

Can We Save the Saint Lawrence Aster?

by Bob DEZIEL

One of many questions being answered by graduate studies at UPEI.

The Saint Lawrence aster is a flowering plant found primarily on the North Shore in PEI National Park, in the salt marsh regions filled

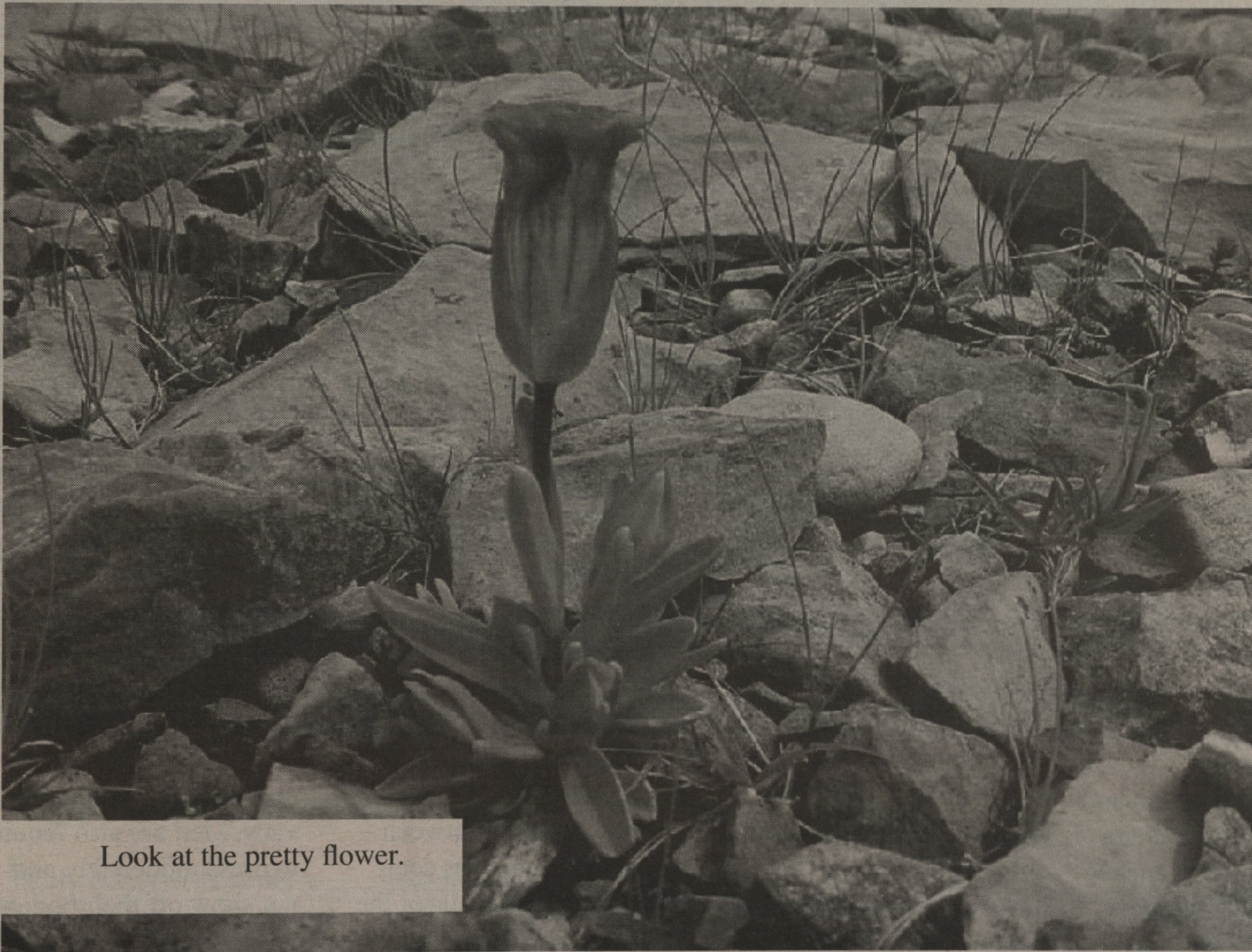
ing negatively affected and will, at times, initiate research in order to find solutions to prevent its complete disappearance.

Kerry-Lynn has been working on multiple sites in the park, and the site that we visited was a marsh on Robinson's Island where the species

where cottages are built and salt marshes are destroyed, the reason there are fewer asters is obvious: there is no proper habitat. However, within the National Park itself, such developments are non-existent. So, why are the aster populations decreasing?

helped the growth of the aster, as the tire tracks allow fresh ground for the aster to germinate and thrive (though this is not a license to joyride in the National Park...). Another potential cause of depletion is an increase in the amount of vegetation in the marsh. Eel grass (and trust me, there is loads of dead eel grass) could potentially be choking out fertile ground that allows the aster to grow. The increase in dead eel grass could be anthropogenic in origin, but it is not certain at this time.

Much progress has been made in the past two field seasons, and this year's field season has yielded interesting information about the requirements necessary for this flower's survival. So there is hope for the species on PEI. Thankfully Kerry-Lynn's sites other than Robinson's Island yielded hundreds of offspring. With further research into planting and conservation methods, the Saint Lawrence aster could once again thrive along the salt marshes of the North Shore.



Look at the pretty flower.

with sink holes and hungry mosquitoes (as I discovered).

Kerry-Lynn Atkinson is a graduate student researching the aster who, having worked at P.E.I. National Park for a number of years, was approached to do a Master's project by Dr. Christian Lacroix in the Biology Department. Kerry-Lynn explained to me that once a species inside any National Park is found to be endangered, the Canadian Government is mandated to monitor the species which is be-

ing reintroduced. Kerry-Lynn had planted asters in the marsh the previous season and was coming back this season to see how many seeds had sprouted. Unfortunately, just under a dozen had germinated.

What, specifically, is responsible for the depletion of the aster population during the last 10-15 years? I assumed that the cause was anthropogenic, seeing as how humans are, of course, the cause of everything bad in the environment. But humans are only half the problem. In areas

One of the possible reasons for this depletion is a change in the microclimate of the marsh itself. The Saint Lawrence aster requires "disturbances," meaning areas in the salt marsh where the top layers of soil have been removed by force or have eel grass. These disturbances in the marsh are typically caused by retreating ice, which clears the ground below and allows this plant to grow the following year. In some places, human disturbances in the marshes (ATV tracks) have actually

TFLN:

Texts from last night

(603): GUESS WHAT I JUST LICKED
(1-603): I feel like half our conversations start this way.

(902): I didn't notice until this morning that he had a six inch RAT TAIL...

(902): The walk of shame is so much worse when you've spent the night third wheeling.

(310): so i had a choice between studying for my physics test on fluid dynamics or spend the night with my girlfriend. hello doubletasking.

(314): What happened to the watermelon?
(1-314): You fucked it.

(519): and then she said I drew a line on her forehead with my cum and whispered "Simba"