

MACALESTER COLLEGE

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■ DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGY

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Subject: ORCHIDS at ORDWAY.

While walking in the oak forest on one happy occasion there occurred to the walker one of those trivial events which is rare enough to be momentous to the observer - the sighting of an orchid! On this occasion it was a small cluster of the Large Twayblade (Liparis lilifolia), a beautiful flower which appears as a 10-15 flowered spike rising about 15 centimeters out of a pair of lily-shaped basal leaves. The flowers themselves are mauve-colored with greenish sepals and each individual flower is a near replica of some of the gaudy tropical orchids of the kind which are flown in from Hawaii for gala shopping-center openings. To see this small gem in the setting of the forest floor is one of those minor thrills which can reward that walker who can carry away such beauty in his mind without ripping it from its setting.

We are speaking here of a member of the so-called "northern orchids", a group of about fourteen members of these usually tropical plants. In general they grow best in bogs but also in cold, wet woods. Ordway has no true bog conditions but there are three orchids which have been located on the property, all in dark, dense sites, two of which are also quite swampy.

The Northern Coralfoot (Corallorhiza trifida) has no green foliage, rising about 12 centimeters from its coral-like root in 5-10 yellowish flowers on a single stem. The Northern Green Orchis (Habenaria hyperborea) is more nearly a wetland habitue, its cluster of lance-shaped leaves rising directly out of some wet, grassy spot and from its midst a single spike of about 14-15 yellowish-green flowers, each a perfect little orchid with its petal lip pouting its beauty hidden in a clump of swamp grasses.



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