



turtle tracks

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FROM THE CHAIR

Well, another summer has come and gone and we are now enjoying the fall colours and cooler temperatures that herald the coming of another winter. If the haw berries are any indication of a severe winter, then I think their loaded branches may be telling us to brace for it!

This year FOMB was able to partner with Manitoulin Streams and the Climate Risk Institute to hire an intern for the year. Many of you will have met Maddie at the visitors centre this summer. Maddie and our summer student Brynn did an awesome job looking after the centre and also organized guided hikes, including two excursions to the seldom visited west side of the park. Maddie will continue to work with us a couple of days a week till next July.

Water levels are very high this year and we had to close a section of the coastal alvar trail south of Our Friends' Shelter as it was underwater. Quite a dramatic change from a few years ago when low water levels allowed one to hike to the west side trails with nothing more serious than a couple of wet feet! It remains to be seen what will happen over the coming years as the effects of climate change take hold.

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We had hoped to have the 10 hotspots identified with signage on the trails that corresponds to the display at the centre

but progress on the text needed for the signs is slow in coming from Ontario Parks. We continue to work with them and hope that we will be able to complete this project in 2020. Also, the wet spring prevented us from completing the last stretch of the all-access trail. Hopefully, this fall or next spring will see the finishing touches all in place.

Once again, our volunteers did an awesome job at manning the centre on weekends, with almost all shifts being covered. We are always looking out for new volunteers at the centre, so if you

know of anyone, please have them contact our volunteer coordinator Ken Mackenzie who is doing a terrific job! If you have an interest in becoming more involved with Misery Bay, contact either myself or John Diebolt (see last page of newsletter for contact information). We need more folks to join the board at the next AGM so please give it some thought!

The website is being updated and will be a much more user-friendly site. It will take a while to complete all the renovations but the revamped website is already up and running :

<https://miserybayprovincialpark.godaddysites.com/>

Please note that our mailing address has changed (see last page). We decided to avoid the \$190 charge that Canada Post was levying for our Gore Bay post office

box and take a free one in Evansville (apparently Misery Bay is outside of the Gore Bay mail catchment area which was the reason for the charge).

I would ensure all of our readers to ensure their membership is paid up. This is a valuable source of revenue for us and helps us continue to move forward on all our projects.

As the season draws to a close, please remember that the park is open year-round, even though the centre is closed after Thanksgiving. There is great snowshoeing in the winter, so do come and enjoy!

I hope you have an enjoyable winter and hope to see you on the trails at Misery next summer!



Haw berries

Misery Bay Provincial Park

2019 Visitors Numbers and Comments

by Maddie Wagar-Lovelace

Over the course of the 2019 season we kept track of the number of visitors that came into the centre. Both volunteers and summer staff recorded how many people they engaged with on the handheld clicker. From May 18th, 2019 to October 14th, 2019 we had a total of 3673 people that visited Misery Bay Provincial Park, down somewhat from the past couple of years. They came from all over the world – Canada and the United States, of course but also South Africa, the Netherlands, Germany, and Switzerland.

The guest books located at the visitor's centre and the two gazebos are filled with hundreds of comments. One of most frequent comments are from people coming to Misery Bay to celebrate a special occasion including anniversaries, birthdays and even weddings! Lynn and Marc wrote *"Today was supposed to be our wedding but got postponed due to hail. So, we came out here together to celebrate this day anyways. We will write each other a letter and give it to each other on our actual wedding day! What a great place to do so. Thank you!"*

Many of the comments in the guest books praise the people who keep Misery Bay Park amazing. There are comments on how great the trails are kept; how beautiful the gazebos are and how friendly the park centre staff and volunteers are. All throughout the books are comments such as *"Thanks to the Friends of Misery Bay!"*

The serenity and peace of Misery Bay inspired so many people to write beautiful poetry and stories throughout the guest books. One here by an unknown author received many comments and seemed to inspire many more people to leave their poems for others to enjoy!

*"By my eyes,
I'd never seen the sky.
By my skin,
I'd never felt the wind.
By my hands,
I'd never held the sun.
By my feet,
I'd never mounted sand.
By my friends,
I'd never said the words.
Spoken here, to me, by the water, trees & birds"*



Park Centre Volunteer Report 2019

For me, one of the most rewarding parts of being the "Park Centre Volunteer Co-ordinator" (a role John Diebolt and Jan McQuay appear to have selected for me), is witnessing the gradual morphing of the original volunteer cohort into a new peer mix.

This summer, for the first time since the Park Centre opened, Margut and Klaus Dunker were unable to contribute a shift – a major loss for FOMB; Suzanne and Roy Robson moved to British Columbia; Regine Moorcroft – who had covered multiple shifts last year and hoped to do a few shifts again this year – had to alter her plans in early July due to family commitments; finally, Peggie Balkind's generous support often on Sundays, was abruptly stopped by a fall from which she is recovering.

However, we still have a very active commitment from some of our old guard, like Gisele and Ed Kellar and Bill and Barb Kling. And this season, we were able to replace our former contributors thanks to eight members who are new to hosting at the Park Centre: Pauline Head, Melanie Hunt and son Ethan, Anastasia Eranosova and George Kopylov, Rose Iantorno, Gary Fuhrman and Pam Jackson as well as three members who were 'new' last year; Jane Hohenadel (also a Board member) and Jean Bently and Dave Edwards. While I met with Melanie over coffee and overlapped with Pauline at the Park Centre, Barb and Bill Kling 'orientated' Pam, Gary and Pauline, who later orientated Rose Iantorno and reintroduced Jan McQuay to the idiosyncrasies of hosting at the Park Centre. FOMB are also indebted to Bill and Barb for reviewing our Park Centre volunteer procedures and especially for the institutional continuity

they, along with Ed and Gisele, have provided to the Park Centre volunteers.

Volunteers 'staffed' the Park Centre for 94% of the expected shifts (as in counting 2 shifts for every Saturday and Sunday, from June 30th to September 1st) and this includes three long weekend Mondays, thanks to Gaynor's 'holidaying' contribution. FOMB staff covered the July and August Monday holidays as well as a Saturday in September. While no weekend day was missed, four shifts went unfilled in August. My thoughts are that weekends in the summer are particularly busy times for all of us and so expecting all four weekend shifts to be covered is a lofty goal. It might be that some volunteers would rather be at the Park Centre during the week at the height of the summer. If so, please let me/ us know before FOMB Board starts organizing staffing for next summer in April and May.

I experimented with a multiple 'issue' poll; there had been some frustration with our name tags and an overall question about identifying volunteers. From a half a dozen responses, support for new tags and a lanyard system got significant support but the prospect of "T" shirts was quite divided. As Misery Bay has many others who volunteer in other capacities and they were not 'consulted', I think for the time being I will only pursue the lanyard system for name tags and have new name tags for next spring. With Jane Hohenadel's technical support; the volunteer Park Centre schedule could appear in future in more than one format and may as well be viewed next season on the new FOMB website by volunteers and Board members.

Until April 2020.

Yours, Ken Mackenzie

Late Summer Beauties

by Marcel Bénéteau

The dramatic parade of flowering plants at Misery Bay has peaks and valleys of intensity from early spring to late fall. Things start slowly in late April-early May with such modest little blooms such as Spring Whitlow Grass, Early Saxifrage, Creeping Buttercup, Lyre-leaved Rockcress and a few flowering shrubs. Things reach a crescendo by the end of May-early June, with the various Ladies' Slippers and Coral Root orchids coming on line, as well as Columbines, Wild Chives, Indian Paintbrush, Blue Flag Iris and the iconic Manitoulin Gold exploding onto the scene to paint each of Misery Bay's landscapes in a riot of colour. The



Fig. 1 Fringed Gentian, flower close-up

progression continues, but slows down by the end of June. July is a "quieter" month, as if mother nature is catching her breath before launching into the late summer-early fall spectacle where all the goldenrods and asters put on their show. Some of the loveliest flowers come out in late August to early September and in this issue, we will focus on three unrelated species that grace the shoreline areas of Misery Bay during this period.

The first of these, Fringed Gentian (*Gentianopsis virgata*) is one of three members of the Gentian family to grow in the park but by far the showiest and most common of that group. It grows close to the water on alvar, cobble or marshy ground, in areas that are fairly wet for at least part of the year. Measuring 12 to 15 inches in height, it has one of the most striking flowers of any plant at Misery: at one to two inches across, its four deep blue fringed petals are arranged in the shape of a cross (Fig. 1 and 2).



Fig 2. Fringed Gentian flowers



Fig. 3 Fringed Gentian, rare white form

A square opening in the centre of the flower reveals the reproductive parts inside its tube-shaped calix. The leaves are long and lance-shaped; in dry or rocky habitats they can be very thin and almost spike-like. This plant has been a little harder to find this year due to the high-water levels but is still fairly abundant. A rare white-flowered form is sometimes encountered (Fig. 3).

The second plant we will focus on grows in similar environments and is often found side by side with gentians. Grass of Parnassus (*Parnassia glauca*) is a member of the Saxifrage family.



Fig. 4: Perfect symmetry

Its strikingly marked star-shaped flowers are a picture of perfect symmetry (Fig. 4). The five white petals are decorated with deeply embossed, dark green veins. The green style and ovum are perfectly centred where the five petals meet; surrounding this ball-shaped structure are 15 "false stamens" – three for each petal – that radiate out from the base of the ovum, each one ending in a shiny green ball. Experts are divided on the function of these sterile structures:



Fig. 5 Grass of Parnassus Plants

They could be vestigial remnants that once produced pollen, or they could have evolved solely to attract pollinators to the real stamens. These radiate out between each group of three false stamens and neatly separate the five petals. Each flower, about an inch across, sits singly atop a long narrow and glabrous (smooth) stem about 10 to 12 inches tall. The leaves, smooth, leathery and egg-shaped, grow in a rosette at the base of the stem (Fig. 5). Sometimes plants with six or even seven petals can be found (Fig. 6).



Fig. 6 Grass of Parnassus, double-flowered form.

A comment about the odd name of this plant: why is it referred to as a grass when it clearly isn't, and what does it have to do with Mount Parnassus in Greece? Common names of plants are an endless source of confusion. Apparently, the earliest reference to this plant is in the *Materia Medica of Pedanius Dioscorides* of the first century AD; the long and convoluted history of the plant and its name can be followed at this website: <https://stories.rbge.org.uk/archives/26399>



Fig. 7 From Gerarde's *Herball or Generall Historie of Plantes* 1633.

Suffice it to say that when Carl Linnaeus formalized the modern system of naming organisms in the 18th century, he took the Latin name for this plant from the ancient sources. As for the "grass" part of the name, legend has it that the cattle on Mount Parnassus enjoyed this plant so much that it was "as good as grass" to them (though I would not vouch for the scientific accuracy of this account).

The third of our late summer beauties is less showy than the other two but is well worth a closer look. White, or Death Camas (*Zigadenus elegans*, aka *Z. glaucus* and *Anticlea elegans*) grows quite profusely along the park's shorelines and



Fig. 8 White or Death Camas plants

can be found further inland than the other two plants described above. Look for it in mid to late August on rocky or sandy shorelines and also along the trees and meadows along the water's edge. As the common name implies, all parts of the plant are extremely toxic and can in fact be deadly to humans and to livestock.



Fig. 9 Death Camas flowers

The smooth, multi-branched stem can grow to two feet or more in height and supports a dozen up to sixty or seventy whitish six-petaled flowers about half an inch across (Fig. 8 and 9). The cone-

shaped style in the centre of the flower is surrounded by six arching stamens with green to purple to orange tips. Each petal is adorned with a thick greenish-yellow heart-shaped nectar gland, forming a ring around the centre of the flower (Fig. 10). The leaves are long and lance-shaped. Formerly considered a member of the Lily family, Death Camas has recently been reclassified as belonging to the Trillium family. Evidence suggests that the pollen and nectar are even toxic to many pollinators, meaning the plants rely on certain "specialized" pollinators who have developed an immunity to the toxins.



Fig. 10 Death Camas flower close-up

The flora of Misery Bay is endlessly fascinating and following it through the seasons can be a very rewarding experience. Once introduced to its many individual species, it is a joy to greet them every year when they return as old friends for the brief appearance on the seasonal stage!

References:

- Dickinson, Timothy *et al.*, *The ROM Field Guide to Wildflowers of Ontario*, Royal Ontario Museum, 2004.
- Morton, John, with Joan Venn and Judith Jones, *A plant list for Misery Bay Provincial Nature - Reserve*, The Friends of Misery Bay, 1997.
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Guided Hikes

Marcel Bénéteau

Thanks to our intern Maddie Wagar-Lovelace and second-year biology student Brynn Kiley, Misery Bay was able to reintroduce a past practice that had been fairly infrequent over the past few years: guided hikes along the park's trails. Maddie and Brynn led hikes on a weekly basis and shared their knowledge with visitors who wanted to learn more about the park.

Our dedicated staff also helped FOMB

organize special hikes that were advertised in local media, on Facebook and our website. The response was overwhelming, especially for two hikes to the normally inaccessible west side of Misery Bay. I led the first of these hikes, on August 6th, which brought out nearly 35 people who took advantage of this opportunity to explore the trails on "the wild side" of the park. The demand was so overwhelming that Maddie and Brynn led another expedition on August 20th.



West side alvar, Aug. 20th – fun for all ages!



Group by west side vernal pool, Aug. 6th.

Another hike on August 14th focused on the rich plant life of the inland alvar trail on the east side of the park: Brynn's tally

included more than 50 flowering plants that grow along the woods, alvars and shorelines of this beautiful trail!



Flower and camera enthusiasts photographing Cylindrical Blazing Stars, Aug. 14th

**YES! I want to become a
Friend of Misery Bay!**

Name: _____

Address: _____

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Email: _____

2020 Membership Fees

Student \$10.00 _____

Adult \$20.00 _____

Family \$40.00 _____

Corporate \$200.00 _____

Life \$350.00 _____

Membership Fee Enclosed \$ _____

I want to make a donation \$ _____

Total enclosed \$ _____

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THANK YOU for your support

Friends of Misery Bay Board of Directors 2019

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