

A VACATIONER'S GUIDE TO CARNIVOROUS PLANT LOCATIONS

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In 1961, National Geographic Magazine published an article by Paul Zahl (1961) entitled “Plants that eat insects.” This was followed by a related article (Zahl 1964) entitled “Malaysia’s giant flowers and insect-trapping plants.” Although I was just a young teenager at the time, these two articles introduced me to the fascinating and bizarre world of carnivorous plants, and created a curiosity in me that has persisted to this day. In the first article, Zahl discussed the world of Venus fly traps, sundews and American pitcher plants and created a bog terrarium of carnivorous plants that came from the only company at that time from which one could easily obtain these, *i.e.*, the Carolina Biological Supply Company. In the second article he wrote about the more exotic pitcher plants from Borneo in the *Nepenthes* family.

It wasn't long after that that I placed an order and created my own bog terrarium with these fascinating plants. Although these lived only a short period a time, it set the stage for further purchases over many years that peaked with the successful growth of *Nepenthes* plants in my basement under halogen lights. Although I have often thought of field trips to see carnivorous plants growing in their natural location, the demands of career and family have kept me from doing this. In addition, it has appeared to be very difficult to find the exact locations of such plants because of their endangered status. I have subscribed to Carnivorous Plant Newsletter for nearly two decades and have always



Figure 1: View of Bog Trail from boardwalk in Pacific Rim National Park, Vancouver Island, Canada.



Figure 2: *Drosera rotundifolia* among sphagnum moss as seen along Bog Trail.

noted how circumspect the authors are in describing the location of their finds, although I certainly understand and agree with their concerns.

However, during the last three years, three distinct opportunities unexpectedly arose in which I was able to observe and photograph different species of carnivorous plants in their natural settings, without the need for any special permits, hiking through bogs or swamps or hours spent researching possible locations. By sheer coincidence, during vacations taken for other reasons, I found carnivorous plants growing in the wild! Not only are the sites themselves not secret, but in fact are well publicized in literature available at the parks. These locations are also easily accessible on well-maintained trails and present good photo opportunities.

The first site is in the Pacific Rim National Park on Vancouver Island in Canada. This is a magnificent temperate rainforest situated on the west side of Vancouver Island on Highway 4 between Ucluelet and Tofino. Located along the main road connecting these two cities and inside the national park is a trail clearly labeled, “Bog Trail.” This trail consists of an easy hike on a boardwalk over a swamp that is in fact handicapped accessible. Scattered through this bog, with many growing right along the side of the trail, are thousands of *Drosera* plants. My wife and I visited this park in August, 2007, and it wasn’t until we got there and I read the park’s brochure on the trails that I knew about the presence of these plants. Figure 1 gives an overview of the bog as taken from the boardwalk and Figure 2 is a close-up the sundews growing along the side of the trail.

The second site also was not known about in advance, and was discovered when we visited Algonquin Provincial Park in Ontario, Canada in May, 2008. This park is located in northern Ontario along Highway 60 and is a nature lover’s delight with an abundance of wildlife and trails. Near the east end of the park is a trail, clearly labeled “Spruce Bog Boardwalk.” Like the previously mentioned trail, this is an easily hiked boardwalk that covers a large bog/swamp. The park’s brochure gives the location where *Sarracenia purpurea* plants can be seen and photographed from the trail



Figure 3: Overview of bog as seen from Spruce Bog Boardwalk in Algonquin Provincial Park, Ontario, Canada.



Figure 4: Close-up of *Sarracenia purpurea* growing near trail.

itself. Figure 3, gives a view of the bog as seen from the boardwalk, while Figure 4 is a close-up of plants growing near the edge of the trail. Note that due to the early time of the year there (May), the plants were only just beginning to come out of their winter dormancy.



Figure 5: Darlingtonia Wayside Park north of Florence, Oregon on US Highway 101.



Figure 6: Field of *Darlingtonia californica* growing near trail in park.

The third and final location was easily the most spectacular of all. This site is located approximately five miles north of Florence, Oregon on US Highway 101 and is in a small state park named Darlingtonia Wayside. This park consists of a small circular loop boardwalk, and at the midpoint of the boardwalk are hundreds, if not thousands, of mature specimens of *Darlingtonia californica*.

Many of these are nearly three feet in height, and we had the pleasure of visiting this site in August, 2008. The sign at the park entrance (see Figure 5) clearly states the presence of the many plants visible for viewing and picture taking (see Figure 6).

These three sites demonstrate that the casual vacationer with an interest can find many locations where carnivorous plants are available to view in accessible locations and without the need for any special permits. Also, as the sites are all advertized as having carnivorous plants by the parks themselves, the concern of maintenance of secrecy for the location is avoided. My final hope is that sometime while I am vacationing in the Southeast portion of the United States that I am able to find similar viewing locations for the Venus fly trap!

References

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