

A FIELD TRIP TO POINT ABINO - 1954

---by Bert Miller

Early in the morning it rained and the Peninsula Field Naturalists had planned a field day August 29th, at Point Abino. However before 9 o'clock the weather cleared and according to schedule six cars met at Sherkston and from there went to Point Abino.

After parking, the group started to explore the high sand hills and valleys in that area and found some plants of the Ginseng (*Panax quinquefolium*). Some saw the Great Lobelia or Blue Cardinal flower (*Lobelia siphilitica*) also the lovely Tall Bellflower (*Campanula americana*). Many of the spring and summer flowering plants were now in fruit. Of these we noticed the True Solomon's Seal (*Polygonatum biflorum*) with blue berries, the False Solomon's Seal (*Smilacina racemosa*) with pink and red berries and the Star Solomon's Seal (*Smilacina stellata*) having green berries with brown stripes. We also found the Blue Cohosh (*Caulophyllum thalictroides*) with blue berries, the White Banberry (*Actaea alba*) having white fruit with a dark spot on the end (dolls eyes), and the Red Banberry (*Actaea rubra*) with bright red berries. An unusual find was a nice showing of the white form of the Red Banberry with pure white fruit.

Along the sandhills we found the Bladder-nut or Rattle Bush (*Staphylea trifolia*), this small tree has seeds enclosed in a large, thin, three cornered pod with no opening and after ripening the seeds loosen and not being able to get out the pod becomes an interesting rattle box.

Here we also saw the Leatherwood (*Dirca palustris*) a small tree with bark that is tough and strong like rawhide. The Carrion-flower (*Smilax herbacea*) and Greenbrier (*Smilax hispida*) were seen, these having blossoms of very unpleasant odour, climbing vines, the former with smooth stems and the latter very prickly.

Along the shore of Lake Erie we observed the Sand Cherry (*Prunus pumila*) a shrub growing in crevices of the limestone rock having small white blossoms and dark red fruit, something like the cherry in our orchards, also the Nine-bark (*Physocarpus opulifolius*) a small shrub with unusual seed clusters. Of small flowering plants along the beach, we saw the Gerardia (*Gerardia paupercula*), Mountain Mint (*Pycnanthemum virginiana*), Water Hoarhound (*Lycopus americanus*), Spider-flower (*Cleome spinosa*) and small Lobelia.

We now inspected the Sand Bowl, a large area enclosed with high sandhills on all sides with a narrow entrance from the lake shore. Here we saw a small fern (*Polypodium vulgare*), the Flowering Raspberry (*Rubus odoratus*), and a fine specimen of the Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*) with abundance of red fruit. As it was getting near lunch time, we came back toward the cars through a valley and noticed the Wild Ginger (*Asarum canadense*), the Lopseed (*Phryma leptostachya*) and the Ticktrefoil (*Desmodium canadense*), the latter left with us many flat burs of their seed pods. Here we found much of the Scouring-rush (*Equisetum hyemale*), in olden days the early settlers used bundles of this rush for scouring floors.

Nearby we came to The Garden of God, a quiet little sequestered spot with high timber on all sides and here in peace and quietness grow fine specimens of Low Juniper (*Juniperus communis*) and tall stately Red Cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*). After lunch an interesting demonstration was given of starting fire without matches.

We now started on a hike over another part of the sandhills and happened to see Dodder (*Cuscuta gronovii*), a parasitic climbing vine, that lives on other plants, and noticed the One-seeded Bur-cucumber (*Sicyos angulatus*). Also Ground-nut (*Apios americana*), Virgin's Bower (*Clematis virginiana*) with its lovely white flowers and Wild Wormwood (*Artemisia caudata*). Going into the Indian Burying Ground, we saw a large area of bare sand with no evidence of burial at any time. Here was a large specimen of the Chestnut Oak (*Quercus muhlenbergii*), these trees are quite rare.

Near here we found Gromwell (*Lithospermum officinale*) a small plant with bright shiny seeds like small pieces of silver, also the Three-seeded Mercury (*Acalpha virginica*) and a rare form of the Lamb's Quarters (*Cycloloma atriplicifolium*). Specimens of the plant Galinsoga were seen (*Galinsoga parviflora*), this appearing only recently in this area, having come from tropical America.

Another plant of interest was the Running Strawberry Bush (*Evonymus obovatus*), this having a fruit pod of unusual form, being in three sections, light pink and very bristly. After ripening, the pods open showing a brilliant red berry.

Turning our attention to the marsh along the shore of the bay on the east side of Point Abino, we found grass of Parnassus (*Parnassia caroliniana*) with its shining waxy flowers, white with green stripes on the petals. Also the Closed Gentian (*Gentiana andrewsii*); this plant has blue blossoms that are always closed, but the bees manage to get in and get the nectar and get out again. Here we noticed many forms of Rush and Sedge, some very small specimens.

Now it was time to turn homeward (some of the party had left earlier). A grand day? Yes, having seen much of interest in our great outdoors.

