

THE SLOW DEATH OF SUITLAND BOG
by Robert Czerwony

of those interested in conservation of wild carnivorous plant sites, and particularly those living in the Washington, D.C. area, will be sad to hear of the imminent destruction of yet another wild site--Suitland Bog in Maryland.

years ago I spent many summer weekends in Suitland Bog. The plants grew on a small spring-slope which drained into a larger swampy stream area and included Drosera intermedia, Drosera filiformis, and Sarracenia purpurea. Several fine specimens of Dionaea, descendants of a crop of fly-traps planted there five years earlier, were also to be found. Anyone who experienced the wonder of visiting one of these sites knows what a precious, irreplaceable part of our natural resources they are, and can understand why I was disturbed to find that a short distance above the bog a large cleared area adjacent to an apartment complex, was patiently waiting for some future expansion.

August I drove to Washington for a few days and visited the bog again. It was much more difficult to find than it had been, and what was most disturbing to me was that the boundaries of the cleared area had been expanded; in several places roads had been cut directly across the main drainage of the swamp, and worst of all, an access road had been cleared through the very base of the swamp, accelerating drainage of the entire area. When at length I found the slope, the area supporting the plants had shrunk to less than half of what it had been. Sarracenia population was nearly wiped out, the ground there having dried fully and been overgrown by the advancing trees, while the total number of Drosera was down to about a third of what I had previously observed. At the current rate of drainage, all the CP species would probably be gone in another two years even if left undisturbed. Most ominous was what appeared to be a surveying stake planted right at the foot of the slope. New areas on either side of the bog had been bulldozed and filled, auguring no good for the survival of the Suitland plants.

There is a way to save the plants, though nothing will help the bog itself. We needn't sit back and watch them get buried for the greater glory and profit of another apartment complex, for there is a nearby carnivorous plant-supporting bog in Cedarville State Forest, Maryland. It is close enough for three or four determined people to transplant the entire remaining CP population of Suitland Bog to the protection of the state forest which is controlled by permanently-stationed rangers.

I am really unable to do much more (gas, tolls and meals to and from Cleveland is no small matter), though I did remove some excellent flowering Drosera which are all doing well. I would like to suggest that all those CP enthusiasts in the Washington, D.C. area take some action in this matter. Collect a small number, transplant the rest. It is far preferable to fighting for the bulldozer and cement trucks. If anyone interested does not know the exact location of the bog, write to me at 574-C Corkhill Rd. #319, Bedford, Ohio 44146, or call J. Schetler at the Smithsonian, who has visited the bog.

I will be working on propagating those plants I have collected and would rather have them used and traded among knowledgeable CP collectors than simply watch them be razed for a parking lot. Over a year ago I purchased a dozen flytraps from a commercial grower, but will never need to again, for through bulb-splitting and leaf propagation I have over fifty healthy plants today and expect to have even greater success with the Drosera. It is a sad thought that in another fifty years these plants may have been exploited and eliminated out of most of their wild sites, and survive only in collections and protected areas, but that is better than going the way of the passenger pigeon.

I would be most interested to hear from anyone in the Washington, D.C. area regarding the plants or future of Suitland Bog.

MEASURING ACTION POTENTIALS IN DIONAEA

by Dave Dubosky

Recently I was working on an experiment involving potentials in Venus' flytraps and I thought some of my findings would be of interest to you.

One of my references (Joseph R. DiPalma, Robert Mohl, and William Best, Jr., "Action Potential and Contraction of Dionaea muscipula" Science, Vol. 133, March 24, 1961) that best explained things to me told me much, except how to and where to attach the electrodes to the plants (the electrodes are connected to an instrument that picks up electrical currents, or potentials, in the plants). After much experimentation, we discovered that the electrodes should be attached to the outside of the trap itself and not to the petiole as we had once thought. I connected the electrodes using "Glycerin and Rosewater", a hand lotion that not only is sticky enough to hold them to the plant, but gives good electrical contact. The electrodes themselves were made of aluminum foil, for they must be flexible in order to stay attached during the closing of the trap.