys the scene from up top. Photo: C. Zoladeski.

the eating completed. In the shallow water and within reach were Water-shield (*Brasenia schreberi*), which often has gelatinous coating on its leaf petioles, and Fragrant Water-lily (*Nymphaea odorata*). To finish the count, we added Fraser's St. John's-wort (*Triadenum fraseri*) and Reed-like Three-way Sedge (*Dulichium arundinaceum*).

We resumed our trek and, on the slope surrounding the bay we saw several new species, including Round-leaved Dogwood (*Cornus rugosa*), Downy Arrow-wood (*Viburnum rafinesquianum*), Black Huckleberry (*Gaylussacia baccata*), Hairy Goldenrod (*Solidago hispida*), Large-tooth Aspen (*Populus grandidentata*) and Black Cherry (*Prunus serotina*). It was there, otherwise a banal location, that Eleanor Thomson and Bill Draper entertained the group with their first amicable sparring about accuracy and usefulness of certain plant ID publications. As it turned out, it was only a warm-up for more lively discussions later, on nuances of taxonomy from *Amelanchier* to *Agrostis*. Actually, both Bill and Eleanor admitted that they never even expected they would differ on so many points, while agreeing on most others!

But – back again on some other rocky hill, covered by juniper, mosses and lichens, a few exotics were observed, for example Common St. John's-wort (*Hypericum perforatum*) and Glaucous King Devil (*Hieracium piloselloides*). The native species were Low Sweet Blueberry (*Vaccinium angustifolium*), Rusty Woodsia (*Woodsia ilvensis*), and Poverty Oat Grass (*Danthonia spicata*), instantly recognizable by its dead, curled leaves. The nearby forest had two more species to add to our long collection of names: Pointed-leaved Tick-trefoil (*Desmodium glutinosum*) and Dwarf Raspberry (*Rubus pubescens*). It was almost at the end of our long afternoon when we stumbled upon a very nice stand of vigorously growing Buttonbush thicket. Its many companions included Winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*), Speckled

Alder (*Alnus incana* ssp. *rugosa*), Tomentose Meadow-sweet (*Spiraea tomentosa*), Marsh Fern (*Thelypteris palustris*), Multi-coloured Blue-flag (*Iris versicolor*), Northern Water-horehound (*Lycopus uniflorus*), Hop Sedge (*Carex lupulina*) with its perigynia retained, and Upland Bent Grass (*Agrostis perennans* = Draper vs. Thomson).

As we walked by a large patch of Ground-pine (*Lycopodium obscurum*) we could compare it with Prickly Tree Club-moss (*L. dendroideum*), seen just earlier. They grew together with Wintergreen (*Gaultheria procumbens*) and Creeping Partridge-berry (*Mitchella repens*), whose small scarlet berries would overwinter.

For our last field lab of comparative morphology, Eleanor collected leaves of Blue-beech, Hop Hornbeam or Ironwood (*Ostrya virginiana*), and Yellow Birch (*Betula alleghaniensis*). These three species from the Betulaceae family, have quite similar leaves but, when seen side-by-side, the differences became evident for everyone.

Well, it was a very interesting trip indeed (which is always the case when we have Eleanor to guide us). From forest to open rock, from wetland to dryland, all within short walking distance; many species, lively discussions, and a big applause for a very knowledgeable leader. 🌿

## Mystery Crown Land Tour

11 August 2012

By Andrew Dean

An unusually small group of field botanists were in attendance for the GTA mystery Crown Land tour led by Steve Varga, presumably due to recent and forecasted rain. The property, known as the Egypt Crown Land Area, is within York Region, just south of Lake Simcoe, and east of the hamlet of Egypt. The provincially-owned portion of the property, roughly 100 acres in size, is characterized by old sandy beach ridges and interdunal wet meadows, formed when water levels in former Lake Algonquin receded. A variety of wetland and upland habitats exist within the property, including marshes, thicket swamps, treed swamps, upland forests and meadows, some of which are within the boundaries of the provincially significant Zephyr-Egypt Wetland Complex. Wetland flora in this area resembles typical Great Lakes wet meadows as a result of sand-dominated soils and the shoreline influence of Lake Algonquin.

The first stop of the day was along the south side of Smith Boulevard, a sandy ditch with both dry and wet pockets, to



brush up on common edge species, both native and non-native, and to give us a flavour of what types of flora to expect as the day progressed. As we discussed and studied various diagnostic characteristics of common roadside grasses, such as Tall Fescue (*Festuca arundinacea*), Meadow Fescue (*F. pratensis*) and Red-top (*Agrostis gigantea*), it was not long until Steve began drawing one of his famous upside-down sketches of grass characteristics.



Showy Lady's Slipper (*Cypripedium reginae*) and Field Mermaid-weed (*Proserpinaca palustris*). Photo: A. Dean.

Notable species within the ditch included Nodding Ladies' Tresses (*Spiranthes cernua*), Slender-leaved Agalinis (*Agalinis tenuifolia*), Pink Pyrola (*Pyrola asarifolia*), Bristle-stalked Sedge (*Carex leptalea*), Marsh Goldenrod (*Solidago uliginosa*), Peach-leaved Willow (*Salix amygdaloides*), and Showy Lady's Slipper (*Cypripedium reginae*), and a couple of these were among the 'advertised' species for the day. Steve explained various diagnostic characteristics such as peach-colored petioles on the *Salix*, and progressively smaller leaves on the *Solidago* – from the bottom to the top of the stem. Previously unknown to me and others in attendance, Steve explained how the hairs on the stems of the *Cypripedium* can cause allergic reactions for some when touched. Typical botanizing speed along the ditch was respected (i.e. 100m per hour).

Next up was a former aggregate extraction area, with floristic affinities typical of a regenerating burrow pit. Pooling water in low-lying areas of the former pit created a couple meadow marshes, with ridges of drier sand and gravel-dominated habitats in between. Common species included Early Goldenrod (*Solidago juncea*), Gray Goldenrod (*Solidago nemoralis*), Devil's Beggar-ticks (*Bidens frondosa*), Missouri Willow (*Salix eriocephala*), and Yellow Sedge (*Carex flava*). Attendees walked in up to knee-high water and along the marsh edges in search of interesting and uncommon species. Regionally rare species included Canadian St. John's-wort (*Hypericum canadense*), Field Mermaid-weed (*Proserpinaca palustris*), and Sand Dropseed (*Sporobolus cryptandrus*). Diagnostic features of *S. cryptandrus* include nodes fringed with hairs and leaf sheaths covering up portions of the lower inflorescences.

By lunch time, it was warm and sunny, although quite noisy with a nearby group of hunters using a portion of the property as a shooting range. Following lunch, we explored similar habitats as encountered in the morning, along linear wet meadows that were formed presumably as a result of past aggregate extraction. In this graminoid-rich portion of the property, Steve

suggested we keep our eyes peeled for Fringed Gentian (*Gentianopsis crinita*), noting suitable habitat at the surrounding forest edges, and on the list of advertised species for the outing. We quickly discovered a variety of sedges including Woolly Sedge (*Carex pellita*), with hairy perigynia, Bristle-leaved Sedge (*Carex eburnea*), with hair-like leaves,



Retorse Sedge (*Carex retrorsa*), with a downward bending proximal pistillate spike, Beaked Sedge (*Carex utriculata*), and Lake-bank Sedge (*Carex lacustris*). Other notable species were Black Chokeberry (*Aronia melanocarpa*), with smooth rubbery leaves, Fen Twayblade (*Liparis loeselii*), Water Smartweed (*Persicaria amphibia*, or *Polygonum amphibium*), and Fringed Gentian.

Excitement, due to the initial observation of Leatherleaf (*Chamaedaphne calyculata*) in the next area, hinting at a possible bog habitat, was short-lived. It didn't take long to observe more than 14 plant species, ruling out the possibility of a bog community, and quickly realizing that this was a swamp thicket dominated by Northern Wild Raisin (*Viburnum cassinoides*) and Winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*). Water levels in this portion of the property were above the boot line, and as high as one's waist in some sections, typical of the Steve Varga trips I had attended. Mossy hummocks in this habitat supported species such as Silvery Sedge (*Carex canescens*), Tuckerman's Sedge (*Carex tuckermanii*), and Soft-leaved Sedge (*Carex disperma*), among a variety of other herbaceous plants. *Carex disperma* is uniquely different from *Carex trisperma* (Three-seeded Sedge) in that the former's bract on the lowest inflorescence (proximal bract) is shorter than all other inflorescences, whereas the latter's proximal bract is longer than all inflorescences.

A walk back through a mid-aged mixed swamp of Green Ash (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*), Black Ash (*Fraxinus nigra*), Balsam Fir (*Abies balsamea*), and Freeman's Maple (*Acer x freemanii*) ended the day, with observations of Crested Wood Fern (*Dryopteris*





Mixed Swamp. Photo: A. Dean.

*cristata*), Fen Twayblade and Hooded Skullcap (*Scutellaria galericulata*). Field botanists left the site wet, both from swamp tromping and an afternoon rain, but content having explored and helped contribute to a site with a previous lack of botanical information. Regards to the field trip organizers and Steve Varga for sharing his botanical expertise and leading the outing. 🌿

# Botanical roots

## Hastings County Flora Underway

By **Mike McMurtry**

I would like to let FBO members know that I have initiated a flora for Hastings County and I'm encouraging everyone to contribute their observations of plants in that county.

While floras are completed or are in progress for nearby counties/municipalities, such as the City of Kawartha Lakes,

Pembroke and Lanark, and there is a recent compilation for Peterborough County, there has never been a thorough inventory of the flora of Hastings County. Hastings extends from the Bay of Quinte on Lake Ontario to the southern tip of Algonquin Park. It encompasses a broad range of habitats, from lakes and rivers, alvars, prairies, savannahs, rock barrens, to forests and wetlands. The County includes some of the largest road-free areas in southern Ontario. There are excellent inventory data for some sites within it, e.g. Egan Chutes Provincial Nature Reserve (White 2002), Lake St. Peter Provincial Park (White 2004), Salmon River Alvar (Norris 1994) and Stoco Fen (The Landplan Collaborative 1986), but other parts are poorly known. There is an interesting historical aspect to this project, as one of Canada's best known field botanists, John Macoun, lived in Belleville and taught at Albert College (Macoun 1979). Macoun later was appointed as botanist to the Geological Survey of Canada and completed surveys across the country. He did some collecting in Hastings County and his records will be included in the flora.

I'm hoping that this project will be a collaborative effort and I encourage you to contact me if you have records or observations, if you know of relevant reports or if you wish to take an active role in inventory work. Public lands are few in the County so if any members can assist with access to private properties, please let me know. I can provide a spreadsheet formatted to indicate the information I am seeking and to facilitate data entry. The minimum information is scientific name, observer, date and location (lat/long or UTM). A description of the location, accuracy of coordinates, habitat, abundance, township and property would also be appreciated. I will be collecting voucher specimens for less common and hard-to-identify species where permission has been granted and where it poses no threat to the local population. Collections will be transferred to a recognized herbarium. The final products of the flora will include an electronic compilation and written report; there may or may not be a hardcopy version, since any flora is a work in progress and can be added to periodically.

Macoun, J. 1979. Autobiography of John Macoun, Canadian Explorer and Naturalist, 1831-1920. Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club, Special Publ. No. 1. 361 p.

Norris, T.A. 1994. A Life Science Inventory of the Salmon River Alvar Area of Natural and Scientific Interest. Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, Tweed District, Tweed, Ontario. 68 p & 2 maps.

The Landplan Collaborative Ltd. 1986. Life Science Inventory of the Stoco Fen. Prepared for the Government of Ontario., Guelph, Ontario. 42 p. & photos.

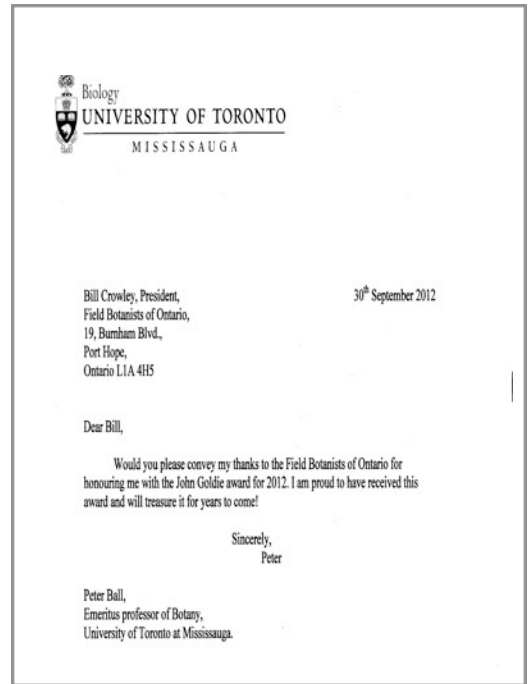
White, D.J. 2004. A Detailed Life Science Survey and Evaluation of Lake St. Peter Provincial Park. Ministry of Natural Resources, Kingston, Ontario. 58 p.

White, D.J. 2002. Life Science Inventory and Evaluation of Egan Chutes Provincial Nature Reserve. Ministry of Natural Resources, Kingston, Ontario. 54 p.





Crowe River in Hastings County. Photo: M. McMurtry.



Royal Botanical Gardens' Herbarium and Taxonomy staff will be offering four plant identification workshops this year. Please visit RBG's web site for more details (link below). RBG would be delighted if you could share this information with friends and colleagues who are interested in plants!

RBG's Plant Identification Workshops  
<http://www.rbg.ca/Page.aspx?pid=473>

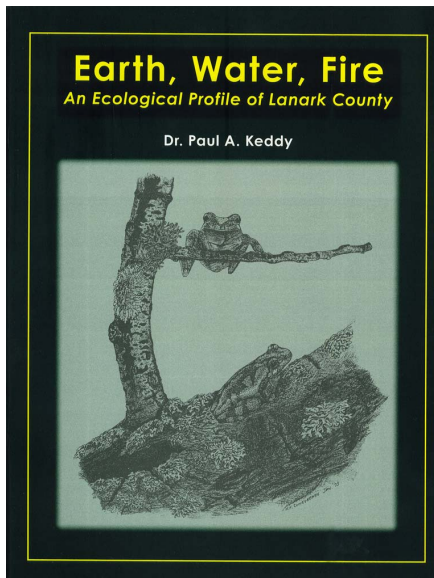
Wetland Graminoid Identification: June 20-21, 2013  
 Grass Identification: July 11-12, 2013  
 Fern and Allies Identification: July 25-25, 2013  
 Aster and Goldenrod Identification: September 12-13, 2013

**Dr. Laurie Consaul**

It is with sadness that we pass on the news that our friend and colleague, Dr. Laurie Consaul, of the Canadian Museum of Nature in Ottawa, passed away on December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2012, after a lengthy illness. She was 53. Laurie was an expert on Arctic flora, and in particular on the difficult grass genus *Puccinellia*. Several of us brought plant specimens to Laurie for her assistance in identification and she was always friendly and helpful. Laurie made a presentation on the plants of the Belcher Islands, in southern Hudson Bay, and their importance to native people at our joint FBO/Canadian Museum of Nature meeting in Ottawa in 2011. For those who would like to know more about Laurie's life, a full obituary is on the *Ottawa Citizen* website at the time of distribution of this issue. We express our sympathy to Laurie's family, friends and colleagues.

Mike McMurtry

*Dr. Paul Keddy, semi-retired distinguished professor of botany at the University of Ottawa, now living amidst the forests of Lanark County, and with whom your Editor's path almost crossed many years ago, wishes to inform the FBO members that his book, "Earth, Water, Fire, An Ecological Profile of Lanark County" is available from various bookstores. Although Dr. Keddy's specialty is wetland ecology, this little publication aims to provide a "solid introduction to the natural heritage and human history of the area". Keddy's writing style is lively and clear, and he easily marries the language of science with popular presentation. Opposite is the cover page and highlights of the book's contents.*



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