

New England Botanical Club – Minutes of the 984th Meeting 10 January 2003 Lisa Standley, Recording Secretary *pro tempore*

The 757th meeting of the New England Botanical Club, being the 984th since its original organization, met on Friday, January 10, 2003, in the Seminar Room and Lecture Hall of the Fairchild (Biochemistry) Building, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, with 35 members and guests present.

The evening began with an exceptional and well-attended potluck dinner featuring a wide range of botanical edibles. Various members of the Apiaceae and Fabaceae appeared as appetizers and dips. *Spinacea oleracea* and *Lycopersicon esculentum* combined in an excellent lasagna and quiche. Most of the desserts featured *Theobroma cacao*, supported by Pam Weatherbee's outstanding apple-cranberry pie. Apples appeared again in the mulled cider. *Vitis vinifera*, *Humulus lupulus*, and various strains of yeasts contributed to the array of beverages.

President Somers called for announcements and gossip before the main event of the evening. Nancy Eyster-Smith announced that Councillor Jennifer Forman had successfully defended her PhD thesis at UMass Boston, and that Marsha Salett had defended her MS. She also sadly noted the passing of Eugene Walker, husband of long-time member and past president Mary Walker. Pat Swain announced that Graduate Student award submittals are due March 8th and encouraged all to apply. She also regretfully noted that the Natural Heritage Program would not offer small research contracts this year as a result of the state budget crisis. Paul Somers announced that Lisa Standley, David Lovejoy, and Pat Swain have agreed to serve as the nominating committee. Barre Hellquist noted that Dick Mitchell has retired as the New York State Botanist. Pam Weatherbee displayed two of Sargent's 1880 maps of tree distributions, prepared for the 10th US Census, that she recently found in an antiques shop.

The annual member's "show-and-tell" evening got off to an early start, as images of ferns from **Don Lubin's** website played during the announcements (see them all at <http://theworld.com/~donlubin>). Don showed slides of the fall NEBC trip to Owls Head in VT and Mt. Willard in Crawford Notch, featuring intrepid club members and some pteridological highlights (fertile *Pteridium aquilinum*; *Isoetes echinospora*; *Lycopodium lagopus*). **Paul Somers** followed with more slides of Club trips, including the Montague Plains in June, Yale Camp in August (Sue Williams teaching about mosses, Ernst Schori as chef, drenched botanists), Owls Head, and the spectacular view from Mt. Willard. **Art Gilman** continued the fern theme with photos of an unusual dissected *Osmunda cinnamomea*, a new tetraploid subspecies of *Phegopteris connectilis*, and *Botrychium pallidum* on Petit Manan. Art also shared pictures of a population of showy lady slippers in Vermont, with spectacular patches of albino flowers.

Marsha Salett provided a preview of her CD field guide to peatlands and acidic fens of New England. The interactive format allows students and amateurs to easily find photos of common bog species at various life stages, with information on natural history, ecology, and phenology, as well as information on peatland ecology. Club members are eagerly awaiting publication of the guide! In the same theme, **Jenn Forman** shared her summer project, which documented the flora of the UMass field station on Nantucket with a "virtual nature trail" and photo gallery (<http://www.cs.umb.edu/nantucket>). Some highlights included *Vitis labrusca*, which should be known as the kudzu of Nantucket, and the invasive *Cytissus scoparius*.

Traveling farther afield, **Lisa Standley** showed images of her trip to Mongolia by way of Beijing. Slides featured Mongolian modes of transportation, the grassy steppes of central Mongolia, and the vast spaces and mountain ranges of the Gobi. Plants were weird and wonderful, from the tiny curlicue *Ephedra* to the tremendous diversity of *Astragalus*, *Oxytropis*, and *Iris*. **Barre Hellquist** also showed slides and told tales of the desert, although in the Davis Mountains of Texas rather than Central Asia. He showed images of his search for *Potamogeton clystocarpus*, the extremely rare Aguha Canyon Pondweed. Barre assured us that the plant (which looks exactly like *P. pusillus*) really is a good species with a unique rhizomatous growth form, perhaps to anchor it against the turbulence of flash floods.

Nancy Eyster-Smith closed the evening presentation with slides from Arizona, featuring the Biosphere site, various effects of fire in the southwest, and sunset behind the Saguaros.