

New England Botanical Club – Minutes of the 943rd Meeting

7 December 1998 Prepared by Dr. Paul Somers, Recording Secretary

The 716th meeting of the New England Botanical Club, Inc., being the 943rd since the original organization, met on Friday, Dec. 7, 1998 in the main lecture hall of the Biological Laboratories, Harvard University, with 36 members and guests present.

Lisa Standley, Vice President, opened the meeting with a few announcements including details about upcoming meetings, the spring symposium, four new regular members, and an honorary membership being given to Kancheepuram Gandhi for his services to the Club as Associate Editor of *Rhodora* and the one we turn to for questions about Latin diagnoses and nomenclature. Art Gilman announced that he and Dave Conant would be leading a three-day fern foray in Vermont during 1999 and that details would be published in the American Fern Society's *Fiddlehead Forum*.

The program, titled "Verdant Venues and Ventures: Visible and Verbal Visions" by Corresponding Secretary, Nancy Eyster-Smith, was in actuality the annual event where Club members are invited to make presentations with ten or fewer slide images. **Keith Williams** led off with images from a South American vacation trip with his wife in May, 1998. It was the middle of the dry season in Brazil, their first destination, but they still saw lots of water because much of their time was spent on the coast and in the Pantanal, a huge wetland that extends into two other South American countries. Plants featured in the slide images were *Tabebuia alba*, an endangered tree species in Brazil; *Cuphea melvilla*, a prolific shrub along the Pantanal waterways, and *Ludwigia inclinata* and *Cabomba furcata* growing in sloughs and shallows of the Pantanal. He ended with shots from Peru's Inca Trail to Machu Picchu and an image of an *Equisetum* growing from the mortar of stone ruins. **Marsha Salett** followed Keith with a brief introduction to her Master's degree project at the University of Massachusetts--Boston which is to create a CD-ROM version of a natural history guide to bogs of southern New England. She showed images of several bogs with public access that she might feature in the guide, as well as a few that lack easy access or boardwalks that she may omit. Her intent is to present explanations and illustrations of bog types and common species such as *Kalmia angustifolia* and *Ledum groenlandicum*. Dichotomous keys and images of plants in flower and fruit will be provided to help with identifications. **Lois Somers** then took us back to the tropics with images of a trip with husband Paul to Costa Rica. Being a registered nurse, not a botanist, she used a few wildlife images to illustrate some of the critters botanists need to be on the watch for while probing the greenery. The images included an orange-kneed tarantula seen in the Monteverde cloud forest and an eyelash viper seen at Braulio Carrillo National Park. Aquatic critters to be aware of included caiman seen on the Cano Negro River near the Nicaraguan border and the much larger and fiercer crocodiles of the Palo Verde region.

Joanne Sharpe's slides started in Costa Rica with an image of *Danaea wendlandii*, one of the fern species she studied there for six years. She then landed us in Puerto Rico for a look at disturbance studies of ferns in a palm forest before and after Hurricane Georges and in mangrove swamps where 14 foot tall leather ferns, *Acrostichum danaeifolium*, were regenerating following four years of hydrologic disturbance from dike construction. Her last stop was Maine with

images from the Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens in Boothbay, where *Nyssa sylvatica* can be found at or near its northern limit. **David Hunt** continued the regional theme with images from New York where he has been helping to refine the state's plant community classification, particularly in the Northern Appalachian Ecoregion. His images included riverside ice meadows with *Prunus pumila* and *Andropogon gerardi*, and pine dominated rocky summit communities with red pine and associates such as *Vaccinium myrtilloides*, *Amelanchier bartramiana*, and *Oryzopsis pungens*. He then took us underwater at Lake George where he has been doing underwater vegetation sampling at depths up to 40 feet. In shallow bays he found *Potamogeton amplifolius*--*Vallisneria americana* and *Eriocaulon aquaticum*--*Elatine americana* to be common community types, whereas sandy deltas had associations of *Lobelia dortmanna* and *Myriophyllum tenellum*. In deeper waters he found associations of *Najas flexilis*, *Potamogeton gramineus*, and *P. perfoliatus*. At 30 ft., he found beds of *Isoetes macrospora* and *Potamogeton robbinsii*, and at 40 ft., a dense cover of *Nitella flexilis*. With this success, he's now tackling marine eelgrass environments of Long Island.

The next group of presenters came as a team representing the newly formed Botanic Club of Cape Cod and the Islands. **Don Schall** spoke about the group's search for and likely rediscovery of an extant population of *Asclepias purpurascens* on the Cape and the discovery of water hyacinth, *Eichhornia crassipes*, thriving in a spring upwelling near a Barnstable cranberry bog. **Mario DiGregorio** discussed, with a vial sample in hand, the group's discovery of a county record for *Wolffia papulifera* from a freshwater pond in Barnstable and showed images of sandplain grassland rarities: *Liatris scariosa* var. *novae-angliae* being visited by a monarch, *Aster concolor* at the northern limit of its range, *Aristida purpurascens*, New England's only perennial awn-grass, and *Prenanthes serpentaria* from Nantucket. **Pamela Polloni** continued the discussion of *P. serpentaria* by pointing out of its hairy calyx, which distinguishes it from *P. trifoliolata*, and other aspects of its life history, such as pollination by *Bombus* bees and the variable leaf shapes in seedlings and spring growth, which range from entire to pinnatifid.

The meeting ended with **Don Lubin** offering gifts of young *Cheilanthes lanosa* ferns that he had grown from spores and an invitation to tour his fern garden in Allston which features 43 taxa, 27 of which are native to eastern Massachusetts.

We then adjourned for refreshments and socializing.