Native Plant Society of Northeastern Ohio

Thompson Ledges in Geauga County

Field Trip Archives

17 April 2010

This joint program with Geauga Park District was led by Native Plant Society President Judy Barnhart. A group of about 35 people explored the upper part of the Sharon Conglomerate sandstone ledges where a chestnut oak community dominates. Early lowbush blueberry was in bloom along with the early blooming trailing arbutus, which was our trip goal to see. We almost missed its bloom period due the exceedingly warm 80-degree temperatures in early April. Another plant along the upper ledges was the rock or polypody fern which hangs right off the rock ledges.

Trailing arbutus, *Epigaea repens* B.Mack 2011

Sweet white violet, *Viola blanda* A.Horowitz 2009

After skirting the upper ledge area we made our way down through an opening in the sandstone. Following along the base of the ledges, an entirely different plant community exists.

Hemlock and yellow birch dominate along with many of our spring wildflowers including sweet white violet, trilliums, and mayapple.

Mayapple, *Podophyllum peltatum* A.Horowitz 2004

Features of the rock included bands of quarts pebbles, honeycomb weathering patterns, cross-bedding, and large cracks or fissures in the rock. Many of the fissures cause large blocks to shift away from the main face revealing narrow channels to traverse. The nonporous shale underlying the sandstone caused seeps and springs to arise at the base of the sandstone. A large butternut tree with numerous chewed nuts at the base culminated our trip of the ledges to the south.

The group then proceeded to the more remote section north of Thompson Road. The highlight was a beautiful, large hobblebush in full bloom at the base of the ledges. A small stream cascading over the ledges created a waterfall and a small wooden bridge was constructed below. Part of this area was previously owned by the boy scouts. Some of the kids explored the smaller openings in the rocks trying to determine if the legend of a bear living there could be substantiated.

Great solomon seal, *Polygonatum biflorum* B.Mack 2011