EVERYTHING YOU WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT LICHENS

Barbara Parke

Arboretum staff had the pleasure of attending a half day workshop on “The Secret Life of Lichens” on July 12, 2011. Guest speaker was Troy McMullin from the Biodiversity Institute of Ontario Herbarium at the University of Guelph. What an interesting and informative presentation followed by a tour through parts of The Arboretum searching for these various ‘coral reefs of the forest’, as Troy calls them. What are lichens, you ask? They are a composition of algae or cyanobacteria and fungus. Over 17,500 of the species have been identified worldwide. There are 3 basic forms... Fruticose (branchy), Foliose (leafy), and Crustose (crusty).

Many of us have seen these tiny organisms before... but probably haven’t paid much attention to them. They can be found on old tree trunks, branches, park benches, rocks and in various other places. They come in a variety of colours... yellow, orange, pink, grey, blue, brown and black... oh, did I miss a colour... well almost every colour of the rainbow.

What an education... we learned about all parts of the lichen, how lichen grow or reproduce, what nutrients are required for these lichen to survive, uses for lichen... for dyes, in high class perfumes and deodorants and sometimes even in toothpaste. Birds, bats, chipmunks and squirrels use lichens to make their nests... and caribou enjoy these tasty morsels during the winter months when other food sources are scarce.

After our classroom presentation we headed out to the field to locate many of these lichen. There are the ‘big six’... the most common and abundant species. In total on our walk about 22 different species were identified. Troy has actually recorded 62 different species on The Arboretum grounds... with another two varieties found close to, but not on Arboretum grounds as of yet. Although I will never profess to remember all the scientific names... some of the more interesting lichen were the ‘hooded rosette lichen’, ‘candleflame lichen’, ‘mapledust’ and ‘hammered shield’.

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Coordinator’s Corner

Finally time for another issue of the Arb Aux. There are so many great articles and pictures from Auxiliary members and staff alike in this issue. No need for a long epistle from your Volunteer Coordinator in this issue… so sit back and enjoy the read!

Our next Volunteer Information Session will be held on Wednesday, October 19… agenda will be sent out to all a week before this event by e-mail. Hope you can make it.

Happy Fall… soon it will be time to enjoy all those wonderful fall colours as the leaves change colour and drift to the ground!

A hand lens will definitely assist you in identifying the various species and a field guide is useful for the identification basics.

This workshop will be offered again next year…. so why not come out and enjoy an enthusiastic group who want to marvel at these tiny organisms.
On Friday September 16 over 20 people with wide-ranging interests in trees and forestry gathered at The Arboretum to unveil a plaque honouring E.J. Zavitz, "The Father of Reforestation". The plaque is the latest in a series of plaques in the University's Historical Walking Tour (see http://www.uoguelph.ca/historicaltour/ for more information), and was suggested by Professor Andy Gordon, School of Environmental Sciences.

E.J. Zavitz, was a faculty member of OAC from 1905 to 1912 and went on from Guelph to become Ontario's Provincial Forester. In Guelph E.J. Zavitz was studying the use of pines as way of reducing the loss of soil in the “blow sands” of Norfolk County. In 1907, as part of his study, Zavitz planted rows of white pine (Pinus strobus) in a sandy area of the OAC at the southwest corner of College Avenue and Victoria Road. It is very appropriate that the plaque is located adjacent to the pines that Zavitz planted.

Funding for the historic plaque was provided by the VP Academic's Office, University of Guelph, Ontario Professional Forester Association, The Canadian Institute of Forestry, Faculty of Forestry, University of Toronto and The Arboretum.

The site looked absolutely perfect and to that we owe a sincere thank you to Sean's group of volunteers: Harold Crawford, Marjatta Downie, Ben Fear, Valerie Jackson, Peter Jackson, Bill Laidlaw, Joan Prowse, Wayne Prowse, Fernando Rios and George Willms. What would we do without you?
Discovering the Rural Gardens of Grey & Bruce Counties
Marg. Gillies

The Hebrew quote “as is the gardener, such is the garden” in many ways sums up the characteristics, which made each of the gardens so special that were visited in June by twenty-three garden enthusiasts. This year’s garden tour organized through the Arboretum Auxiliary included fourteen gardens listed in the Discover Rural Gardens of Grey and Bruce Counties brochure along with a few other private gardens that had been brought to the attention of our tour leader Clare Newson, who first scouted out the gardens last autumn.

Although some gardens were more outstanding than others, from my perspective, each garden offered something unique. The word ‘pride’ comes to mind as a common factor no matter the size of the garden property. One never can judge a property by its front view as the real gem may be hidden in the seclusion of the back yard such as was the case in Mildmay where we viewed shaded gardens that had been carefully textured in an assortment of soothing greens. In its own way a Clarksburg century home (Hillcrest Garden) presented a soothing feeling too with its colourful, sunny backyard borders that included eye popping mass plantings of dianthus, peonies and poppies. At Blossom Hills nestled on a hill surrounded by wild apple and pear trees, drifts of peonies were soothing to the eye too.

Apparent too, was the fact that each garden over time had become a labour of love. We learned that a number of the owners had purchased their properties in a raw state thirty to forty years ago when land values were not at the levels that they are today. Perhaps some of these gardeners were yesterday’s hippies with a rural dream that led them to this part of Ontario where they expressed their creativity over the years to the delight of visiting gardeners.

For me, gardens such as My Heart Is In It, Larkwhistle and Kepple Croft Farm were inspirational in different ways. The design of Larkwhistle’s one acre of garden areas seemed to have a certain degree of formality. At the same time the integrations of perennials and shrubbery in the various gardens presented a delightful air of informality that a future Monet would enjoy painting. Kepple Croft Farm and Gardens consisted of four acres of very distinct garden rooms that were a constant surprise at every turn. The largest of the gardens was an adapted Japanese style that contained a delightful mix of rocks and stones that enhanced the plant collections. The owners of Kepple Croft have an artistic flare and have, created whimsical touches such as “Ladies in Glass Hats” in little out of the way corners.

Over the course of the garden season, 1000 different perennials can be seen at the very aptly named ‘My Heart Is in It Gardens. An inviting, large alpine garden is a focal point as one drives into the property. In one direction, it connects to a woodland garden that then leads to a magical 40 foot pond and bog garden. This property as well as the gardens at Tranquil—

Winter 2011/2012 Issue of Arb Aux – Issue #13
Planned Publication Date: mid to late January 2012

Submission deadline for articles and pictures: December 31, 2011

Volunteer Information Session #9
Date: Fall 2011, Wednesday October 19, 2011
Time: 3:00 – 4:15 pm Location: Board Room Arboretum Centre
Agenda will be forwarded in a separate e-mail to all Auxiliary members
ity on the Rock suggests that much thought has been given to the placement of various plants. The gardens at Tranquility on the Rock reflect the fact that the owners did not fight the large rocks and flat rock surfaces that define the property but designed their gardens so that rock and plants complement each other.

Further into the Bruce Peninsula we visited three very diverse gardens that had been developed within their forest settings. Of the three, Rural Rootz with its various unique artsy, garden settings included a ‘meditation maze’ in the midst of a 100 acre forest. The owner of Living Carpet was somewhat apologetic regarding the state of his natural rock garden. The prettiest feature of the property was a large pond surrounded with native plants in a woodland setting. Bury Road Garden in Tobermory had its beginnings just a few years ago when the owner purchased a house in the woods that had been abandoned for nine years. I can understand why ‘Serendipity’ was part of the garden’s name as this women managed to find a garden use for every piece of discarded junk that she found on the property. As one walked along the forested pathways, it was not unusual to observe objects such as beat up pots and pans hanging from tree branches. In a number of ways, Serendipity as well as the shady Memory Garden Retreats that sloped down to the Sydenham River in Owen Sound were in part, filled with past memories associated with loved ones.

Each of the gardens visited suggested that gardeners are very energetic people. This feeling certainly was obvious at Carpe Diem Gardens and Morland Place. Carpe Diem is Dutch for ‘seize the moment’. The extensive gardens that surrounded the home and beyond suggested that the owner seized many creative moments that were crafted in the personal touches that added to the garden’s informal palette of colours and textures.

When we arrived at Morland Place, the owner was no where to be found. Spellbound by the unusual California/Italian style, castle-like stone building with its widow’s walk, we began to meander through an extensive landscape of French and Italian style settings including a maze, all surrounded by tall hedges. Quite by accident we entered into a large perennial garden filled with peonies, irises and poppies when suddenly the owner popped into view and invitingly stated “If you come back in the summer, hundreds of lilies will be in bloom here”. Although the gardens and grounds with their enumerable owner created lions, nymphs etc, seem to demand a lot of attention, the whole place like the owner was somewhat mesmerizing. Having inherited this very large property, the museum-like home and gardens have been the owner’s life passion for some forty years.

Gardeners can be described as ‘passionate’, especially when that passion transcends to favourite perennials, trees or shrubs. The owners of both Earthbound Gardens, specialist in lilies and Folmer’s Botanical Gardens and Garden Centre demonstrated this trait as they conducted us through parts of their speciality gardens. Having received a gift of a lily at Earthbound, that last afternoon at Folmer’s, most of our group was quite passionate about the purchases that found their way into the bus. As passionate gardeners, there is always space somewhere for a plant in need of a home. Passionate about the colour of blue, I look forward to seeing that special autumn gentian in bloom this September. To conclude, our garden tour proved that there is truth to the Chinese proverb “He who plants a garden, plants happiness.”
They are all in search of a murder. And this leads us directly to the topic of this article: collective nouns. I was so amazed and fascinated when I heard some of these collective nouns during one of our monthly meetings of the docent volunteers at the Arboretum. Yes, you certainly think of an ambush of tigers, a pride of lions, a mob of kangaroos and of course a murder of crows. One of my favourite is an aurora of polar bears, because it reflects not only the wilderness of the far north but also the vulnerability and uncertain future of these powerful bears.

Let me invite you for a little virtual tour through the Arboretum:

**Imagine**

Imagine it is early morning in late spring. You park your vehicle among a fleet of cars right below a clump of Paper Birches. You are going towards the Victoria Woods passing a spray of honeysuckles and as soon as you approach the forest a scourge of mosquitoes gives you a warm welcome. But you will be soon rewarded with a cacophony of bird song: a mutation of thrushes, with their leaders the American Robins, is among the first to show its talent. Soon the songs of a dissimulation of other small birds will join in. And while you are listening a paddling of mallards is swimming in the pond and a gaggle of Canada geese stands on the shore. A knob of toads try to catch a rabble of insects and soon a bale of painted turtles will climb a floating limb to take a sun bath. Near a brake of fallen trees, just beside a troop of mushrooms, is a rout of snails slowly making its way through a holt of ash trees. Unfortunately the carpet of blooming trilliums is already fading but a fernery of Ostrich and Sensitive Ferns covers the forest soil on damper spots. While an army of ants follows its trail and a clew of earthworms is chewing its way through the soil, you suddenly get a glimpse of a gaze of raccoons going home after a “hardwork’s night”. Just as you pass a gush of violets, a descent of woodpeckers starts drumming on a group of dead trees and then a scold of Blue Jays spotted you and alarm instantly the venery of all wild animals about your presence.

Later you follow the Ivey Trail towards the Taylor Nature Centre, and after passing a brush of Hoptrees, you see a herd of House Wrens which is busy with choosing the appropriate nest box in the old fields where once a flock of sheep and a bow of cattle were grazing. A tribe of sparrows flies over you and within the small grove of tall spruces along the trail a parliament of owls has perhaps already finished its brood. Near the spinney of Manitoba Maples close to the Nature Centre you hear a murmuration of excited starlings, and under the Centre’s roof a bike of wasps starts building a nest.

When you enter the Gosling Wildlife Gardens a knot of leopard frogs quickly hops into the pond which is surrounded by a bouquet of blue flags. The bosh of different flowers in garden number one provides nectar for a flutter of butterflies, an erst of bees and a business of flies. As you enter the lawn garden a scurry of gray and red squirrels are looking for food under the birdfeeder while a dule of Mourning Doves is picking seeds as fast as possible inside the feeder. Little holes in the lawn are signs that a surfeit of skunks is searching the larvae of an earlier swarm of June beetles. In the native plant garden a battery of photographers are waiting with their long lenses for a shimmer of hummingbirds close to a cluster of Wild Columbines. But only a charm of goldfinches shows up and goes for a quick bath in the little stream. You decide to go to the suburban vegetable garden where a tally of cabbage and a hill of beans must be protected against a warren of rabbits. Maybe a rout of coyotes or a brace of red foxes could help to reduce the wrack of young rabbits. In the small city garden a conglomerate of different flowers, like the nosegay of peonies, greets you. A lost piece of dry skin lets you wonder if there might be a den of snakes close by.

When you go through the avenue of White Cedars, a consort of bird calls, especially the one of the Northern Cardinals, escort you to the service road. High above the open fields a kettle of Turkey

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Vultures and a **boil** of Red-tailed Hawks take advantage of good ascending winds, while a **flight** of Tree Swallows is inspecting the nest boxes. In the summertime there might be a **cloud** of grasshoppers and a **harvest** of mice hiding in the **tuft** of grasses from a **sneak** of weasels. While slowly walking up the dusty road you are thinking of the Nature Reserve and asking yourself: if a **prickle** of porcupine or a **covey** of Ruffed Grouse will be there or if at dusk a **fall** of woodcocks will perform their courtship display on their leks.

But time has passed so quickly that you have to go back. A **clutter** of spiders is checking its web during the evening hours in the **stand** of dwarf conifers and while you pass a **chaplet** of roses at the rose collection you spot some tracks of a labour of moles. And on the way back to the parking lot you admire a **shrubbery** of Fragrant Sumac which flowers attracts a **grist** of bumble bees. And the evening **woodchoir** of bird songs starts while you drive on the Arb road. For an **orchestra** of crickets it is still too early in the season but a young **family** of groundhogs is already playing in front of its burrow. Then you witness a red sun setting just behind the **thicket** of Staghorn Sumacs right beside the **cock** of oak trees. Now is the time when a **colony** of bats flies into the air and a **mischief** of rats explores the grounds and a **bevy** of roes begins to taste the **foliage** of the Arb plants. A **galaxy** of stars will soon dot the sky and you go home filled with an **anthology** of little nature stories you have just seen and heard.

**Acknowledgments:**
With my special thanks to Ann Estill for her competent editing help.

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There is always Music amongst the trees in a Garden, but our hearts must be very quiet to hear it.

*Minnie Aumonier*

Wild Birds Unlimited is having a "Shop for a Cause" weekend Oct. 22 & 23. During this event 10% of our sales will go directly to the Arboretum.

Richard Tofflemire
Manager
WBU
Well the annual auxiliary plant sale has passed and once again it went off without a hitch. The line started at 6:45 am for the 9:00 am opening; I didn’t arrive until 5 minutes later. Attendance was perhaps not as high as usual but those that came were buyers; woody plants were a big hit as usual; large empty spots on the perennial tables were appearing by 10:00. All with one thought in mind: to purchase plants of excellent quality at great prices in support of the Arboretum Auxiliary which in turn supports the University of Guelph Arboretum in so many ways.

This has been a year of transitioning not only into the new Greenhouse but also following the Plant Sale group’s desire to add more native perennials to the mix on the day of the sale. Staff fully support this move and will assist in this move to educate the public on our fantastic selection of native species from the wild.

A job well done; looking forward to next year.

'Financial results for this year's Plant Sale will be forwarded in a separate email, when available.'