



turtle tracks

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Spring 2019

From the Chair

by Ted Kilpatrick

Happy spring to all Friends of Misery Bay supporters!

It was a good old-fashioned winter here on Manitoulin Island with lots of snow that came and stayed. We did have a few episodes of freezing rain but not enough to have an impact on the snow depth. I was out to the park on a couple of occasions and the snowshoeing was excellent. I must confess I did try skis once but learned that it is not an ideal method of moving about the trails!

As the park comes back to life for another season, we intend to finish construction of the accessible trail this year.

Unfortunately, our plan to utilize the junior rangers has been quashed: in spite of the excellent work they did for us last year, the province has cancelled this very worthy program. Looks like our volunteers will have to finish the job! Once completed this trail should make the travel down to Our Friends' Shelter much easier for those with mobility issues.

We are excited to be bringing a new face to the AGM, Marlene Bowers, who has worked with our current treasurer Geoff Hector. She has agreed to stand for election to the treasurers' position. Marlene brings a wealth of accounting knowledge to the table and will be able to carry on the fine work that Geoff has done for this organization over the past 6 years.

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Our volunteer coordinator Ken Mackenzie has done a great job this past year and also has arranged for a school group to visit the center and experience our wonderful new displays.

John Diebolt – our ever-ready Misery Bunny – and his wife Rose have been very busy (I do not know how they do it all) applying for student funding, working special projects and organizing the retail section at the center. Well done!

Marcel does a bang-up job on the Turtle Tracks newsletter.

Colin Frame, our secretary, has been doing an amazing job with recording the minutes. They often beat me home!

Our board functions well and everyone does their part, but I wanted to point out

the above-mentioned folks for the great job they do. I would also be remiss if I did not thank Gaynor for the many years she looked after applying for the student funding and supervision.

Jan McQuay is leaving our board after her two terms. Over the years she has raised a lot of money for FOMB with her bowl project. This year she and her band of potters have decided to send the proceeds of their bowl sales to the Mindemoya

hospital. Thank you, Jan for all of the previous years' donations!

Don't forget our AGM scheduled for 10 AM on June 22 at the Visitors Centre. We will have a great guest speaker, Franco Mariotti, who will give a talk on "Natural Places, their Significance and Why We Need Them" – sure to be both insightful and entertaining and perfectly suited to all things Misery! Hope to see you there!



**N.B. Friends of Misery Bay AGM at Visitor's Centre 10 AM Saturday
June 23**

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

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

2018 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 \$ _____

Mail To:

FOMB, P.O. Box 114, Gore Bay ON POP 1H0

Park Centre Volunteering

One of the most noticeable contributions of the FOMB members has been the staffing of the Park Centre on weekends, especially the coverage by two shifts (am & pm) on Saturdays and Sundays during the July-August period. I am hopeful that this tradition can continue this summer. At this time of writing, volunteers have already filled in 48% of the possible shifts, with most of the gaps in July and August. In July most of the weekend days have one shift covered.

I'm sure some members find the prospect of being in charge of the Park Centre quite daunting – even for a few hours. Between sorting out admissions issues, monitoring toilets, keeping monies organized and remembering to shut down the building securely, volunteers do have much to keep track of! If I seem to be pestering members for “more hours”, I also recognize the irreplaceable contribution so many of you have made and continue to make. I am also glad to welcome our recent new recruits: Anastasia, George, Melanie and Pauline.

This brings me to the need to have a conversation with Park Centre volunteers and prospective volunteers about the duties and responsibilities of staffing the

Park Centre. I suggest we take time to do this at our AGM (June 22).

The main reason we need volunteers to staff the Park Centre on weekends is to supplement the summer student employment, which covers the week days; the show of public presence by FOMB on weekends also demonstrates the connection of the Park to the Manitoulin community. Recent cuts in government funding raise the possibility that having student/intern employment funding will no longer be a given in the coming years. I am wondering whether in the future, some volunteers would be willing to take shifts during the week – especially during the July-August period, as those days are as likely to be busy as weekends. (Some of you might have more free time during the week to volunteer.) And, of course, this is part of the question as to how best to use volunteer hours, to capture the most visitor contacts.

You are all invited to contact / comment by email or better come to the AGM where we will have an opportunity to have a conversation in person!

Ken Mackenzie
Volunteer coordinator



Forest birds of Misery Bay

by Dave Sproule,
Discovery Program/Marketing Specialist
Ontario Parks – North-East Zone

(This article originally appeared in the Ontario Parks Blog, March 26, 2019; used by permission)



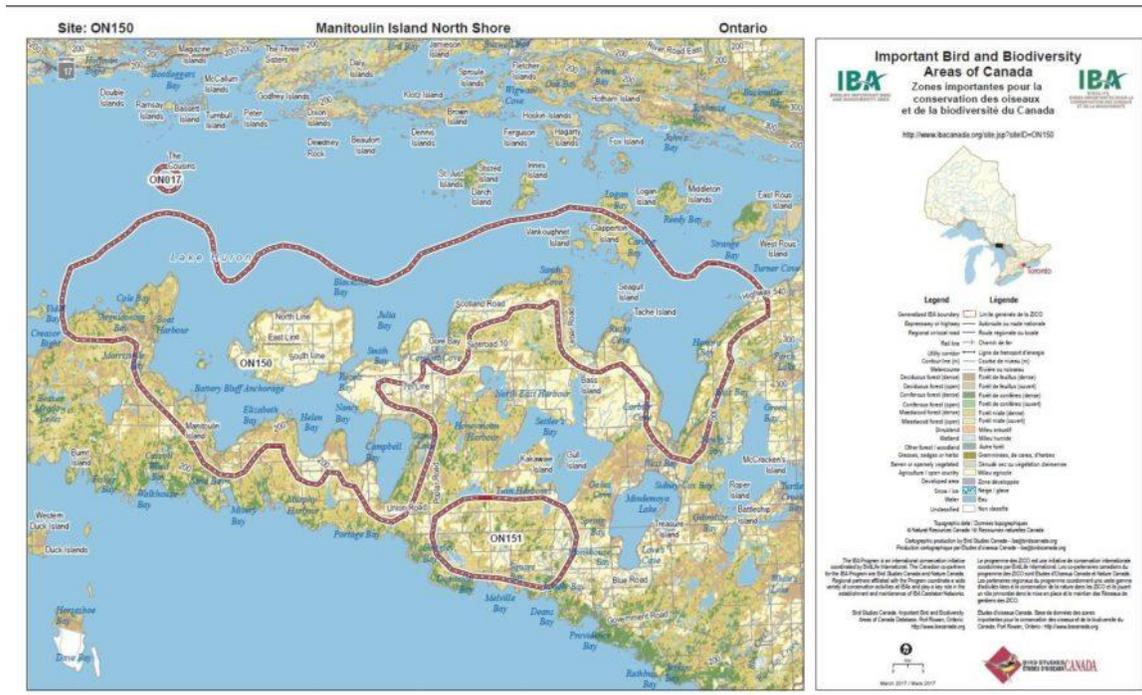
Song Sparrow

A trip out to Misery Bay Provincial Park on lovely Manitoulin Island is always a treat. To go during the spring migration is doubly so.

The big island (Manitoulin is the largest freshwater island in the world) is a hot spot for migrating birds heading north for the summer.

It sits in the northern part of Lake Huron, and along with the Bruce Peninsula, separates Georgian Bay from the main part of the lake. It makes a natural migration route for birds crossing the Great Lakes, and is an important feeding stop for tired birds.

The Manitoulin Important Bird Area (IBA)



Manitoulin Island's IBA (Important Bird and Biodiversity Area)

Sightings, sightings, and more sightings at the IBA!

On the way from the mainland to Misery Bay, which sits on the southwestern shore of Manitoulin, Highway #540 crosses a causeway that divides Wolsey Bay from the North Channel of Lake Huron.

This is a great place to stop (there is a handy picnic area at the south end of the causeway). A large portion of the north shore of Manitoulin Island, including Wolsey Bay, is an Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBA).

At the beginning of May, a group of 500 Goldeneye Ducks were spotted there, along with dozens of Bufflehead Ducks, Common and Red-breasted Mergansers (two species of serrated-billed fishing ducks), some of the first Common Loons this spring, and several Horned Grebes with their striking plumage and crimson red eyes.

A flock of 30 Tree Swallows did acrobatics over the bridge while catching the first hatching of insects.



The little Bufflehead Duck nests in old woodpecker holes, especially those made by the Northern Flicker

The area usually has several nesting Ospreys, conveniently located next to the lake, as they are fish-catching birds of prey. Even a Great Egret has been seen in the area in past years.



Osprey parents with freshly caught fish at their large stick nest

The causeway acts as a funnel for forest birds too, and the trees buzz with activity of warblers hunting for insects.

In the park

Misery Bay Provincial Park itself contains a variety of habitats, from the open waters of Lake Huron and Misery Bay to open limestone bedrock plains called alvar to dense mixed forest that are sprinkled with temporary (vernal) pools in spring.



Scoping out birds at the head of the bay

The park, classified as a provincial nature reserve for its outstanding natural heritage values, contains the largest wetland on Manitoulin, which is considered provincially significant.

Home to globally rare alvar habitat

Alvar, the other key habitat the park protects, is globally rare habitat. Misery Bay's alvar habitat includes:

- **Treed-alvar** — looks like thin forest where trees have found cracks in the limestone large enough to hold them
- **Open grassland alvar** — looks like a grassy field
- **Bedrock plain** — here plants live in the cracks and have to work to survive the spring floods, summer heat, and freezing cold each winter

•



The Coastal Alvar Trail follows the shore of Misery Bay

For visitors of Misery Bay

Misery Bay Provincial Park does not have a campground because nature reserves generally have just enough development to allow some appreciation of their natural heritage values.



Walkway over vernal pool

There is a small nature centre and about 15 km of trails for hiking and bird-watching. The park is operated with the help of the amazing volunteers of the Friends of Misery Bay, a group of dedicated nature buffs.

Birds to look out for at Misery Bay

From the visitor centre to the shore of Lake Huron and the well-placed "Friends Gazebo" (a good spot to rest, have a snack and do some birding), the trail intersects patches of open alvar (limestone pavement) that appear in the forest.

Species of note here include:

- Hermit Thrush
- Red-breasted and White-breasted Nuthatch
- Golden-crowned Kinglet
- Canada Jay
- Pileated Woodpecker

You'll also have a chance to see and hear several beautiful warbler species:

- Yellow-rumped Warbler
- Black and White Warbler
- Magnolia Warbler
- Chestnut-sided Warbler
- Blackburnian Warbler
- Nashville Warbler
- Yellow Warbler



Magnolia Warbler

You might also see Ruffed Grouse, and — depending on the time of day — Great Horned and Northern Saw-whet Owls may be heard.



The call of the Gray Treefrog sounds remarkably like a bird

This area also has other singing sounds that sometimes confuse folks expecting birds. One such masquerader is the Gray

Treefrog, whose call is often confused with that of a bird.

Waterfowl, shore birds, and waders

From the Our Friends Gazebo, north and south along the Coastal Alvar Trail, which skirts Misery Bay's sheltered eastern shoreline, there is an **extensive marsh community with lots of insect life and bird activity.**



Semipalmated Plovers cross some of the sparsely vegetated alvar along the coast of Misery Bay

During the open water seasons, there are migrants visiting this area for resting and feeding, with 20+ species of shorebirds (such as the Semipalmated Plover, shown above) regularly seen. Eleven Horned Grebes were also spotted here at the beginning of May, as well as several pairs of beautiful Northern Pintail Ducks, and both Common and Hooded Mergansers.



A family of Common Mergansers lounge on the beach at Misery Bay

Visiting shorebirds and waders have also included:

- Sora
- Sandhill Cranes
- Greater Yellowlegs
- Lesser Yellowlegs
- Great Blue Heron
-



Sandhill Cranes nest in the provincially significant wetland at Misery Bay, the largest on Manitoulin Island

And the sightings continue...

A Bald Eagle, a Northern Harrier and a Merlin have made up the contingent of birds of prey in Misery Bay. In the breeding season there are usually three species of gulls, one tern and various species of ducks that make the bay their home.



The elegant Northern Pintail Duck. Photo: Yvette Bree



Palm Warbler, one of the park's many sweet-singing visitors

Numerous "edge" species make use of the forest edge where it meets open alvar or water, while other birds prefer the deep forest interior of the park.

Early visitors so far have included:

- Yellow-rumped Warbler
- Palm Warbler
- Song Sparrow
- Ruby-crowned Kinglet
- Golden-crowned Kinglet
- Brown Thrasher
- Eastern Phoebe

Hot Misery Bay birding tip

Eastern Kingbirds are known to hunt insects from perches in the alvar.



A migrating Monarch Butterfly takes a sip at a Manitoulin Gold flower (a.k.a., Lakeside Daisy)

This is also a great place to view a variety of butterflies in season that take advantage of the park's many flowering plants, like the rare Manitoulin Gold (a.k.a., Lakeside Daisy) and beautiful Fringed Gentian.

Wherever you choose to go this spring to see birds on the wing, happy "twitching!" (That's birdwatching for keeners)



The rare Lakeside Daisy is abundant at Misery Bay, and known as Manitoulin Gold on the Island



Recognizing our pioneers

By Gaynor Orford

In 2016, five people who played a huge part in making Misery Bay Park what it is today passed away: Doreen Bailey, Ellie Moore, Steve Hall, Jim and Mary Hastings. Their commitment and dedication to create a safe place to explore and enjoy can be seen both in the centre and on the trails.

Doreen Bailey was the driving force behind the Friends of Misery Bay from 1995 to 2001. As the first chairperson she completed the onerous task of Incorporation, and attaining the Registered Charitable Organization status. When she realized that accessing Misery Bay from the Little Lake Huron Road was not feasible, she approached the Burpee-Mills council regarding the opening of unopened road allowance, and Misery Bay road clearing began in 1998, and was completed by 2000. Her grant applications, in 1999, to build a Visitors (Interpretive) centre were successful, and the building process began in 2000. Doreen wrote the first newsletters, and organized year-round monthly events in the early days. She attained the funding for the construction of the boardwalk on the west side, and solicited volunteer help from Nature Clubs around the North Shore, the then FON (now Ontario Nature), and the British Conservation Trust, arranging for them to be housed at a local tourist resort.

Steve Hall became involved with Misery Bay from the beginning, and was elected to the first board of directors in 1996. He served a second term on the Board in the early 2000's. Steve was a "citizen

scientist" with a wealth of knowledge about plants, birds and animals. He volunteered his time and expertise on every project the Friends were involved in, from boardwalk building, to opening the road, to trail marking and trail expansion. He surveyed, cleared and marked the Coastal Alvar trail to the East, and the extension up to Mac's Bay. Steve attended every event in the early days, sharing his knowledge of, and his love for, all things natural, with young and old alike.

Eleanor (Ellie) Moore joined the Friends of Misery Bay immediately upon its incorporation. With life long memories of Misery Bay, she supported and endorsed the efforts made by the Friends to create a place for visitors to come and appreciate the landscape so loved by her parents. As volunteer chair, she took it upon herself to organize and standardize the procedures used to welcome visitors, and begin their education. This Manual remains the backbone of the volunteer instructions, today. Many of the volunteers, who still donate their time to our efforts to keep the centre open on weekends, were enlisted by Ellie. She made sure that she knew each and every one of them, and had this ability to make everyone feel special. She hosted many of the guest speakers, when there was a summer lecture series.

Jim and Mary Hastings were strong supporters of the Friends of Misery Bay, who recognized what needed to be done, and then did it.

Jim was "Mr. Safety". Misery Bay is somewhat remote, and Jim was concerned about not being able to call for help, should it be needed. In the early days there was no telephone at the centre, and with only one student hired, he felt that a connection to the outside world was essential. He was a Ham Radio enthusiast, who happened to have equipment that he was prepared to donate to the centre. Volunteers and students alike were trained by Jim in the use of this equipment. He also provided the centre with first aid kits, and a Search and Rescue kit containing all sorts of maps, first aid items, back-packs etc. His 2-way radios are still in the office, although the need for the Ham Radio equipment was made obsolete when the satellite communications were set up. For years, Jim met with the summer students, and did some basic first aid and safety training with them. He provided each student with a safety pack, which included a T shirt, maps and bear bells (and bear spray).

Jim researched the Saunders Family, finding out more about Ned, the Hermit of Misery Bay. He contributed to the many binders of information available to the

public. Along with his wife Mary, Jim hosted a "Ned" day in the Park, suitably attired in pioneer costume. When first opened, the centre was in need of materials that visitors could look at and engage with. The first "activity" was the fossil hunt in the floor tiles. Jim and Mary assisted in developing much of the information and hands-on exhibits still in use at the centre today. They donated the tree discs, the animal tracks and skulls, the casts of the glacial features.

Mary led interpretive hikes for several years, helping park visitors appreciate the wildflowers, trees, and local geology. She used her hand-held GPS unit to map the park trails so they could be placed on the trail maps – still being used today. In 2011, she completed an illustrated "Trail Guide" for the park containing many of the photographs she had taken of the various park features. She too developed relationships with the students over the years.

I am sure that there is much more that can be said about these early volunteers' unwavering commitment to Misery Bay.

This summer (date and time to be announced), the FOMB will be hosting a dedication ceremony to honour these five people. A bronze plaque, similar to the Sifferd dedication plaque, is being made, and will be attached to the Sifferd monument stone outside the Visitors Centre. It will be an opportunity for Friends to gather with the families, to share memories of these wonderful folks.



Ghostly Plants of the Forest Floor

by Marcel Bénéteau

Biology 101 tells us that plants use green chlorophyll to convert sunlight into energy in a process called photosynthesis. This energy in turn fuels a series of complex chemical reactions that allow the plant to convert nutrients from the soil into the food it needs to grow. The vast majority of flowering plants get their nourishment in this way. Some plants, however, have exchanged photosynthesis for other means of obtaining nutrients. For example, Misery Bay hosts several types of carnivorous plants that grow in acid-rich, nutrient-poor environments and who supplement their needs by trapping and digesting small insects and other tiny aquatic creatures.

Some of our plants have adopted a different strategy: instead of doing the energy conversion themselves, they let other plants do the work for them. A few are direct parasites, attaching themselves to the roots of a host plant and hijacking nutrients for their own needs; others are indirect parasites, relying on mycorrhizal fungi already in a symbiotic relationship with the roots of a host plant. These latter types are called **mycoheterotrophic** to distinguish them from the strictly parasitic species. In either case, these plants do not rely on chlorophyll to manufacture their own food; this allows them to grow in areas that receive very little sunlight. Many of them lack any green pigmentation whatsoever, giving them a bizarre, almost unearthly appearance. You might even mistake them for mushrooms at first glance, but upon closer inspection, it

becomes clear that they are indeed flowering plants!



Fig. 1 Indian or Ghost Pipes

Some of these unusual plants can be found along the woodland trails of Misery Bay. The best known and most easily identified is a pale, waxy, little flower commonly referred to as Indian Pipe (*Monotropa uniflora*) (**Fig. 1**) Also known as Ghost Pipe, Ghost Flower or even Corpse Plant, it blooms from the beginning of July to mid-August. As the name suggests, it is shaped like a clay pipe, with a fairly slender stem bent into a U-shape from the weight of a solitary drooping flower (**Fig. 2**). Every part of the plant – the stem, the vestigial leaves, the petals and sepals – is of a pure, almost translucent and ghostly white; pierced by a ray of sunlight, they almost seem to glow in the dark! However, black spots will appear as the plant ages, and the stem

straightens out once the flower is fertilized and the seed case begins to form (**Fig. 3**). Look for it in areas along the Inland Alvar or Mac's Bay Trail where very little sunlight reaches the forest floor.



Fig. 2 Indian Pipe, with white petals and sepals

Sometimes mistaken for an orchid, *Monotropa uniflora* is considered to be part of the *Ericaceae* or Heath family, which includes plants like blueberries, Labrador tea and the various pyrolas that grow in the park. It must be said that most members of this family are only partly mycoheterotrophic, obtaining at least *some* of their energy from photosynthesis. But it is speculated that full mycoheterotrophs like Indian Pipe evolved to be particularly adept at stealing nutrients from their mycorrhizal partners, reaching a point where they could do away with chlorophyll and photosynthesis altogether.



Fig. 3 Indian Pipes, mature plants

Closely related to Indian Pipe is *Monotropa hypopithys*, commonly known as Pine-sap (**Fig. 4**). *Hypopithys* means "underneath pines" and there are indeed usually pine or other coniferous trees growing nearby when Pine-sap is found. But remember that these plants are not parasitic on the trees themselves, but on the mycorrhizal fungi connected to the tree roots.

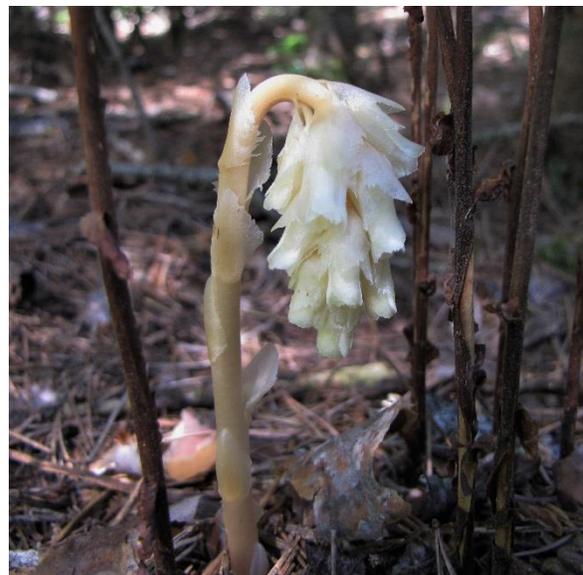


Fig. 4 Pine-sap. Note vestigial leaves on stem.

Pine-sap plants are a bit more colourful than Indian Pipes, usually with a yellowish or even pale reddish tint. And, unlike their *uniflora* (one-flowered) cousins, they feature a whole cluster of flowers drooping at the end of their stems (**Fig. 5**).



Fig. 5 Close-up of flower cluster

They also straighten out as they mature and towards the end of summer become bright pink or red (**Fig. 6**). I have come across these plants along the wooded part of the inland alvar trail in late July.



Fig. 6 Pine-sap, mature plants.



Fig. 7 Pine-drops

A third member of the former *Monotropaceae* family has not been recorded in Misery Bay but is found in the adjacent Mac's Bay conservation area. *Pterospora andromedea*, commonly known as Pine-drops or Giant Bird's Nest (because of its large tangled underground rhizomes) is definitely one of the most unusual plants to grow on Manitoulin Island (**Fig. 7**). Most of this plant's life happens underground, but when conditions are right, it sends up one or several red, almost burgundy-coloured stalks that can reach nearly two feet in height. They bloom in early August. The stem is crowded with symmetrical rows of little white urn-shaped flowers hanging down from curved stems (**Fig. 8**); these later produce bright red little pumpkin-shaped seeds-pods (**Fig. 9**). The plant has an eerie, almost unnatural look and is unlike anything else you will encounter in northern forests.



Fig 8 Pine-drops, close-up of flowers

Pinedrops are always found underneath pine or spruce trees. Common in Western North America, they have been rapidly disappearing from the eastern part of their range and have been given an S2 (imperiled) ranking by the Natural Heritage Information Centre of the Ministry of Natural Resources. Species with this ranking are typically reported from 20 or fewer locations in Ontario;



Fig. 9 Pine-drops, mature seed pods

we are fortunate here as nearly a third of these locations are on Manitoulin Island. The tall dried stems will persist over the winter and into the second year – in fact, winter is the best time to locate them as they poke out of the bare white landscape.

The three plants discussed above are mycoheterotrophic, making them “double thieves,” stealing nutrients from the mycorrhizal fungi who have stolen them from the host plant. The next plant is a true parasite, attaching itself directly to a host plant by means of a modified root called the **haustorium**.



Fig. 10 One-flowered Broomrape

One-flowered Broomrape (*Orobanche uniflora*) is a delicate little plant with a hairy yellow or light brown stem and a five-petaled flower that ranges from white to light blue or violet in colour (**Fig. 10 and 11**). It has no leaves nor any trace of green and is a parasite of many common plants, such as asters and goldenrods, saxifrage and sedums, all of which are abundant in Misery Bay. It is fairly common, but easily overlooked, growing singly or in small bunches in open grassy areas at the edges of the alvars.



Fig. 11 One-flowered Broomrape, white flowers



Fig. 12 One-flowered broomrape, close-up of flower

All of these highly specialized species demonstrate the amazing adaptability of the plant world and add an aura of beauty and mystery to the woods and fields of Misery Bay Provincial Park. Easily overlooked, they are worth getting to know as a unique part of Misery Bay's varied and diverse flora.

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**N.B. Friends of Misery Bay AGM at Visitor's Centre 10 AM
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MISERY BAY PARK SUPERINTENDENT

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