

CHAMBERS, from Page 3

Bay with bruised ribs and a bad headache, but was wheeled out of the hospital a day and a half later, and was back botanizing on Isle Royale in a few weeks...

Before my visits, the only significant plant collections on Chambers Island had been made by Donald Ugent, who visited the island several times during the summer of 1961 and collected several hundred species. Don, now a professor of botany at Southern Illinois University, recalls that he worked at the agricultural experiment station on the mainland (researching potatoes, then as now), and hopped the then-public ferry to the island whenever he could. I collected 209 specimens during my three visits and increased the number of vascular plants known on the island to 358 species.

Several aspects of the natural history of Chambers Island are noteworthy: Its fine regrown hemlock-hardwood forests (about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the island); current absence of White-tailed Deer; remnant Great Lakes pine barrens communities with a strong prairie element; and relatively undisturbed Great Lakes beach flora on Sand Point and on the long southeast "tail" of the island. In the north, Red Oak is locally dominant, sometimes mixed with Bitternut Hickory (*Carya cordiformis*). The Red Oak woods is best developed on the road to Sand Point and has a few characteristic southern Wisconsin species such as Hog-peanut (*Amphicarpaea bracteata*), Wide-leaved Panic Grass (*Panicum latifolium*), Smooth Aster (*Aster laevis*), and Pale Vetch (*Lathyrus ochroleucus*). There are also nice American Beech (*Fagus grandifolia*) stands near the west coast (Fig. 4). The Chambers Island lighthouse (built in 1868, and lovingly restored by the Blahniks) at the north end of the island has some of the finest spring wildflower displays, with Great-flowered Trillium, and Great-flowered Bellwort (*Uvularia grandiflora*).

The island forests are unusual in a number of ways. Deer had a devastating effect on plant survival and regeneration on the island from the 1940s through the 1980s; local residents said that you could see a half-mile through the woods because the understory was so open. But they have now been absent for many years, resulting in fine regeneration of Sugar Maples and some conifers.

The sandscapes on Sand Point and the North Bay Harbor are remnants of a Great Lakes barrens community (Fig. 5) found nowhere else on Wisconsin's Lake

**Fig. 4**

Pure beech forest on Chambers Island, May 1998.

Michigan coast. The 1835 survey notes confirm a very open forest even then with scattered pine trees. Along with juniper species (*Juniperus communis* var. *depressa* and *J. horizontalis*) and Beachgrass (*Ammophila breviligulata*), and among scattered White and Red Pines (*Pinus strobus* and *P. resinosa*), grow prairie elements such as Big and Little Bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii* and *Schizachyrium scoparium*), Indian-grass (*Sorghastrum nutans*), Needle-and-thread Grass (*Stipa spartea*), Muhlenberg's Sedge (*Carex muhlenbergii*), New Jersey Tea (*Ceanothus* spp.), Butterfly-weed (*Asclepias tuberosa* subsp. *interior*), Blazing-star (*Liatris aspera*), Hoary Puccoon (*Lithospermum carolinense* subsp. *croceum*), and the abundant Smooth Aster. Many grow nowhere else in the Door Peninsula or the Grand Traverse Islands.

I returned to Chambers Island in September for more collecting and to thank the island residents who had saved my life in June. I stayed in the lighthouse, as the guest of Joel and Mary Ann Blahnik. Some folks looked at me as if I had returned from the dead! When they asked me how I was feeling, I said "all right"... But it did bother me that I suffered about a two hour window of "retrograde amnesia" when I could not recall my plant collecting localities just prior to the accident... ?

**Fig. 5**

Great Lakes Barrens with scattered pine, juniper, and prairie species such as hoary puccoon, on north bay of Chambers Island, May 1998.

NEW MEMBERS OF BCW

Kama Almasi
Stevens Point, WI 54481

Armund Bartz
DeSoto, WI 54624

Tim Bischof
Baraboo, WI 53913

Sarah Braun
Stevens Point, WI 54481

Douglas Fields
Withee, WI 54498

Ted Roeder
Rosholt, WI 54473

Jean Rovelstad-Straka
St. Paul, MN 55116

Brianna Schoessow
Stevens Point, WI 54481