



Minnesota Plant Press

The Minnesota Native Plant Society Newsletter

Volume 27 Number 1

Fall 2007

Monthly meetings

Thompson Park Center/Dakota Lodge
Thompson County Park
360 Butler Ave. E., West St. Paul, MN 55118
651-552-7559 (kitchen)

6 p.m. — Social period
7 – 9 p.m. — Program, society business

Programs

The MN NPS meets the first Thursday in October, November, December, February, March, April, May, and June. Check the website for more program information.

Nov. 1: “Effects of moose browsing on long-term forest succession on Isle Royale,” by Dr. Peter Jordan, University of Minnesota. **Annual seed exchange** following the program. Package seeds in small envelopes; label them.

Dec. 6: Program to be announced. Check our website: www.mnnps.org

Do your holiday shopping at Terrace Horticultural Books

by Ken Arndt

Need a hard-to-find gift this holiday season? Join us Saturday, Dec. 15, between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m., on another Society outing to Terrace Horticultural Books.

Owner Kent Petterson will donate 20 percent of all purchases made by MN NPS members to the Society. A similar outing last winter resulted in a very nice donation to the Society. We thank Kent for opening that day and thank the members who purchased the books.

Terrace Horticultural Books is located at 503 St. Clair Ave., St. Paul 55102. For a preview of their selections and directions on how to get there, go to www.terracehorticulturalbooks.com

MN NPS website: www.mnnps.org
Blog: www.mnnpsblogspot.com

Easements to help owners protect rock outcrops

by Tom Cherveney, *West Central Tribune, Willmar, Sept. 27, 2007.*
Reprinted with permission.

A project near Olivia, initiated by the Renville County Soil and Water Conservation District, aims to help landowners protect the unique scenery and environments of rock outcrops on their property. The project will compensate landowners for protecting the rock outcrops in a perpetual conservation easement, said Tom Kalahar of the [conservation district]. “It provides fair compensation for something that they would really like to have done,” he said.

The new project is attracting interest from landowners in Renville and Redwood counties, despite the fact that there has been little done to advertise it, he said. The Renville County Soil and Water Conservation District is processing applications from four Renville County and three Redwood County landowners interested in placing rock outcrops in the easements. Kalahar said they will continue to accept applications into October. The Legislative Citizens Commission on Minnesota Resources has provided \$470,000 for easements.

The protected lands will still be available to their owners for uses such as hunting. The conservation district and the DNR will provide staff to remove invasive species such as red cedar and sumac from the sites. They will work with the landowners in future years to continue to manage the rock outcrops to protect the unique native plant and animal populations found on them.

Kalahar said the project was proposed to serve two goals. First among them is the desire to protect the rock outcrops for future generations. They hold unique plant and animal species found nowhere else in the state, and their geologic features are also of special importance. The exposed granite bedrock is more than 3.5

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President's Column

by Scott Milburn

A great deal of behind-the-scene effort goes into the operation of our organization. This happens when members step up and volunteer their personal time for the betterment of the Society. For almost 10 years, Ellen and Chuck Peck have mailed each issue of the *Minnesota Plant Press*. They also have been mailing the new member packets. The Pecks have graciously served the Society and, after all of these years, will be turning over these duties. On behalf of the Society, I thank the Pecks and look forward to their continued participation.

Membership participation is crucial for the success of any organization. We are fortunate to have a diverse group of enthusiastic folks on the 2007 - 2008 board. We recently held our second board meeting with new members Peter Dziuk and Russ Schaffenberg. Peter and Russ bring their experiences and great ideas and are very welcome additions to the board.

We are now beginning our second year meeting at the Dakota Lodge in West St. Paul. There have been some questions as to why we are meeting there rather than at the Wildlife Refuge in Bloomington. Initially, we were informed that the facility at the Refuge was due for renovating. Then we learned the Refuge would no longer allow groups to hold meetings there due to a cut in their budget from the federal government. We are happy to have a new home for the next few years and thank those on the board who help set up for each meeting. Attendance numbers have been great thus far.

Another issue is the need to form a social committee and find a chair for it. The hour before our scheduled meeting provides an opportunity for members and friends to mingle. If you can help with this, please contact our vice president, Shirley Mah Kooyman. In closing, I encourage everyone to enjoy the Fall colors. I look forward to seeing you at our next monthly meeting.

Conservation group needs helpers

The MN NPS Conservation Committee will launch a web page soon. Under the leadership of Committee Chair Beth Nixon, they are seeking members who can complete tasks related to developing the web page. These tasks include creating a compendium of state legislation related to native plant conservation and links nationally and locally to other organizations doing plant conservation.

The committee is also seeking:

- Members who want to be notified of letter-writing action items;
- A member to "monitor the monitor" for public notices of upcoming environmental reviews of state projects that may be worthy of letter-writing campaigns; and
- Member input on action items for this year.

Please contact mnconservation@comcast.net if you can contribute a little of your time.

Two nature center field trips planned

by Ken Arndt

Are you interested in learning how to identify plants outside of the growing season? The MN NPS will lead two field trips this fall that will focus on this challenging task.

Warner Nature Center

Join Jason Husveth Saturday, Nov. 10, at Lee and Rose Warner Nature Center for a morning of plant identification. Jason, a former MN NPS president and ecologist for Critical Connections Ecological Services, will lead participants through several unique plant communities on the property, which is typically closed to the public. The field trip will begin at 9 a.m. with a brief winter botany lecture inside the nature center. This will be followed by a hike until about noon.

Maplewood Nature Center

Saturday, Dec. 1, learn winter botany at Maplewood Nature Center

MN NPS Board of Directors

President: Scott Milburn, president@mnnps.org

Vice President: Shirley Mah Kooyman, vp@mnnps.org

Secretary: Sean Jergens, secretary@mnnps.org

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Listserv Coordinator: Charles Umbanhowar, ceumb@stolaf.edu

Field Trips: fieldtrips@mnnps.org

Memberships: memberships@mnnps.org; 651-739-4323

Historian/Archives: Roy Robison, historian/archives@mnnps.org

Technical or membership inquiries: contact@mnnps.org

New member packets: To be announced

Minnesota Plant Press editor: Gerry Drewry, phone, 651-463-8006; plantpress@mnnps.org

from Scott Milburn, our current MN NPS president and botanist for Midwest Natural Resources. The event will begin indoors at 9 a.m. with a brief lecture on how to identify plants outside of the growing season. This will be followed by a hike to several diverse plant communities in this fine nature center.

For details and directions, visit our website (www.mnnps.org) and follow the link to the field trips page. Register on-line or at our general meetings throughout the year.

Rock outcrops Plant Lore

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billion years old, and is among the oldest known rock in the world.

No less important, he said the project is an opportunity to do right for landowners. If we truly believe in the value of protecting the outcrops as a society, then we ought to compensate the landowners no differently than when we set aside lands for parks or other conservation purposes, Kalahar said.

The easements are available for property both inside and outside of the Wild and Scenic River corridor. Kalahar noted that lines drawn on maps in the 1970s largely determined which properties were included in the protected Wild and Scenic corridor along the Minnesota River in Redwood and Renville counties. Landowners who happened to have property inside the corridor discovered that hard rock mining was prohibited on those lands, but that they would receive no compensation for the limitation.

Kalahar said inquiries have come from landowners who like the idea of protecting the outcrops. This helps make it economically feasible for them to do so, he said.

The lands will be assessed this fall to determine the diversity of plants located on each. The assessment will be used to prioritize which lands to enroll. He said there is more land being offered than can be funded. He is hoping to return to the state to obtain funding to continue to enroll lands in future years.

Kalahar said it would be “irresponsible” to fail to protect the outcrops. He said that we have lost 95 percent of the wetlands and over 99 percent of the native prairie in this area, and he fears the same will be true of the rock outcrops if steps aren’t taken today.

2007 membership list

The list is enclosed or will be e-mailed separately to all members.

by Thor Kommedahl

What is dogbane?

Dogbane is *Apocynum androsaemifolium* (spreading dogbane) or *A. cannabinum* (hemp dogbane). It is in the dogbane family.

How did it get these names?

In Greek, *apo* means away and *kuon* is dog (*cynon* in Latin), meaning that these species were considered poisonous to dogs. It literally means “Away Dog.” *Androsaemifolium* means that the leaves look like *Androsaemum*. And *cannabinum* means that its leaves look like hemp (*Cannabis*).

Where do these plants grow?

Both are shrub-like perennials native to Minnesota, with spreading dogbane being more frequently found in upland woods, whereas hemp dogbane is more in open fields. These species interbreed in nature, and the hybrids are sometimes named *A. medium*.

What do the plants look like?

Flowers are small bells, pink in spreading dogbane and white in hemp dogbane, arranged in terminal cymes. Seed pods (follicles) are three to eight inches long and in pairs. Leaves are egg-shaped and occur in pairs. The stems (one to four feet tall) are reddish and contain milky latex.

Does it have any medicinal uses?

Actually it is poisonous. Cymarin in plants is a cardioactive glycoside, poisonous to ruminants. Yet, the plant has been found to have anti-tumor activity. The Chickasaw and Choctaw Nations used root juice as a specific treatment for syphilis. Both dogbanes were listed in the *National Formulary* and in the *U.S. Pharmacopeia* until 1952 as a cardiac medicine. Plant extracts have been used as an emetic and diuretic.

Does it have any economic uses?

The fibers in the stem are finer and stronger than cotton thread and were



Apocynum androsaemifolium, photo by Scott Milburn

used by Menomini Indians for bow strings. Stem fibers have been used in making rope.

Seed harvest at Morris is a record

by J. B. Bright, trip leader and refuge operations specialist, Morris Wetland Management District

The weather cooperated Saturday, Sept. 22, making for an enjoyable time on the prairie. Nineteen volunteers turned out to hand-collect prairie wildflower and grass seed. In the process, they learned about district management and prairie ecology, while getting an “up close” experience with native prairie.

The site was a tract of remnant prairie on the Maki Waterfowl Production Area, located eight miles south of Hancock in Section 16 of Tara Township, Swift County. Some of the species harvested included: purple prairie clover, blazingstar, golden alexanders, prairie dropseed, prairie onion, snakeroot, and Virginia mountain mint.

The fourth annual seed harvest day was by far the most productive and successful event yet, as approximately 23 bulk pounds of seed were collected, with an estimated retail value of \$11,000! Many thanks are owed to the volunteers, because this amount equals or exceeds the previous three years’ collections combined. The seed will be used in native restorations on the district this fall and next spring.

Minnesota Native Plant Society
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Fall 2007

Welby Smith receives member award

by Scott Milburn

Those who have visited the University of Minnesota herbarium on the St. Paul campus and viewed the Minnesota collection of vascular plants have seen Welby Smith's name continuously appearing. He has contributed greatly to the collection at the herbarium, and he is truly appreciated by those who understand his craft. Just by looking at some of the collections made by Welby, the care and appreciation for each collection can be seen.

Welby is a lifetime resident of Minnesota, having grown up on a family farm in Wright County. He headed to St. Cloud State University to study biology, a subject that had always interested him. He completed both his undergraduate degree (biology) and Master's degree (botany) there and then went to the University of Minnesota to start his Ph.D. It was there that Welby met other botanists who inspired him to learn as much as he could about plants.

Rather than continue pursuing his Ph.D., he accepted a job with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources in 1978. He was given the task of exploring the best places in Minnesota, and he has been exploring ever since. In that time, Welby has increased our knowledge about Minnesota's flora with much devotion. He is probably best known for his book *Orchids of Minnesota*, which in turn has encouraged many to start exploring. He has also just written *Trees and Shrubs of Minnesota*, which is due out in early 2008.

Honorary lifetime membership in our Society is reserved for those who have provided exemplary service to the plant sciences, for outstanding work in plant conservation, or for 20 years of active membership. Less than 10 individuals have been awarded this in our 25-plus-year history, and perhaps

none is more deserving than Welby. Welby is one of the founding members of the Society and has been active, holding almost every position and leading field trips. With all of Welby's contributions over the years, the board thought he deserved our highest award. It was presented to him at our 2007 symposium and was graciously received.

Welby enjoys botanizing in the northeast and southeast portions of Minnesota, but he is content with any natural remnant. When asked about his favorite plant, he indicated an interest in sedges, woody plants, and ferns, then said any plant that offers an intellectual challenge. He is a great source of information and fun to listen to. Welby has an ability to capture the attention of his audience when speaking about plants. Just as others inspired him, he inspires others in the subject. The Society is honored to have such a great member as Welby.