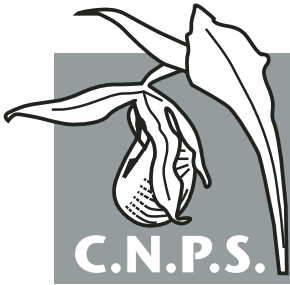


# Ram's-head Lady's Slipper



**Conserve Native Plants Society Inc.**

The name is derived from the latin word *arietinus* meaning “of a ram,” in reference to the flower’s “ram’s head” shape.

This very rare orchid occurs in a variety of habitats covering an area from Quebec to the eastern Saskatchewan border.

Its small size and dark colour make it difficult to distinguish from its surroundings, contributing to it being a coveted species once identification has been established.

The Ram’s-head’s “pouch” is white with heavy streaks of purple, which descend to the bottom tip of the cone-shaped flower. Delicate white hairs surround the opening. The two petals and two sepals are also purple, with some plants tending to have greenish-hued sepals.

This plant usually features three to five elliptical leaves on each stem. Its height ranges from six to twelve inches. Although one or two flowers are common per plant, in some drier locations, they can be found to have ten or more stems.

Check for blooms from the end of May through June. Dialictus bees are the known pollinators of this species.

The Ram’s-Head lady’s slipper is, because of its rarity, considered to be a plant of special concern in each state and province it appears in. The Manitoba Conservation Data Centre requests that, in the event of a siting, that its location be documented and that notification be given to that department. You can also contact Bud Ewacha at CNPS with the same information.

See the following article for an update about the Western Prairie Fringed Orchid.



Ram's-head Lady's Slipper  
*Cypripedium arietinum*  
Photo by Bud Ewacha

**(C.N.P.S.) Conserve Native  
Plants Society Inc.**

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**Please remember to renew  
your membership.**

# Breakthrough for the Western Prairie Fringed Orchid

Conserve Native Plants Society is pleased to report that a possible breakthrough has been made that could secure a better chance of survival for the Western Prairie Fringed Orchid.

Conventional propagation takes place by collecting pollinated seed and then reseeding it in suitable habitat during the spring and fall months. CNPS President Bud Ewacha is experimenting with a technique which may allow for seed propagation that bypasses the Western Prairie Fringed Orchid's dependence on soil-dwelling mycorrhiza, a vital component of that habitat. This experiment is of significant importance, in that, if successful, the technique might be also used for the propagation of other orchid species in the wild.

Mr. Ewacha's research has gained the respect and interest of the Province of Manitoba's Sustainable Development program, as well as that of Nature Conservancy of Canada, both of which are providing grants for this valuable endeavour. The project is expected to continue until 2010.

The Western Prairie Fringed Orchid thrives in only a small, select area of Manitoba and Canada, and accordingly is listed as endangered, both provincially and federally in Canada, and as threatened in the United States. It favours the wet fields and roadsides of southern Manitoba and habitat that was formally wet Tall Grass Prairie.

It's possible to find, in early summer, thousands of plants, each bearing 6 to 25 large creamy-white blossoms. The flowers are 1.5 to 3 cm in width and height, and feature a three-parted, shallow fringed lip. Its 3 - 5 cm nectar spur is the longest of any north-temperate orchid.

The Western Prairie Fringed Orchid reproduces almost entirely by seed, with pollination facilitated by moths and other insects whose long palps permit access to the nectar held in the spur. The powerful scent of this orchid is the attraction to these insects during their nocturnal search for food.

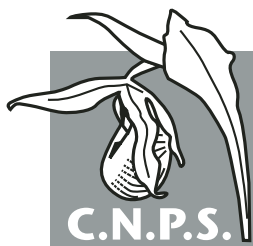
This plant is seriously at risk by expanding agricultural encroachment. There has been some intervention to protect its delicate environment. Some measures include the purchase of land containing this unique habitat by organizations such as Nature Conservancy, and by the creation of the Tall Grass Prairie Preserve. However, there still exists the threat of conversion of much of this land to agricultural use by private landowners.

Poor weather, unsuccessful seeding, unsuitable habitat and human encroachment can all influence the outcome of survival for the Western Prairie Fringed Orchid. However, the research that is currently being done to enhance development of the seed may at least improve the odds for this spectacular flower.

For more information, contact Bud Ewacha at Conserve Native Plants Society, 253-4741, or at our email address, bud\_ge@escape.ca. You can also view our web site at [www.conservativeplants.ca](http://www.conservativeplants.ca).



The Western Prairie Fringed Orchid  
Photo by Bud Ewacha



## Annual General Meeting Pending

The planning of our Annual General Meeting is currently in the works. It will take place at the end of March, although the final date and location have yet to be confirmed. Note that elections will be held for the positions of President and Treasurer. Any nominations that you would like to make can be forwarded to Bud Ewacha at Conserve Native Plants Society.