

# Newfoundland Rare Plant Project Report on the 1999 Field season

(March 2000)

## Introduction

The Newfoundland Rare Plant Project (NFRPP) is a multi-partner effort to update and augment data on the rare vascular plants of the island of Newfoundland. Data obtained through this project will:

- support management efforts towards the conservation of rare plants;
- help in determining the general status of plants throughout the province; and,
- provide basic information for the preparation of status reports for species of concern.

This three-year (April 1999 to March 2002) project involves intensive and systematic botanical surveys to document the occurrence, distribution and density of, and disturbance threats to, vascular plant species of conservation concern. Currently, Bouchard *et al.* (1991, The Rare Vascular Plants of the Island of Newfoundland, Syllogus No. 65, Canadian Museum of Nature, Ottawa) identify 271 such species for the island of Newfoundland. Work is carried out by a team of qualified botanists under the supervision of the project steering committee. In the first year of the project, major focus was paid to the unique limestone barren regions on the west coast, where numerous provincially and, in some instances, nationally rare species occur. In the second year, work will continue on the west coast and may include the south and northeast coasts.

Deliverables of the NFRPP are as follows:

- the development and updating of a vascular plant tracking list for the island of Newfoundland, produced as per conservation data centre methodology;
- the incorporation of georeferenced location data, and population and habitat information within the Biological Conservation Data (BCD) system of the Atlantic Canada Conservation Data Centre (AC CDC);
- the employ of the BCD system to respond efficiently and as fully as possible to formal requests for rare plant data;
- the production of maps showing the occurrence and distribution of the species of conservation concern; and,
- by March 2002, the completion of a detailed report including background information on the project, the most current vascular plant tracking list, location, habitat/range, status and notational information on each species of conservation concern, as well as maps showing the occurrence and distribution of species.

Following is a first report on field work undertaken in the 1999 field season. Importantly, this report will discuss actual application and use of existing data, as well as data compiled during the project.

## Participants

The 1999 field season involved the collaboration of a number of individuals and institutions, namely the Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Forest Resources and Agrifoods (NLDFRA) [lead], the Atlantic Canada Conservation Data Centre (AC CDC), Gros Morne National Park (GMNP), the *Institut de recherche en biologie végétale* of the University of Montreal (IRBV), Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN), and the Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Tourism, Culture and Recreation (NLDTCR).

The principal investigators (botanical team members) were:

Marilyn Anions (GMNP)  
Douglas Ballam (Parks and Natural Areas Division, NLDTCR)  
Luc Brouillet (IRBV)  
René Charest (AC CDC)  
Nathalie Djan-Chékar (Endangered Species Program, NLDFRA)  
Claudia Hanel (AC CDC)  
Stuart Hay (IRBV)  
Lawrence Lavers (Pasadena District Office, NLDFRA)  
Henry Mann (Grenfell College, MUN)  
John Maunder (Newfoundland Museum, NLDTCR)  
Sue Meades  
Beth Pollock (GMNP)  
Carson Wentzell (GMNP)

Other participants were:

Joe Brazil (Endangered Species Program, NLDFRA)  
Michael Burzynski (GMNP)  
Stephen Flemming (GMNP)  
Kim Furey (summer student, MUN)  
Luise Hermanutz (Department of Biology, MUN)  
Pat Lavers  
Anne Marceau (GMNP)  
Debby Meades  
Jeff Motty (summer student, NLDFRA)  
Rob Rainier (AC CDC)

## Summary of activities

Field work started at Gros Morne National Park in early June with a visit to Table Mountain. In early July the NFRPP team had an intensive weekend workshop jointly with the *Braya* Recovery Team<sup>1</sup>. Team members visited coastal barren areas along the west coast of the Great Northern Peninsula in search of *Braya*, and were introduced to the use of the field data sheets prepared for the NFRPP. From then on up to three teams worked in the field, independently or together, until the end of August. Field teams surveyed coastal and mountainous areas along the west coast of the island of Newfoundland from the Port au Port Peninsula to the northern tip of the Great Northern Peninsula (see Fig. 1). Efforts were concentrated on limestone barren habitats. In early August, field teams met in southeastern Labrador to survey similar habitats.

### Sites visited:

1. Port au Port Peninsula (Cape St. George to Mainland, Shoal Point, Lower Brook)
2. Table Mountain
3. Lewis Hills
4. Serpentine Lake
5. Mountain tops east of Bonne Bay (namely Killdevil Mountain, Big Hill and Fang Mountain in Gros Morne National Park)
6. Arm Pond (Gros Morne National Park)
7. Ponds in Hawke's Bay area
8. Port au Choix/Port Saunders area
9. Port au Choix National Historic Site
10. Doctors Brook
11. St. John Island
12. New Ferolle Peninsula
13. Flower's Cove/Sandy Cove area
14. Eddies Cove area (west of Watts Point Reserve)
15. Cape Norman/Cook's Harbour area
16. Big Brook area (east of Watts Point Reserve)

17. Burnt Cape Provisional Reserve
18. L'Anse aux Meadows National Historic Site
19. Quirpon Island
20. Goose Cape Peninsula
21. Southeastern Labrador coast (L'Anse-au-Clair to Capstan Island, Pinware River Provincial Park, Red Bay National Historic Site)

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<sup>1</sup> A team of expert botanists convened under the auspices of the Recovery of Nationally Endangered Wildlife in Canada (RENEW) initiative and involved in helping conserve and protect populations of Long's Braya (*Braya longii*) and Fernald's Braya (*Braya fernaldii*), which are nationally endangered and threatened, respectively.

## **Preliminary results**

Over the course of the summer the botanical teams inventoried approximately 400 stations. At most stations general habitat and precise locality information was recorded. For about a third of the stations complete lists of species present were compiled, thus generating close to 7,000 occurrence records and providing information on presence/absence of rare taxa. An important aspect of the field work during this first field season was the testing and revision of field work protocols.

Vouchers specimens were collected for rare plants or plants of special interest, as well as plants which could not be identified in the field. This summer's collection numbers nearly 3,000 specimens; these are mostly vascular plants but include also a small set of charophytes, bryophytes and lichens. Experts from the Marie Victorin Herbarium in Montreal verified the identification of vascular plant specimens. The collection will be kept at the Marie Victorin Herbarium with a duplicate collection at the herbarium of the Newfoundland Museum.

The information collected last summer has been compiled into a database. In the next few months, it will be incorporated into the Atlantic Canada Conservation Data Centre's Biological Conservation Data system, thereby allowing widespread access and use of the information.

## **Prospects for the next field season**

In November, 1999, the NFRPP Steering Committee meet to review the 1999 field season, and establish priorities and make plans for this year. Work started last year will continue, that is, relocating rare plant populations to improve location data and surveying, in search of rare plants, areas where there has been little or no collecting in the past. The geographic search area will be expanded to include the southwestern region of the island from Deer Lake to Port aux Basques and the west side of the Great Northern Peninsula.

Last year the project focused on locating and recording data on vascular plants; charophyte, bryophyte and lichen collections have been incidental. This year some field work on cryptogams will be incorporated within the scope of the project.

## **For more information**

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