

New England Botanical Club – Minutes of the 1023rd Meeting
12 January 2007

Robert Bertin, Recording Secretary *pro tempore*

The 796th meeting of the New England Botanical Club, being the 1023rd since its original organization, was held on Friday, January 12, 2007, in the Lecture Room of the Fairchild Biochemistry Building, Divinity Avenue, Cambridge, MA. There were 34 members and guests in attendance who shared potluck and took home some new (and old) books from the raffle table. The evening featured 14 brief, illustrated presentations by club members and guests, befitting the theme of “*Seventh Segue into Sustenance and Selected Species.*”

Keith Williams led off the evening with slides of algae and cyanobacteria from Highland Lake, Falmouth/Windham, Maine. He illustrated typical taxa from open water, shallow water, and the periphyton, including denizens of introductory botany courses such as *Spirogyra*, *Anabaena*, *Fragillaria* and *Asterionella*, as well as less familiar taxa. The presentation wrapped up with a racing (and direction-changing) diatom, the Club’s first ever video for “show and tell.”

Irina Kadis provided marvelous images of selected members of the local vascular flora from her explorations in the vicinity of Boston, including the very rare species *Scheuchzeria palustris* and *Viola brittoniana*. She also recounted her efforts to explain a vivid splash of yellow in October on a floating island in a local reservoir. Lacking a boat, she swam to the island and was rewarded with a striking display of *Utricularia cornuta* in full bloom, which she documented with a photograph.

Tao Chen, visiting from Shenzhen, China, shared a magical image of the aptly named Shenzhen Fairy Lake Botanical Garden, verdant at this low latitude even at the start of December. He illustrated a few of the many genera of cycads at the garden, as well as several magnificent bougainvilleas, whose inconspicuous flowers were smothered in rich displays of rose, purple, orange and white bracts.

Chin Chang presented images of numerous plants from Korea. While many of the genera, such as *Acer*, *Prunus*, *Carpinus*, *Clematis*, *Viburnum* and *Ulmus*, are familiar to American botanists, the species are different. Given the Korean climate, many of the species are cold hardy, and some have very attractive ornamental features. We can hope that only ones that are not potentially invasive make an appearance at our local nurseries soon.

Uttam Babu Shrestha shared several slides illustrating the diverse flora of Nepal. While occupying only a few thousandths of a percent of the globe’s land area, this country is home to several percent of global diversity for many plant groups. This diversity has yielded numerous medicinal plants and spectacular orchids and rhododendrons.

Lisa Standley continued the Asian theme with slides from her visit to Chengdu in Sichuan Province. She showed images of the lowland deciduous forests that share many genera with our own, including species of *Cypripedium*. She also showed alpine meadows in full bloom with *Primula* and *Meconopsis*, Tibetan high grasslands with contentedly grazing yaks, high elevation forests with numerous rhododendrons, and marl lakes.

Wrapping up the Asian tour was **B. Ramamurthy Kailash**, who reported on the efforts by ATREE, an organization trying to protect India’s biodiversity, while combating the invasive *Lantana camara*. This species, considered one of the world’s ten worst weeds, is being attacked by developing ways to use it, especially for basketry and furniture making. Such efforts provide three-dollar chairs, income for local economies, and should help the conservation of bamboo, which has been greatly reduced by over-harvesting.

Kanchi Gandhi, inspired by a new year’s greeting card featuring *Aristolochia arborea*, gave a brief overview of this genus. It includes the world’s longest flower, *Aristolochia grandiflora*, with a spur up to nearly a meter in length. Pollination is typically by flies, which are attracted by a carrion-like smell and held prisoner in the flowers for several hours. An unusual anatomical feature is the presence of patches of cambium in the stem, which give rise to patches of xylem, rather than the rings typical of eudicots.

Returning to the New World, **Pat Swain** presented images of Alaskan plants. Some of the species, like *Calamagrostis canadensis* and *Streptopus amplexifolius*, can be found in New England. Others, including species of *Mimulus* and *Ledum*, share only a generic affiliation with the local flora.

Paul Somers provided images from the June 2006 NEBC outing to Mount Washington, Massachusetts, including Bash-Bish Falls, dolomite ledges in Sheffield, and Plantain Pond. Among the images of familiar human forms and faces were tales or images of some of the distinctive plants of the region, including *Arabis laevigata*, *A. lyrata*, *Ilex montana*, and *Asplenium ruta-muraria*.

Robert Bertin shared early returns from his efforts to compare the current flora of Worcester County, MA, with that of several decades ago. Among species with striking increases are *Galium aparine* and *Rhamnus frangula*, while *Linnaea borealis*, *Pedicularis canadensis*, and *Inula helenium* appear to be on the decline. As the work continues, he hopes to tease out possible causes related to land use and climate.

Bryan Hamlin shared images, including a marvelous *Hottonia inflata*, taken during his efforts to resurvey the flora of the Middlesex Fells Reservation. His work has turned up some species not previously reported, like *Nymphoides cordata* and *Sicyos angulatus*, and others, such as *Chimaphila maculata*, that have become much more common than when the tract was originally surveyed by Walter Deane in the late 1800s.

Don Lubin shared images from several efforts over the past year, ranging from manual control of poison ivy at Ringer Park in Allston, MA, to his more familiar work with pteridophytes. The latter projects included a pteridophyte inventory under the auspices of the Newton Conservators, a summary of emergence records from the 50 or so species of pteridophytes maintained at his home in Allston, and a good view of *Dryopteris filix-mas* x *Dryopteris marginalis* with its parents.

The theme of **Nancy Eyster-Smith’s** presentation was plants in interesting places. These ranged from flowers at her nephew’s graduation and Elvis Presley’s grave site at Graceland, to a creative display of plant families in containers outside the US Botanic Garden conservatory, to a stunning quilted vegetation map of Denali National Park, to a *Dracenia* at her home that flowered with wonderful fragrance, and finally to the fermentation vats at the Jack Daniel’s distillery (using a liberal definition of “plant”).