

Conservation Corner June/July 2024 by Rachel Gottesman

Viewing the orchids of Bruce and Gray

By Rachel Gottesman, with John Alexander and Peter Kaellgren

Three intrepid explorers (namely John Alexander, Peter Kaellgren, and I) headed out for Tobermory on July 2, 2024 through July 4, 2024, with stops on the way up and on the way back.

Our goal was to see our native Ontario orchids that were blooming at that time of the year in their native habitats. These orchids are not tall and showy, but they have beautiful coloration and intriguing detail. Many of them occurred in profusion, and some were seen only as single plants.

For lunch, we picnicked in the lovely park alongside Colpoy's Bay on Georgian Bay in Wiarton.

First stop was the Oliphant Fen which is located close to the shore of Lake Huron. There is a long, winding and branching boardwalk which afforded us close-up views of the flowers.

Orchids seen there were Rose Pogonia (*Pogonia ophioglossoides*), Grass Pinks (*Calopogon tuberosus*). Loessel's Twayblade (*Liparis loeselii*), and Tall White Bog Orchid (*Platanthera dilatata*). Non-orchids were Tuberous Indian Plantain, Horned Bladderwort, and the very curious carnivorous Pitcher Plants, Linear Leaved Sundews and Butterwort.

Next stop was Petrel Point, further north on Lake Huron. The boardwalk on only one side of the road was in good order, but we still managed good looks at Rose Pogonia, Grass Pinks, Tall White Bog Orchids as well as non-orchids Tuberous Indian Plantain, Horned Bladderwort, Pitcher Plants, and Linear Leaved Sundews and Wood Lilies.

The following day started off pouring buckets of rain, which we watched during breakfast from our comfortable seats at the Princess Hotel in Tobermory where we stayed, at the northern tip of the Bruce Peninsula. Thankfully, the rain eased off by 10:50 when our boat took off for Flowerpot Island, and we had a lovely, if damp walk around the island. Getting off the boat, we saw a water snake beside the dock. Orchids seen were Striped Coral Root (*Corallorhiza striata*), Alaska Orchid (*Platanthera unalascensis*) Tall Northern Green (*Platanthera aquilonis*), Blunt leaf Rein Orchid (*Platanthera obtusata*), Heart Leaved Twayblade (*Neottia cordata*), Large Round Leaved (*Platanthera orbiculata*), Menzies' Rattlesnake Plantain (*Goodyera oblongifolia*), leaf whorls and some in spike.

In the afternoon, we went to Singing Sands, a delightful provincial park, where, after having a thorough walk around the boardwalk and trails, John and I were able to cool our feet wading in the water while Peter recruited a young couple from Toronto for the Orchid Society. We saw some wilted Yellow Lady's Slippers (*Cypripedium parviflorum*) and Ram's Head Lady's Slipper (*Cypripedium arietinum*), a blooming Showy Lady's Slipper (*Cypripedium reginae*), a Tall Northern Green (*Platanthera aquilonis*), and long-awaited look at a Small Purple Fringed (*Platanthera psycodes*).

For dinner that evening, we were joined by a lovely couple, Tony and Tracy Edwards who run Tobermory Wave Adventure Cruises, educational excursions around the islands. Tony had been a ranger on Flowerpot Island and was instrumental in encouraging John to pursue his orchid

photography and presentations. He also showed me my first Calypso and Striped Coralroot Orchids on my first trip to Flowerpot Island, which is when I first met Peter and John.

Our trip home on July 4 was via Bognor Marsh, where we had another close up look at a Small Purple Fringed orchid (*Platanthera psycodes*).

Some orchids that were seen in previous years were not found this time. This could be because the weather patterns have changed.

Thank you, John and Peter for a memorable and enjoyable trip.

All photos taken with cell phones by Rachel Gottesman or John Alexander as noted.



Grass Pink Blossom by Rachel Gottesman



Pitcher Plant detail by Rachel Gottesman



Fen at Petrel Point by John Alexander



Rose Pogonia by John Alexander



Small Purple Fringed Orchid by John Alexander



John and Peter waiting for the ferry to Flowerpot Island