

Ridges Sanctuary in Door County

By Keith Nelson

On June 21 Nancy Thomas, Mike Thomas, Karen McKim and Keith Nelson participated in a field trip sponsored by the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin. The mission of the NRFW is to provide sustainable funding for Wisconsin's most imperiled species and public lands, while helping citizens connect with our state's unique natural places. In 2018 the Foundation sponsored 210 field trips. Since 1986 the



Foundation has contributed nearly \$7 million to conservation efforts.

The Ridges Sanctuary contains 26 of the 40 native Wisconsin orchids. Research at the Ridges include:

1. A survey of the orchids present to assess their status.
2. A seed bank collection to preserve the genetic integrity of the 26 species.
3. Research about the mycorrhizal fungi needed for germination.
4. Pollinators.
5. Propagation.
6. Orchid restoration measuring the success of out plantings.



Monitoring protocols measure success rates of out plantings, canopy cover, soil moisture and pH, mycorrhizal fungi, air quality and many other factors.

We met at the headquarters and enjoyed an excellent presentation of the orchid conservation efforts at the Ridges. We

then walked along the boardwalk adjacent to the headquarters building to enjoy the Yellow lady's-slipper, the Showy lady's-slipper, and the Spotted coral-root. Alas we did not see the elusive Ram's Head Lady's Slipper. The guides pointed out different habitats where the orchid seedlings had been planted to assess their success rate under different conditions.

We learned the researchers don't like to say a planting is unsuccessful, but that the orchids may just be dormant until conditions are right for their re-emergence. I think I will use that concept on some of my orchids that drop all their leaves and wither away, maybe they are not dead just "dormant".

