

## NEWSLETTER SCHEDULE

A number of unforeseen events combined with heavy work commitments have delayed the publication of Issues Number 128 and 129 of the the Island Naturalist. I regret any inconvenience this may have caused readers and hope that the normal schedule can be re-established in the near future.

Dan McAskill, Editor

### THE STEMLESS LADY'S SLIPPER

by Kate MacQuarrie

Take a walk through one of our Island's forests in June or early July and you may come across a very beautiful and relatively common woodland plant. Its latin name is *Cypripedium acaule*, but it is better known as our provincial flower, the Stemless Lady's Slipper.

There is much misinformation surrounding the Lady's Slipper. For example, many people believe it is a protected species and the picking of it is illegal. While it is protected in some parts of North America, this is not the case on Prince Edward Island. Of course, although the picking of the Lady's Slipper is not illegal, it should **not** be done. While the flower **may** return the following year if the leaves have not been removed, the seeds within the flower (some 60,000 in total) will have been eliminated. With every seed bearing flower that is picked, the spread of the Lady's Slipper is reduced.



Another common misconception is that the Lady's Slipper is a rare plant, seldom seen by any but those fortunate enough to stumble across it. This is likely a holdback from the time when our provincial flower was the Showy Lady's Slipper (*C. hirsutum* in the 1950s, now *C. reginae*). The Showy Lady's Slipper is uncommon on P.E.I., found primarily in the West Prince region. The Stemless Lady's Slipper became our provincial emblem in 1965 and is found in woodlands across the P.E.I. The easiest was to distinguish our floral emblem from its close relative is by the leaves at the base of the plant; the colour of the flower does not necessarily tell you which species it is. The Stemless Lady's Slipper has two leaves which do not wrap around the stem, while the Showy Lady's Slipper has many leaves which do wrap around the stem at their base. A third Lady's Slipper, the

Yellow Lady's Slipper (*C. calceolus*) is quite rare on P.E.I., with specimens having been found in a mixed wood near Monticello, King's County. The Yellow Lady's Slipper has two leaves like the Stemless version, however these leaves do wrap around the stem. The Stemless Lady's Slipper is usually pink or white, while the Showy Lady's Slipper generally has a white floral lip blushed with purple.

Our provincial floral emblem is found in acidic soil in dry or moist woods throughout P.E.I. If you own or have access to a woodlot, take a look for the Lady's Slipper - you'll be surprised how often you see it. If not, try: Murray River Pines (near the mill in Murray River), Townshend Woodlot (Souris Line Road), Bonshaw Hills Trail, or Wellington. These are just a few