

# New England Botanical Club – Minutes of the 964<sup>th</sup> Meeting

12 January 2001 Prepared by Don Hudson, Recording Secretary

The 737<sup>th</sup> meeting of the New England Botanical Club, Inc., being the 964<sup>th</sup> since the original organization, met in the Main Lecture Hall of the Biological Laboratories, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, on Friday, 12 January 2001. President Lisa Standley called the meeting to order at 6:54 PM with 45 members and guests present. Guests were introduced, followed by the announcement of two new members, Barbara Andreas and Russell Hopping, and two new family members, Karin Wood and Peter Bogle. The NEBC Graduate Student Award applications are due on March 1<sup>st</sup> and awards will be announced at the April Meeting. Lisa noted sadly that the botanical community had lost Rupert Barneby and Ton Damman during December. They will be sorely missed.

The Club's first botanical potluck preceded the meeting. There were assembled some 20 main dishes, including one rather unique quiche-like prize consisting of eggs and young milkweed inflorescences, as well as numerous snacks and dessert-like comestibles. President Lisa Standley declared it unilaterally a success. Not a soul rose to contest. Lisa reminded everyone that dessert and the usual refreshments were waiting for the conclusion of the annual members' "show & tell."

Nancy Eyster-Smith secured a variety of electronic and video projection equipment for the evening, and Don Lubin was first up with a PowerPoint perusal of the ferns upon which he has obsessed during the past many months. Of particular note, Don had digital images to show of *Dryopteris intermedia* x *marginalis* hybrids and their parents, as well as a wonderful collection of the cliff-hugging ferns of Gaspé haunts. Jenn Forman was up next with the digital projection equipment. Weeds fascinate Jenn, so it comes as no surprise that she spent free time during two visits to Italy hunting weeds. Abruzzo is a rugged place, dotted with flocks of sheep and goats. Amongst the weeds was a collection of stunning and fierce thistles. Jenn also found two species of North American *Epilobium* that have invaded Europe, an *Impatiens* that made the jump from the Himalayas to Italy, and a *Hibiscus* whose range has been expanded to both Europe and North America from Africa.

Russ Cohen has been exploring and teaching about edible plants for more than 20 years. He had short stories to tell of the likes of evening primrose, black locust, pokeweed, milkweed, and others. Learning to cook with corn smut and barberry provided Russ with his best stories for the evening. Hot peppers turn smut from a miserable and nearly unpalatable meal to a marvelous delicacy. A failed attempt to make barberry jelly turned into the best little pot of wine Russ has ever tasted. Lisa Standley was up next with a short tour of the flora of the southern mountains of New Zealand. Lisa has been waiting for years to see *Nothofagus* in its native clime, and she was not disappointed. The rain forests of the region are filled with tree ferns. The branches and trunks of other forest trees are festooned with bryophytes, ferns, and mushrooms, including some spectacular species of *Hymenophyllum* and the brilliant little electric blue cap of an associated basidiomycete. Tiny *Euphrasia* plants and "vegetable sheep" (a peculiar, mat-forming, dwarf composit) are amongst the botanical treasures that visitors to Milford Sound are likely to find. The international theme continued with Tom Philbrick who traveled from southwestern Connecticut to tell us of his latest forays to Mexico, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Argentina in search of the Podostemaceae. There is nothing quite like *Podostemum* in full bloom growing on rocks in shallow water streams and rivers of Central and South America.

Chris Canfield was up next to bring us back to New England and a tour of a local Connecticut bog, complete with *Eriophorum*, *Drosera*, and *Sarracenia*. The vegetation is likely to change if the work of beavers continues to re-flood the bog unchecked.

Globetrotting again, Dr. Gandhi gave us a quick tour of the flora of the Hassan District of southwest India. There, within 100 miles, rainfall ranges from 15"/year to over 200"/year. The forests include both teak and sandalwood, managed carefully for centuries. Gandhi promised a full presentation at a future member meeting. We'll hold him to it. Elizabeth Farnsworth of NEWFS and her husband Aaron Ellison of Mt. Holyoke College traveled recently to the Kimberley district of Australia, where they found baobab, elephant ear, and *Bauhinia*. A tuberous *Drosera* and exotic pipeworts grow along the banks of Mitchell Falls, which cut through billions of years-old sandstones in Bell Gorge. The plants appear to be guarded by a gang of "freshies," the Australian freshwater crocodile. Pat Swain then took us back to Iguassú Falls in Argentina, and showed us some of the more typical trees and shrubs of the towns. Pat was followed by Marsha Salett, whose recent trip to Hawaii brought her to the first, and we hope not the last, National Wildlife Refuge created for the protection of songbirds. A little closer to home, Robert Bertin caught Tom Rawinski smiling in the middle of the single largest stand on record of *Scirpus longii*. After snapping the picture, Robert headed off to the slopes of Mt. Hood and Mt. St. Helens, where fireweed, red alder, and lupines were thriving.

The evening concluded with images of the Club's recent trip to the Gaspé, Quebec. Bill Cullina and George Newman captured the rare herbs and ferns with brilliant photography, and Nancy Eyster-Smith wrapped up the evening with a 10-minute short video that captured botanists, family members, Northern gannets, and hang-gliders enjoying this rugged, mountainous, and wet corner of our world.

The meeting adjourned to dessert and refreshments at 9:03 PM.