

(Third article of series relating to old CPN articles)

(REMINISCENCES - III) CPN AND CONSERVATION

by Donald Schnell

About a year ago, I received a letter from a writer who stated she was about to publish an article in a magazine concerning recent plant conservation measures, and in the letter she expressed her displeasure with CPN for not having expressed a conservation attitude, and she further stated that she was about to say so in her article. True to her word, the article was published and there was a line or two about CPN and how we did little for conservation.

Several years ago, I received a series of letters from a young man who was also beginning a newsletter in connection with his fledgling CP sales nursery. Both are now defunct, but he expressed concern that the editors of CPN had never expressed "an editorial policy," particularly one toward conservation. To this day, I am not certain what sort of "editorial policy" he had in mind otherwise. I thought we had always made it pretty clear what CPN was about, basically a central exchange of CP communications available to any subscriber. CPN was never intended as a crusade.

However, early on we did in fact realize that there were some responsibilities we as editors and you as serious CP enthusiasts should consider regarding conservation of CP. Contrary to the preceding two paragraphs and a few other communications of similar tone, there has in reality been a steady stream of conservation comment of a positive nature in CPN from early on. The workability of some of the conservation proposals from a practical view has been quite variable, but all well intended and deserving of consideration. Actually, out in the world over a long term basis, little else seemed to be working right to really conserve CP habitats, so maybe it has been time for some fresh thinking that admittedly

might be an anathema to those who stubbornly persist in what are often cliché concepts that have worked little for other areas, let alone being applicable for CP.

I guess different readers will look at this article in different ways, perhaps some of you feeling that we are being a bit defensive. If nothing else, look at it as a review of what has been said about conserving CP by both readers and editors of CPN.

Positive comments about conservation of particular species, locations or CP in general appeared as portions of various articles early in CPN (See Vol. 2, pp. 4, 10, 33-34, 36-37, 56; Vol. 3, pp. 7, 26, 48-49, 51; Vol. 4, pp. 27-28). In a brief editorial response to your responses to a questionnaire of readers, we stated a policy of conservation from the editor's viewpoint in Vol. 4, p. 29 in which we strongly urged the propagation of CP either vegetatively or by seed so that those wishing plants to grow could obtain them by trading for or purchasing propagated material rather than increasing harvesting from the field. We further stated that we would leave publication of maps and location details up to the submitting author.

Looking back, I can see that the last sentence of the preceding paragraph might have been stronger in perhaps refusing at that time (we later did) to print any detailed location maps or descriptions beyond which might be necessary to make an ecologic point. I guess we were too innocent then.

In Vol. 4, p. 49, David Lane briefly summarized the CP aspects of the first attempted listing of endangered plants in the Federal Register, and efforts by the new CITES organization to begin evaluating the situation. To many of us in the field in our own areas, the problem had been obvious for years, the solutions far more difficult and

to this day elusive in spite of good intentions. In the same issue of CPN in which the above appeared, I commented (p. 42) that habitat destruction was the primary culprit, and to this day this is accepted to be so. I also acknowledged that predation of rare taxa of CP growing in small numbers in a location was also a serious problem (e.g., *S. oreophila*). I then described my personal observation in the Green Swamp area of North Carolina in which on one summer afternoon several people were collecting masses of *Dionaea*, *Drosera* and *Pinguicula* and placing these in a large dump truck along with some sphagnum. They blithely went about their work, glancing up at me now and then, knowing I was watching. Ironically, the area from which they so heavily collected to my indignation is now drained, dry and the site of young trees growing in neat rows with no hint of CP between them. At that point in this 1975 commentary, I expressed the view that eventually many of our CP species would find their last refuges in well-grown greenhouses, botanical gardens and a few preserves that could be secured.

In Vol. 5, pp. 3-4, we finally printed a lengthy editorial on our feelings concerning CPN's responsibility to conservation. Some readers had felt that the very existence of CPN had fanned such interest that we had incited rampant bacchanals of collecting from the field, and that in our annual list of CP commercial suppliers were listed companies which readers felt collected from the field. We stated our personal concern for conservation. We also announced that ensuing plant supplier lists (which were always published as a service to readers and never endorsed by us) would have those dealers who guaranteed that they sold only propagated material so marked. We also stated our primary concern for massive, mechanized habitat destruction as the primary problem in conservation. Finally, we supported legitimate "plant rescue" projects, such as those undertaken with regularity by the NC Botanical Garden. Such rescue operations should only be undertaken if site destruction is assured and imminent, and if translocation plans for the plants are reasonable. The Garden has handled this

responsibly. Purists argue that translocation measures and propagation in botanical gardens, greenhouses and private collections are not the final answer. None of us say it is. The only reasonable approach can be preservation and security of large land tracts. But we saw—and still see—why clearly doomed plants of a specific site should not simply be bulldozed if they can be translocated for various legitimate purposes.

I think by now you get the point that we feel that we have given conservation its mention and our support over the years. My documentation stops at Vol. 5 above, but various brief and longer discussions of the problem occur in later issues as well at about the same frequency, and I will not bore you by listing more of them; they are there.

In the meantime, what has been accomplished? More commercial suppliers are propagating now, although some still do some collecting. The US Fish and Wildlife Service is sluggishly plodding in the deep muck of lack of personnel, lack of funds and lack of political interest, so the Federal Endangered Species Acts are having variable effects at best. CITES enforcement twitches now and then, but botanically inexperienced port inspectors are asked to identify plant material on the basis of line drawings and descriptions, and could they really tell an *S. oreophila* (protected, and maybe used as a labeling cover by the unscrupulous) on the basis of those pretty drawings, the descriptions and their lack of experience and real interest?

In the United States, government activity is at best inefficient. True, our wilderness areas have recently been expanded, and there are laws about taking plant material from local, state or national government lands (this while lumber companies sheer and crush square miles of national forest yearly). But the laws are unenforceable for many obvious practical reasons. We always seem to get back to this business of practicality—reality versus pronouncements and dreams.

I think the best hope for any specific land tract conservation effort (which, as you know, is what I believe to be the best effort to

EDITOR'S CORNER by Don Schnell

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Carnivorous Plant Newsletter is now entering its eleventh year, and those who have been with us all the way or at least for a greater part of those ten previous years have watched this publication grow from a small offset looseleaf format to our present fine journal with wide-ranging articles and features serving many interests worldwide. CPN is widely respected, is now being carried by more libraries, and even crops up now and then in formal journal or book bibliographies.

One of the most popular services we offer is the CPN Seed Bank, which is quite capably and generously run by Patrick Dwyer. Patrick receives no remuneration for his efforts and gives time from a very busy schedule to keep things running smoothly. It does not take much imagination to realize that the Seed Bank operation is not at all an easy matter, but Patrick has welded order and promptness out of this most difficult challenge.

The Seed Bank belongs to every ICPS member, of course. Obviously, the seeds must come from somewhere, from members who are willing to take the time to carefully pollinate and then collect seed. For donating seed, the member receives at least two rewards: credits for drawing seed from the Seed Bank at no charge, and the satisfaction of his contribution to CPN and other members.

The seventy-five cents per packet charge for seeds requested by non-contributors is fair and appropriate. It helps cover Patrick's cost for containers, wrapping and mailing. Any money in excess of that required by Patrick for expenses is turned over to CPN and used to cover the costs of printing and mailing. Last year, there was sufficient money from the Seed Bank alone to cover the text printing costs of nearly one whole issue.

The unrelenting rise in printing and postage costs has been your editors' most nettling problem these past years, and we anticipate no less of a problem for the foreseeable future. This year we are able to hold membership fees to last year's level by increasing efficiency of operations, and by anticipating Seed Bank returns. No small journal of this kind can exist for long on membership dues alone, for it would soon price itself out of the market.

So, help yourself out as a member who wants this journal to remain at its high level and to grow still more in order to best serve your purpose. Set aside a few minutes to produce seed from your plants to donate to the CPN Seed Bank. The Seed Bank needs a constant influx of increasingly varied material to continue to be a service to all of you.

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save any species or stand of plants) seems to be in the private sector where Nature Conservancy and, on a smaller scale, the National Audubon Society have recently made some truly fine coups in saving land sites of all sizes and kinds throughout the country. Skillfully operated by business-wise leaders and supported by thousands of private individual members (of which I am one) and many large corporate members as well, the Nature Conservancy in particular has often beat developers at their own game and saved

critical habitats that would have been doomed. Now we are talking nose-to-nose, across-the-line reality. The tracts are acquired through either donation or purchase, and then managed by local chapters until other suitable arrangements guaranteeing security can be made.

In the meantime, the co-editors of CPN, the publisher of CPN, and we believe the vast majority of our subscribers do indeed support conservation efforts and will continue to do so.