



turtle tracks

Friends of Misery Bay
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Spring 2020

From the Chair

by Ted Kilpatrick

Hello to all you Friends of Misery Bay members. I hope you are all keeping well in these challenging times. Friends of Misery Bay is also facing challenges in these uncertain times. The park opened for the May long weekend, then closed again and will now reopen June 1. The board struggled with difficult questions: should our AGM be face to face or should it be a virtual meeting? Even with the park open, can we ask our volunteers to operate the centre on weekends? As of now, we cannot see any way to do this without putting our volunteers at risk. However, Ken, our volunteer coordinator, has an interesting proposal (see p. 12).

We have received funding for a student but, with no clear direction if the center will be open or what the requirements will be to make it safe, we are currently looking at other ways we could provide meaningful work for an employee.

As for the AGM, we have decided the only safe way to go ahead is with a virtual meeting, which will be held on Saturday, June 20, at 10 AM. Due to Covid, there will be no invited speaker, just our regular business meeting and elections. Anyone interested in participating should email Maddie Wagar at maddie.wagarlovelace@gmail.com. You will then receive an invitation and instructions before the meeting.

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With uncertain revenues, this year we have made it easier to renew your memberships through our website at www.miserybay.ca. Click on the **Friends of Misery Bay** button at the top and then on **Become a Member** on the drop-down menu. Here you can fill out your membership form and complete the payment through Paypal. Memberships are for the calendar year, so please take this time to renew and support our beautiful park. Hope to see you on the trails at some point this summer. Remember Misery loves company!

These are indeed challenging times! However, we will stay the course. We are looking for new board members so if you have an interest please contact me at friendsofmiserybay@gmail.com.

Stay well and stay safe!

Ted Kilpatrick
Chair FOMB

My Year at Misery Bay

by Maddie Wagar

Over the last year I have had the pleasure of working with The Friends of Misery Bay. My contract began at the beginning of the 2019 summer and will go to the end of June in 2020. I have had the opportunity to work with and meet people from all different walks of life. These include students and all of the people who love Misery Bay. I am thankful for the opportunity to use my College education while working in such a beautiful place with very kind and supportive board members and volunteers. Unfortunately, my time at Misery Bay is coming to an end so here is my review of my year at Misery Bay Provincial Park!

I have been involved in a variety of projects during my time at the park. Some of these activities include organizing and guiding hikes on a weekly basis around the east side of the park. During this time, I had the opportunity to meet and get to know a variety of guests from all over the world. It was my honor to expose people who had never seen anything like Misery Bay to the area. There is a range of wildlife, plants, and different types of habitats that are unique to the west end of Manitoulin Island that were completely foreign to many people. We also organized a handful of Expert Hikes where we asked local experts in different fields to come and guide a hike through the park, some of these included plant hikes, geology days, and birding tours.

Additionally, we were able to take out two guided hikes to the Wild West Side of Misery Bay, where we had a ton of fun! Everyone met up in the morning at the centre and we packed up into all different vehicles to be shuttled along the long, bumpy road to the west side of the park. Visiting the west side of the property was so special for many of us because it had become inaccessible due to the high-water levels of Lake Huron.



Speaking of high-water levels, the Our Friends Shelter was starting to wash away last fall, and we were worried that if it was left it would be gone by spring. So, John got together a group of experts to haul the shelter up onto higher ground. It was definitely a unique and gratifying experience for me!



I am thankful to everyone who gave me the incredible opportunity to work at Misery Bay. As a kid growing up in Silverwater, Misery Bay was an important part of my life and I am happy to have had the chance to work here! Now that my time at Misery is coming to a close, I am looking forward to the future. My next step in life is to move to British Columbia in the fall. However, no matter how far I go, I know Misery Bay and Manitoulin Island will always be a very special place for me!



VOLUNTEERISM IS ALIVE AND WELL AT MISERY LOVES COMPANY

If you have spent any amount of time walking the trails at Misery or visiting our Centre you have met **Lynda Olsen** and **Mike Ewert**. You will have seen them on our trails or volunteering in our Centre. I first met Lynda over 11 years ago when she was the secretary for the board of FOMB. She was excellent at this role- but I knew her and Mike more from their volunteer role as **the guardians of our trails**. After 12 plus years of looking after the trails at Misery Bay – they are retiring from that role.

When one thinks of Friends of Misery Bay a number of words come immediately to mind: **dedication, enthusiasm, hours and days of commitment and a focus on making Misery Bay Provincial Park a better visiting experience for all visitors**. Bracketed between all of those descriptors, you all will fit in the word **VOLUNTEERS**.

VOLUNTEERISM is of course alive and well all around us, but I like to think that our FOMB volunteers occupy a step higher up the staircase than your average volunteer. Lynda and Mike are on the top step.

We have around 20 kilometres of trails at Misery Bay. These trails need to be rechecked (hiked) several times annually. Trees fall across them, our posted trail maps and directional signs fall down or wear out, etc. That's what Lynda and Mike did – one never knew when they were going – but we could count on getting several messages each spring and early summer that gave us locations on our trails where we had to have chain saw teams go in and

remove fallen and dangerous trees. They only told us about the major tree removals that were required. We never heard about tree branches or shrubs that needed trimming along our trails – they looked after that. They always carried a small axe and brush saw on their rounds – and if you looked closely when you were walking the trails, you could see where branches and shrubs had been gently trimmed back so that the trails were clear and easy to walk. Signs were put back up, posts were re-erected. Lynda and Mike had been there.

A few years back when we replaced all of the trail signs and markers throughout the park, Lynda and Mike were there, they had everything organized. It was a huge undertaking with a lot of people helping – all volunteers. It took days of work: Lynda and Mike were there. When we had new summer staff that needed to learn about the trails, Lynda and Mike guided them around. Only they would know how many days they spent and kilometres they walked at Misery looking after our trails.

Mike is also part of the "*cannot say no*" Special Projects Team. He shares a unique attribute that our FOMB members have. When I would ask for help with tasks like shoveling gravel, digging holes or whatever else was involved in building shelters or trails, I never heard him say no: he simply showed up and helped.

All of you know a great host of volunteers like Lynda and Mike. Here on Manitoulin, volunteers operate a large number of

organizations too numerous to mention, including Friends of Misery Bay (FOMB).

BUT...

Did you know that FOMB are the only "Friends of" group to operate an Ontario Provincial Park in our Province – all of it on a volunteer basis (there are over 300 Provincial Parks in Ontario). We look after staffing the Centre, meeting and greeting over 6,000 visitors a year, leading guided hikes, operating interpretive programs... the list goes on and on. We are guided by and follow the mandates of Ontario Parks.

We have a lot of volunteers, too numerous to mention. They operate behind the

scenes and do the things they do – not for recognition, but because it is something they are dedicated to and they enjoy making things better for everyone.

Our kudos and thanks go out to Lynda and Mike and all of our other volunteers. Our trails thank them and will miss them. But, of course, we know that they will not say no tour requests for help and we will still see them at our Centre, greeting visitors and providing information on which trails to hike.

Cheers

John Diebolt, Special Projects FOMB



Woodpeckers gone wild!

Pileated action on Inland Alvar Trail

Misery's Glamorous Lady's-slippers

By Marcel Bénéteau

Ladies'-slippers are the best-known and most easily recognizable of our native orchids and are among the most spectacular flowers to found along our Misery Bay trails. Four species have been recorded in the park. They are all members of the *Cypripedium* genus, which is the Latinized version of two Greek words – *Kypris* (Venus) and *podion* (sock or slipper) – which well describes the almost magical beauty of these extraordinary plants.

Like all orchids, Ladies'-slipper flowers are composed of three petals, three sepals and a unique structure called the column, in which the male stamen and female pistil are fused together. The lower petal in the arrangement, called the labellum, is greatly modified into a swollen and brightly coloured pouch, or slipper, while the two rather non-descript lateral petals droop down on either side. The two lateral sepals are fused together and stay hidden behind the slipper and the dorsal sepal hovers poised above it. A shield-like

structure called the staminode, which protects the column, sits above the slipper's opening (Fig. 1).

This complicated structure all comes together to pull off Lady's-slippers tricky and rather sneaky reproductive strategy. Various types of bees are attracted to the slipper's bright colours and sweet fragrances, but once they force their way into the slipper through the main opening, the pollinators discover that the flowers contain no nectar. To add insult to injury, they then find that it is impossible to get back out the same way they came in: the smooth curled edges of the hole and the direction of the sharp hairs inside direct them to squeeze their way out of a smaller opening underneath the column. In doing so, they must rub first against the sticky stigma, depositing any pollen they have picked up earlier, then against the pollinia where they pick up new packets of pollen that they can take to the next flower. This complicated rigamarole helps to ensure cross-pollination.

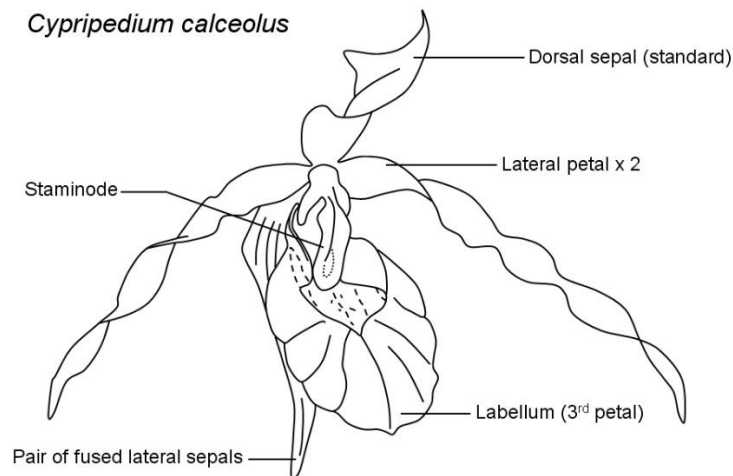


Fig. 1 Parts of a Lady's-slipper

The trick is perhaps too clever by half, however, as individual bees learn after a few fruitless attempts to avoid these devious ladies (once bitten, twice shy, three times a fool). Fortunately, the plants can also reproduce vegetatively, sending shoots up from an underground stem or rhizome. But the seed pods that do result from pollination make up for their rarity by producing hundreds of thousands – if not millions – of miniscule seeds that can be distributed far and wide by the wind. Here again there is a price to pay for this strategy. Orchid seeds are too small to include a food source for the germinating zygote – which most other plant species are sure to include – so the seed must rely on mycorrhizal fungi in the ground to feed the young plant. Only seeds that land in soil hosting the right fungi will germinate. This symbiotic arrangement is a feature of all orchids.



Fig. 2 Large Lady's-slipper plant

In the case of Lady's-slippers, the plants will slowly develop underground for three to seven years, fed exclusively by the mycorrhizal fungi. Only then will they send shoots and leaves above ground capable

of producing some their own nutrients. It can take another five to ten years before the plants start to produce flowers. Showy Lady's-slippers can take up to 17 years from germination to first blooming.

The earliest Lady's-slipper to bloom in the park is *Cypripedium parviflorum*, the Yellow Lady's-slipper. It is the most common Lady-slipper on Manitoulin Island and can be found in many different habitats. There are two varieties that bloom here – Large (*var. pubescens*) and Small (*var. parviflorum*) and they can be seen from mid-May to late June throughout the park. It is not always easy to tell them apart – depending on the growing conditions, there can be quite a bit of size variation within each variety and, to further complicate things, the two are known to hybridize. But under ideal conditions, the Large Lady's-slipper is



Fig. 3 Large Lady's-slipper flower

indeed bigger, capable of growing up to 2 feet (60 cm) in height and sporting large egg-shaped flowers up to an inch and a half in length (about 4 cm) (Fig. 2 and 3).

Most plants do not attain this size and it is best to rely on other features to distinguish the two varieties. The Small Lady's-slipper has flowers that tend to be not only smaller, but noticeably narrower in shape. The sepals, as well as the lateral petals are a darker, almost maroon colour; the coils on the petals tend to be quite a bit tighter than those of the larger variety (see Fig. 4 and 5).



Fig. 4 Small Lady's-slipper plants



Fig. 5 Small Lady's-slipper flower



Fig. 6 Pink Lady's-slipper plant

Pink Lady's-slipper (*C. acauly*), also known as Moccasin Flower, is a bit different from the other members of the genus. The slipper, instead of having a round opening, has a slit-like entrance formed by the two folded halves of the labellum.



Fig. 7 Pink Lady's-slipper flower

The name *acauly* means "stemless", as the underground rhizome does not send up a true stem, but rather a long flower-stalk with two spreading leaves at its

base. This species also tends to favour more acidic environments and can be found in swampy areas as well as drier, sandy areas along the forest trails. The best time and place to spot some is in late May to early June along the stretch of the Inland Alvar trail that runs parallel to the Lake Huron shoreline.

Ram's-head Lady's-slipper (*C. arietinum*) (Fig. 8-9-10) is best seen at the same time and place as the Pink Lady's-slipper. This little orchid is however notoriously difficult to spot, in spite of its striking



Fig. 8 Ram's-head Lady's-slipper plant

wine-coloured markings and bright white crown. It often grows at the base of cedars or jack pines, hidden underneath low-hanging branches. Also, the fact that the greenish-brown dorsal sepal spreads above the tiny flower (1-2 cm) means that the blooms are effectively concealed from searching eyes. One has to get down to ground level to get a good view of these marvelous little flowers.

It takes some imagination to see it, but the small funnel-shaped slipper with its

drooping lateral petals does in fact resemble the head of a charging ram. In another instance of a fascinating reproductive strategy, the dorsal sepal comes down and seals off the opening at the top of the flower once it has been fertilized.

Ram's-head Lady's-slipper has an S3 (uncommon) status in Ontario and is considered vulnerable due to its limited range, which is mostly concentrated in the sandy soils of Lake Huron shores. There seems to be a fairly healthy population on



Fig. 9 Ram's-head Lady's-slipper flower

Manitoulin Island – in fact, its distribution seems to have increased since the last edition of Morton's *Flora of Manitoulin Island* in 2000. Habitat destruction is the most significant threat to maintaining this precious little plant.

There is no missing the last member of the *Cypripedium* genus. *C. regina* means "queen" and that qualifier aptly describes the noble Showy Lady's-slipper. The stems often grow to a height of 30 inches (76 cm), the plants sport several large parallel-veined leaves, giving the plant a

rather bushy appearance. The flower is the crowning glory – a large white slipper up to 2 inches long with variable markings ranging from pale pink to dark burgundy;



Fig. 10 Show Lady's-slipper plants

one commentator describes it as a white goblet that has been stained by wine spilling out over the rim. Coming across a clump of these flowers growing together is a sight not soon forgotten.



Fig. 11 Showy Lady's-slipper flower

Showy Lady's-slippers bloom later than the other members of the genus – late June to early July. The best place on Manitoulin to see them is along highway 6 just north of South Baymouth, where they rather spectacularly fill the road-side ditches in the days on and around Canada Day weekend. In the park, they are mostly restricted to wetter environments; look for them in swampy wooded areas.

The Lady's-slipper family adds an all-too-brief burst of colour and exoticism every spring to Misery Bay Provincial Park. As tempting as it might be to imagine these beauties flowering in your garden, remember that they cannot survive without the appropriate mycorrhizal fungi in the soil. As an added disincentive to picking, be aware that the bristly hairs on their leaves and stems provoke a poison-ivy like reaction in many people. They are best left in place for all to enjoy!

References:

- Bingham, Marjorie T., *Orchids of Michigan*, Cranbrook Institute of Science Bulletin No. 15, 1939.
- Bruce-Grey Plant Committee (Owen Sound Naturalists), *A Guide to the Orchids of Bruce and Grey Counties, Ontario*, Stan Brown Printers Limited, Owen Sound, 2005.
- Morton, John and Joan Venn, *The Flora of Manitoulin Island*, University of Waterloo, 2000 edition.
- Risen, Kim and Cindy, *Orchids of the North Woods*, Kollath and Stensaas Publishing, North Woods Naturalist Series, 2010.

- The schematic drawing of the Lady's-slipper parts is from the Cronodon website, which makes its materials available free for non-commercial use: <https://cronodon.com/BioTech/orchids.html>

The Waters They Are Arising at Misery by John Diebolt, FOMB Special Projects Team

You simply have to love nature. In this crazy mixed up world of ours, nature, and all that it offers, just keeps on marching along. It really does not stop for anything – you can count on it! This past week on Manitoulin, the bird migration was in full flying-north mode. We welcomed back birds like orioles, rose breasted grosbeaks, hummingbirds and a very special visitor, a female and male painted bunting (they are way off course and belong much further south).



Our Friends Shelter before moving last Fall

At Misery Bay Provincial Park, nature is also marching along and the lake level with it. Ontario Parks opened all of our parks this past week leading into the May long weekend and we were finally able to get into our park and check things out, and see how everything survived the winter storms. One of our main concerns was that the lake levels would still be rising and potentially encroaching on our two shelters.

Yes, our lake is still rising. Will Kershaw estimated that Lake Huron was up approximately 20 cm (almost 8 inches) from last November and the Great Lakes Commission has Lake Huron as being up



Moving crew, L. to R. – Maddie Wagar, George Kopylov, Mike Laende

almost 15 inches from May of 2019. This is having quite an impact on our Coastal Trails and of course, our two shelters. Most sections of the Coastal Trails have been closed because of this high water. The inland trails are in remarkably good shape, with only a few major tree-falls across them. Anything minor was cleaned up by Our Friends as they walked the trails.



New location, 40 ft. back from water

You will recall that we moved Our Friends Shelter (at Misery Bay beach) around 40 ft. inland, onto higher ground last December, as it was being inundated by water and ice.



Our Friends Shelter now at water's edge again

It is still high and dry, but the lake is much closer to it now – and this was on a calm day! It may be safe for now, but it still has to be permanently established onto that location, or even little further inland. We are hoping to get that done later this year.



Shrinking beach at Misery Bay

The Shelter at Saunders Cove is still okay- but just – as some storm crest waves have washed very close to it. Note that the flat rocks in the foreground of the first picture below are completely under water now! It promises to be a most interesting year!



Shelter at Saunder's Cove, Fall 2019



Shelter at Saunder's Cove, Spring 2020

**for a special trip down memory lane for our Friends- I have included a photo of the original Shelter that a lot of our Friends will remember from the many hikes they had to it and the lunches they shared there. Photo is from November of 2019. You can see it is still standing, but very much deteriorating and not safe to enter.



A proposal for our volunteers

By Ken Mackenzie

As the summer approaches many FOMB members imagine revisiting parts of Misery Bay for which they have fond memories and even perhaps thinking about walking sections with which they are less familiar. This past year, Board members have supported efforts by Marcel, Dave, Jane and our intern Maddie to have more visual content of Misery Bay on our various digital platforms to keep our members and the general public connected to this special place. Of course, for some of us, these pictures make wanting to be in Misery Bay in person even more compelling.

At the time of this writing, Parks Ontario has informed FOMB that the Park will be open again as of June 1st. Even so, under the current pandemic situation, we cannot ask our volunteers to welcome visitors to the Centre; the Visitors Centre will remain closed for the foreseeable future. The trails, however are slated to open soon. With this in mind, we are looking for ways to keep our volunteers active and engaged at Misery Bay.

One idea is for our members to contribute by walking the trails of Misery Bay as Friends of Misery Bay volunteers. The FOMB board has suggested that members, whether they have volunteered before at the Park Centre or not, walk the trails as they usually do, but that they wear official FOMB Turtle Logo name tags. (We are working on ways to have volunteers easily access the name tags.) We think it is important for members to be able to demonstrate their commitment to this conservation area and for the FOMB to be able to collect information about where and how the Park is being visited by the public. Speaking as you volunteer coordinator, it is also important for me to keep an active core of summer time Park volunteers for 2021.

Anyone, who is or would like to become a Friends of Misery Bay member can pitch in on this volunteer task by contacting any Board member, (myself included).

Bear in mind, of course, that the above project will only go forward if the Park remains officially opened.

VISIT OUR WEBSITE – learn about the latest at Misery Bay – check out new visuals
www.miserybay.ca

Virtual AGM to be held Saturday, June 20, 10 A.M

No speaker, due to Covid

Anyone interested in joining the meeting should contact Maddie Wagar at her email address: maddie.wagarlovelace@gmail.com An invitation and instructions will be forwarded before the meeting.

**2020 membership dues can be paid through Paypal on our website under
Friends of Misery Bay > Become a Member**