

MINUTES OF THE 920th NEW ENGLAND BOTANICAL CLUB MEETING
SEPTEMBER 13, 1996

The following was provided by Lisa A. Standley, Recording Secretary

The 693rd meeting of the New England Botanical Club, Inc., being the 920th since the original organization, met at North Adams State College on 13 September 1996, with 32 members and guests present. Dr. Barre Hellquist welcomed the Club members to North Adams and thanked Pamela Weatherbee and Dr. Harold Brotzman for organizing the meeting. Barre urged members to visit the herbarium following the meeting to examine one of the finest pondweed collections in the country. Barre also reported that the Newfoundland Trip in July had been wet, but successful, with 25 people participating. In addition to plants, moose and caribou were highlights of the trip. Future trip locations were discussed with the New Jersey Pine Barrens and the Smoky Mountains suggested.

Following a summary of the minutes of the previous meeting, Vice-President Conant called for old business, new business, and gossip. The Refreshments Committee requested that a Coffee Subcommittee be formed. Dave asked for assistance in identifying a mystery aster with glandular achenes. Pam noted that she had brought copies of the *Flora of Berkshire County, Mass.* for sale.



Pamela Weatherbee expounding about Mt. Greylock, Mass. at North Adams State College, North Adams, Mass. (Sept. 13, 1996)

Dave introduced the evening's speaker, Pamela Weatherbee, who spoke on "Mount Greylock: Haven for Berkshire Flora". Although it may be the world's smallest mountain, Mount Greylock has a long and interesting history and an unusual flora. The abrupt change in elevation from the valley floor at 600 ft to the summit at over 3400 ft provides sharp distinctions between vegetation zones and severe summit weather. It has been described as a "Canadian island arising from an alleghenian sea". The first written account of the mountain was provided by Timothy Dwight, former president of Yale, who climbed Greylock (then Saddle Mountain) in 1799. Hawthorne, Melville, and Thoreau climbed and were influenced by the mountain in diverse ways.

Vegetation on Mount Greylock has historically been disturbed by clearcutting, pasturage, and burning. Landslides, most recently in 1991, are frequent on the thin steep soils, and wind damage often downs trees in small areas. The mountain was abandoned by farmers early in the nineteenth century, and pastures quickly revegetated with stands of red spruce. Despite the history of disturbance, some portions of the mountain support very large trees, with hemlocks 4-feet in diameter and sugar maples 29-inches across. Over 11,000 acres of the mountain were placed in the first Massachusetts State Park, founded in 1898. Pam recommended a book titled "Most Excellent Majesty" as a good history of the mountain, noting that the most severe and permanent alterations of Mount Greylock occurred after it was placed in state ownership. The CCC constructed roads, trails, and the summit lodge during the 1930s, followed by the erection of the war memorial tower. More recent economic development proposals have threatened the mountain, and the DEM has selected a developer to start construction of a golf course, cross-country ski trail system, and lodging on the east base of the reservation.

The geology of Mount Greylock is responsible for much of the diversity of the flora. The hard resistant and somewhat acidic schists on the summit provide a very different substrate from the calcareous marbles along the mountain's flanks. Pam described the diverse plant communities on Mount Greylock, starting at the summit where northern species such as *Sorbus decora*, *Amelanchier bartramiana*, *Solidago macrophylla*, *Euphrasia*, *Streptopus amplexicaulis*, *Ledum groenlandicum*, *Betula cordifolia*, and the state's only *Vaccinium vitis-idaea* occur. Boggy areas near the summit support *Milium effusum* and *Gaultheria hispida*.

In the Northern Hardwoods zone, species include *Clintonia*, *Oxalis montana*, *Huperzia lucidula*, *Viburnum alnifolium*, *Viola selkirkii*, *Platanthera macrophylla*, *Platanthera grandiflora*, and *P. lacera* (as well as their hybrid, *P. x andrewsii*). The rich sugar maple forests on marble substrate support a very diverse herbaceous flora, including wild leeks, *Dicentra*, *Hepatica*, *Viola canadensis* and *V. rostrata*, *Disporum*, *Caulophyllum*, *Uvularia grandiflora*, *Orchis spectabilis*, *Panax quinquefolia*, *Hydrophyllum canadense*, *Conopholis*, *Botrychium matricariifolium*, and *Camptosorus*, as well as the hairy woodmint. Steep ravines are a high-disturbance zone and support *Ribes lacustre*, *R. triste*, *Conioselinum chinense*, and *Polystichum braunii* along the cold rushing brooks. Cliffs provide habitat for *Woodsia glabella*, *Cryptogramma*, and *Potentilla tridentata*. The mountain also contains old fields and a few beaver ponds near the base.

The meeting adjourned at 9:05 PM for refreshments in the Biology Laboratory.



NEBC members near the summit of Mt. Greylock, Mass.
Sept. 14, 1996

SEPTEMBER FIELD TRIP - On Saturday September 14th, 20 NEBC members and guests met at the summit of Mount Greylock, in the fog, to experience the flora described at the Club meeting. Led by Pam Weatherbee, we started with "parking lot" botany at the summit where, accompanied by a cellist, we saw *Sorbus decora* in fruit (and compared it to *S. americana*), *Amelanchier bartramiana*, *Euphrasia* in bloom, and wind and ice-shaped balsam firs. The sole site of *Vaccinium vitis-idaea* in Massachusetts was observed on the drive to the "boreal forest" zone, where the group was introduced to *Betula cordifolia*, *Dryopteris campyloptera*, *Solidago macrophylla*, *Carex intumescens*, and *Aster acuminatus*. *Carex gynandra*, *C. trisperma*, *Chelona glabra*, and *Nemopanthus mucronata* in fruit were highlights of a small summit bog, along with two sharp-shinned hawks. A wet glade in the "northern hardwoods" forest lower down the mountain provided *Glyceria melicaria*, *Carex scabrata*, *Milium effusum*, *Laportea*, *Ribes triste*, and *Cinna latifolia*. The final highlights of the trip were along a steep stream ravine, where we found *Solidago flexicaulis*, *Ribes lacustre*, *Caulophyllum thalictroides*, *Allium tricoccum*, *Asarum canadense*, *Phegopteris hexagonoptera*, a two-lined salamander, and growing together *Polystichum acrostichoides*, *P. braunii*, and their hybrid, *P. x potteri*.



NEBC members exploring lower slope of Mt. Greylock, Mass.
Sept. 14, 1996



*NEBC members (except one) looking for plants on lower slope of Mt. Greylock, Mass.
Sept. 14, 1996*