

New England Botanical Club – Minutes of the 949th Meeting

4 June 1999 Prepared by Dr. Lisa A. Standley, Recording Secretary *pro tempore*

The 722nd meeting of the New England Botanical Club, being the 949th since its original organization, met on Friday, June 4, 1999, met at the Jordan House Inn in Alfred, Maine 16 members and guests present.

Following an excellent dinner and the introduction of guests, Vice President Lisa Standley introduced Dr. Alison Dibble, forest ecologist with the Northeast Forest Experiment Station, USDA Forest Service, who spoke on the "Flora and Fauna of the Massabesic Experimental Forest: News from the current ecological inventory." Dr. Dibble, an active member of both the NEBC and the Josselyn Botanical Society, studied *Carex oronensis* for her Master's degree and investigated the conservation biology of *Amelanchier* for her doctorate, both earned at the University of Maine.

The Massabesic Experimental Forest, named for the Indian tribe that once occupied this area, is the largest public property in southern Maine. The current 4,000-acre federally-owned forest is a patchwork of lands acquired since the early 1930s, with two major units located in Alfred and Waterboro. The forest has a long history of disturbance, with the major fire of 1947 and subsequent fires and windstorms in the 1950s altering much of the upland areas. Forestry experimentation has included red and white pine and white birch plantations as well as studies of hybrid poplars.

The forest also has a long history of ecological inventory. A solid database of information on woody species was collected from permanent plots established in the early 1940's. Unfortunately, the plots were marked with wooden stakes that did not survive the fire of 1947, which burned over 40 percent of the Massabesic. Current ecological inventory studies being conducted by Dr. Dibble, staff, and volunteers are intended to provide baseline data for long-term experimental studies and management of the forest property that will result in the sustainable co-existence of experimental forestry, forest harvest, and natural systems that protect wildlife and water quality. Goals of the study include documenting existing vegetation composition and structure, identifying unique species or communities, and establishing permanent plots to detect long-term change.

One of the highlights of the Massabesic's southern unit is a large Atlantic white cedar swamp, which is being considered for designation as the Forest Service's only Atlantic white cedar Research Natural Area. Other highlights include a population of the federally-listed *Isotria medeoloides* and several state-listed species such as *Calystegia spithamea*, *Botrychium simplex* and *Carex sprengei*. Plants near the northern limit of their range are also found within the Massabesic - *Nyssa sylvatica*, *Chimaphila maculata*, and a lichen (*Vulpicida viridis*). The forest also supports a diverse fauna, ranging from moose and porcupine to pileated woodpecker. Several vernal pool complexes provide habitat for rare dragonfly and damselfly species, ribbon snake, and Blanding's turtle.

The USDA Forest Service has developed successful partnerships with local ATV and conservation groups interested in protecting the recreational values of the forest. These partnerships have resulted in substantial clean-up of the land, reduction of illegal dumping, and maintenance of hiking trails. Dr. Dibble encouraged members of NEBC to also participate in this partnership by assisting in the ecological inventory or by using the forest in teaching or research programs. Following questions, the meeting adjourned at 9:45 PM.

Saturday Field Trip - Massabesic Experimental Forest, Northern Unit

Ten club members and friends spent Saturday, June 5th, exploring the northern unit of the Massabesic. The group explored streamside habitats along Cook's Stream, mature red oak forests along an esker, a vernal pool, floating bog mats of Robert's Pond, and an extensive *Acer rubrum*-*Fraxinus nigra* swamp. One member, claiming that aquatic botanists have more fun, immersed himself to the chest in the vernal pool and bounced on the floating bog islands. Highlights of the day included discovery of *Botrychium multifidum*, *B. lanceolatum*, and *B. virginianum*, as well as *Woodwardia virginica*, and numerous species of *Carex* (*blanda*, *ormostachya*, *leptalea*, *atlantica*, *albicans* and others).