



Manitoba's Rare Plants Surveyed

Elizabeth Punter, CDC botanist, is working on surveys to assist provincial and national advisory committees with recommendations on the protection of rare plant species found in Manitoba.

Four uncommon plant species are being reviewed as candidates for listing under the provincial *Endangered Species Act*. "The information being gathered will increase our understanding of the plants' distribution in Manitoba, their habitats, their population densities and the threats to their existence," Punter said.

The four species of interest are the dwarf dandelion (*Krigia biflora*), Culver's-root (*Veronicastrum virginicum*), Riddell's goldenrod (*Solidago riddellii*) and northern adder's-tongue (*Ophioglossum pusillum*). The first three species are rare in Manitoba since the CDC has under 20 reports of their occurrence. Finding the northern adder's-tongue, currently listed as very rare by the CDC, will be a

challenge for Punter. "It's fairly small and cryptic so it blends well with existing vegetation," Punter said. "You have to get down on your hands and knees to find it." the plant can be found among willows, wet grass and shrub communities.

Punter is also reviewing occurrences of the small white lady's-slipper (*Cypripedium candidum*) in the province for the Committee On the Status of Endangered Wildlife In Canada. This plant, which occurs in Ontario and Manitoba, is listed nationally and provincially as an endangered species. Its population status was last examined in 1981. "Each protected species is reviewed periodically to update information and to ensure the status is still representative," Punter said. The key threats to this plant species in Manitoba are people who dig up the plants from their natural habitats and the invasion of brome grass, leafy spurge and woody plants. ■

Province's Protection of Species Expands

Seven new species have been listed for protection under Manitoba's *Endangered Species Act*. The Conservation Data Centre was instrumental in researching species of concern for the Manitoba Endangered Species Advisory Committee.

The additional species are:

- *Dakota skipper* - a prairie butterfly with a restricted range in North America, found in southern Manitoba;
- *Riding's satyr* - a butterfly not found in Manitoba since 1958;
- *Uncas skipper* - a wide-ranging butterfly in North America, only individuals have been reported in Manitoba since the 1970s;
- *Great Plains ladies'-tresses* - a plant in the orchid family occurring in low numbers in native prairie habitats;
- *Western silvery aster* - a plant native to the tall grass prairie, found in only three areas of Manitoba;
- *Eskimo curlew* - a shorebird nearing extinction, found in Canada's Arctic during the nesting season;
- *Pronghorn antelope* - a mammal once common in Manitoba, now only seen occasionally. ■

CDC Makes East Coast Connection

Canada's newest Conservation Data Centre is open for business in Kentville, N.S., bringing the number of CDC's in the country to seven. This new addition to the CDC family is regarded as an asset, filling a significant gap in Canadian geographic CDC coverage.

"Plant ranges and animal species don't respect geographical boundaries," said Carol Scott, manager of the Manitoba CDC. "The East Coast office expands our shared geographical range and our ability to deliver coordinated programs across Canada." ■

The Manitoba Conservation Data Centre was initiated by:

- Manitoba Museum
- The Nature Conservancy of Canada
- Manitoba Natural Resources
- The Nature Conservancy (United States)

Manitoba
Natural Resources
Hon. J. Glen Cummings
Minister



Manitoba Beetles Join National Insect Collection

Two beetle specimens collected during the CDC's inventory of the Gardenton community pasture last summer have been placed in the Canadian National Collection of Insects in Ottawa.

The beetles were collected in pitfall traps by entomologists Darren Pollock and Weiping Xie while working for the CDC. The beetles were forwarded to Yves Bousquet, an expert in the Carabidae family of beetles, with Agriculture Canada in Ottawa. Bousquet was able to identify the specimens as *Bembidion praticola* Lindroth. "These beetle specimens are of particular interest because they previously had not been found in Manitoba," Pollock said. The beetles occur under leaves in moist, deciduous forest, often near standing water.

The pitfall traps also captured four other species of carabid beetles that have rarely been collected in Canada. These include *Anisodactylus ptychrous*, *Bembidium canadianum*, *Bembidion nudipenne* and *Elaphrus fuliginosus*. ■

Seeing Things

Extirpated species are those that can no longer be found in areas where they were known to exist previously. They are considered locally extinct, but individual sightings can still occur, creating excitement among people who are lucky enough to spot them.

Swift Fox - Last year Jeremy Sawatzky was driving along PTH 5, north of Glenboro, when he noticed a fox in the ditch. He snapped a picture and when he showed it to his dad Peter, they knew it was not the red fox commonly found in Manitoba. "I was quite sure it was a swift fox, but I knew it shouldn't be," Peter said. The swift fox was redesignated from extirpated to endangered this year at a national level.

Lu Carbyn, with the Canadian Wildlife Service in Edmonton, has spent 15 years studying the swift fox. He validated the identification of the fox in the picture and visited the site near Glenboro where it was seen. A den site was located, but no evidence was gained as to how the fox arrived in Manitoba. The swift fox has not been reported in this province since 1873 and the nearest known denning area is in South Dakota.



Swift Fox

illustration from *The Mammals of Canada*,
A.W.F. Banfield, University of Toronto Press, 1974.

Trumpeter Swan - Bob Jones of Manitoba Natural Resources confirmed sightings of trumpeter swans on Lake Manitoba in May of this year. Three juveniles were being fed by a home owner living in Echo Bay, near St. Laurent. The swans had bands on their legs, allowing Jones to track them back to Kellogg, Michigan. "They were probably from the same family group," Jones said, "because the bands were all in sequence." Trumpeter swans are no longer a species at risk in Canada, but Manitoba is not within their current breeding range.

Grizzly Bear - A recent confirmed sighting of a grizzly bear in northern Manitoba occurred this spring. Cam Elliott with Manitoba Natural Resources in Thompson received reports of a grizzly bear sighting from goose researchers working at Cape Churchill. The bear was also seen by representatives of Parks Canada and Manitoba Natural Resources. Elliott said he has received unconfirmed sightings of grizzly bears at Hubbard Point, but the sighting at Cape Churchill is a little more unusual because this area is beyond the range of one of the grizzly bear's main food sources in the north. "Grizzlies often eat Arctic ground squirrels and the range of the squirrels does not extend as far south as Cape Churchill," Elliot said. Grizzly bears disappeared from the Prairies in the 1880s. ■

Recent Publications

- Grassland and Forest Bird Project. 1997. *Manitoba citizen's awareness guide for the conservation of grassland and forest birds*. Box 24, 200 Saulteaux Cr., Winnipeg, MB. R3J 3W3. 52 pp.
- Manitoba Department of Natural Resources. 1998. *Manitoba's Prairie Conservation Action Plan 1996-2001*. Winnipeg, MB. 25 pp.
- Goulet, S. and N.C. Kenkel. 1997. *Habitat survey and management proposal for Manitoba populations of Western Spiderwort (Tradescantia occidentalis)*. Final report, February 1997. University of Manitoba Quantitative Plant Ecology Laboratory, Winnipeg, MB. 89 pp.
- Slogan, J.R. 1997. *Long-term vegetation dynamics of plains rough fescue (Festuca hallii) grassland in Riding Mountain National Park*. M.Sc. Thesis, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, MB. 177 pp.

■ CDC Project Updates

New Biological Inventories Underway

The Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS), Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration (PFRA) and Manitoba Natural Resources have teamed with the CDC to conduct a biological inventory of the Narcisse Wildlife Management Area, Narcisse PFRA Community Pasture, and the Libau PFRA Community Pasture.

The Narcisse sites are adjacent to each other and cover more than 173 km² in Manitoba's Interlake. "These areas consist of primarily native habitats that are poorly documented in terms of native biodiversity," said Jason Greenall, CDC botanist/ecologist. "This project affords a great opportunity to document the species and habitats typical of Manitoba's aspen parkland."

In addition to the garter snake dens for which the area is renowned, elk, sharp-tailed grouse and many neotropical migrant birds use habitats available in the area.

Information from the Libau pasture inventory will assist in the development of a rotational grazing project being planned at the site.

"These projects are exciting because we are bringing together the resources, and needs, of both provincial and federal agencies to produce reports that will benefit all parties," Greenall said. Field work will be completed by the end of September and Greenall plans to have final reports delivered to the contracting parties in the spring of 1999. ■

COSEWIC Contributions

CDC manager Carol Scott attended the annual meeting of the Committee On the Status of Endangered Wildlife In Canada (COSEWIC) held in Ottawa, Ont., in April. COSEWIC is the national body that identifies species at risk.

Eleven Manitoba species were to be assessed during the meeting, but due to input from the Manitoba CDC, two species, the small white lady's-slipper and weed shiner, were deferred until next year so that more information could

be gathered. The peregrine falcon was also deferred to next year.

Over 100 people were recognized at the meeting for their history of service and contributions towards the conservation of Canada's wildlife. Among those honored were Manitoba Natural Resources staff members Ken DeSmet, Merlin Shoemith and Bob Nero as well as Ken Stewart, a zoology professor at the University of Manitoba. ■

CFS Survey Complete

The CDC has completed a study for the Canadian Forestry Service (CFS) that identifies rare plant occurrences within selected forested areas of Manitoba. Using existing records, a map was generated to identify the locations of plant species of concern. "As you moved north from the 49th parallel, you saw fewer occurrences," said Elizabeth Punter, CDC botanist. "This is not necessarily a reflection of the distribution and number of rare plants but rather that there are fewer opportunities for people to access more northern forested areas."

The map will be useful to the CFS because it identifies where rare plants are likely to occur. Areas with habitat characteristics associated with rare plants can be screened for occurrences prior to use of the forested area. ■

Dwarf Bilberry
Vaccinium caespitosum
Occurrences of this rare plant were among those identified for the Canadian Forestry Service.



FOCUS ON... Element Occurrences

An element occurrence (EO) is a physical location important to the conservation of a species or natural community. These are recorded by the CDC and incorporated into its computer databank. The definition of an EO is not the same for all species, and depends largely on the behaviour and biology of the plant or animal. For example, EOs associated with the blue-spotted

salamander are the ponds used for breeding in early spring, whereas EOs associated with the little brown myotis (a bat) are certain limestone caves in the Interlake Region that are essential overwintering areas for this species. EOs are often areas that are very sensitive to disturbance and more than one type of EO can be tracked for an individual species.

When the CDC receives an information request, the EO databank is one of the computer files searched to assist with conservation planning.

At the request of Vince Crichton, a wildlife biologist with Manitoba Natural Resources, the CDC will be adding location data for large stick nests to its EO records. Contd. on next page . . .

■ Staff & Volunteer Updates

The staff at the Manitoba CDC congratulate Elaine Weiss, former administrative assistant, on her recent retirement. She is looking forward to actively pursuing her interests of painting and swimming. ■

Helping the CDC with biological inventories this year are botany field technicians Marilena Kowalchuk and Tracy Ruta. Ruta has a degree in botany and Kowalchuk has one course left before she acquires her degree. Both technicians studied at the University of Manitoba.

Wayne Neily is this year's zoology field technician. Neily has experience conducting bioinventories and he also runs the Christmas Bird Count for the Winnipeg area. He has a biology

degree from Acadia University and bachelor of education degree from the University of Winnipeg. ■

The CDC welcomes new volunteer Tracy Maconachie who will be reviewing and updating computer records on managed areas. Maconachie has been coordinator of the Peregrine Falcon Recovery Project in Manitoba for six years. She has a degree in geography and she is finishing a master's thesis at the Natural Resource Institute at the University of Manitoba. Welcome aboard, Tracy! ■

Volunteer opportunities exist for people with biological training and/or experience with GIS and computer databases.

FOCUS ON . . . contd

Currently, the CDC tracks information on stick nests found only in heron colonies. With Crichton's initiative, information on stick nest occurrences will be expanded. Stick nests constructed by some birds, like crows and ravens, for reproductive purposes are subsequently used by other species, including great gray owls, to rear their young. Researchers believe that stick nests are selectively placed in specific areas by birds. Areas where nests are clustered may have a greater intrinsic value to wildlife when the presence of stick nests is considered. ■

The following companies and organizations have contributed to the development of the Manitoba Conservation Data Centre:

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- Manitoba Wildlife Rehabilitation Organization
- Nature Saskatchewan
- Northern Forest Owl Symposium Award Fund
- Shell Environment Fund
- The Nature Conservancy (Minnesota Chapter)
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