

# WAGNER NATURAL AREA NEWSLETTER

Volume 13 Number 1 April 1999



Newsletter of the Wagner Natural Area Society, Management Committee  
and Volunteer Stewards of Wagner Natural Area, Parkland County, Alberta

## Wagner—Let the Good Times Roll!

Wagner Society has been fortunate in being on the receiving end of both money and attention from various sources recently. This largesse allows us to increase our level of activity and move ahead with our goals in research, monitoring and interpretation.

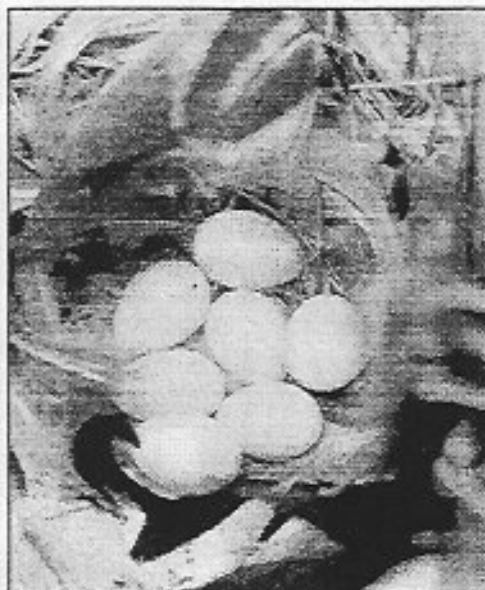
### Moth Project - Year II

For the second year running we have been awarded a grant from Canada Trust Friends of the Environment Foundation for the collection and storage of moths captured in Wagner. This year's sum of \$3,065 will enable us to purchase more collecting equipment, for example, a generator to run the lights used to attract moths—and to top up the summer student's salary. We are of course anxiously waiting to hear whether we have been successful again in getting the federal grant for the summer student under the Summer Career Placement Program. All set to go, providing the funds come through, is third-year University of Alberta student **Albert Ngui**. (Indeed Albert has already been out collecting some early-flying moths.) Albert specializes in entomology and for the past three years has volunteered as an interpreter in the Bug Room at the Provincial Museum.

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It's that time of year again!

Above: a normal clutch of seven Tree Swallow eggs.

*Photo by Edgar T. Jones*

### New Nest Boxes

1999 should see an increase in Tree Swallow production, according to **Eddie Jones**, longtime wildlife photographer and film-maker and Wagner Society director. Eddie has added five new boxes along the east-side fence line bordering the extension of Highway 794, bringing to a total of 30 the number of Tree Swallow/Bluebird boxes along Wagner's fence lines. In addition, Eddie has placed three Goldeneye Duck/Owl boxes, two of them in the beaver pond east of Atim Road.



## The Wagner Grapevine



...continued from page 1

### **Biophysical Inventory**

At long last it looks as if we are on the way to truly scientific monitoring, thanks to the provincial government. A project team consisting of personnel from the Resource Data Division, Northern East Slopes Region, Protected Areas and Water Management (all provincial government), with input from **Derek Johnson** as the Wagner liaison and Dr. **Bert Finnamore** of the Provincial Museum, is planning a biophysical inventory for Wagner that will include detailed soil and vegetation inventories and testing of water quality. This will provide the baseline data necessary for future monitoring of ecosystems and biodiversity. Also, as part of the water monitoring, another water-level observation well will likely be installed in addition to the three (one automatic, the other two requiring manual measurement) already in place in Wagner. For the future, a transect complete with properly established monitoring stations is envisaged. Monitoring could also involve further collection and archiving of invertebrates, similar to the that undertaken by the Provincial Museum in 1985.

Wagner as a biologically diverse protected area that is close to settlement and therefore likely to be subject to change and stress is an ideal site to monitor. Further impetus for scientific monitoring comes from Wagner's recent listing as an EMAN (Ecological Monitoring and Assessment Network) site under Environment Canada.

### **Donations in Kind**

Wagner Society is fortunate to benefit from the labours of **Mel Movold**, a chemical engineer from Dow Chemical who is topping up his pension entitlement by doing community work.

Mel is searching records on Wagner topics and will set up a website for us.

### **New Trail Guide**

This summer we will be spending some time going carefully over the Marl Pond Trail with a view to re-writing or updating the trail guide booklet. The County of Parkland Community Services is kindly providing a grant of about \$1,000 for printing the booklet once the content is finalized. If readers have suggestions on what they would like to see included in the guide, give us a call at our voice mail, 988-4477.

### **Inaugural Meeting of Volunteer Stewards' Association, May 15**

All Natural Areas stewards are encouraged to attend the inaugural general meeting of SAPAA (Stewards of Alberta's Protected Areas Association) at Pigeon Lake Provincial Park on Saturday, May 15 at 1:30 p.m. This meeting will be part of a Natural Resources Service Volunteer Recognition weekend May 14-16 at Pigeon Lake group campground. (For more information call 780-438-8071 or e-mail [mshannon@oanet.com](mailto:mshannon@oanet.com).) **Alison Dinwoodie** recently chaired the third organizational meeting of SAPAA. This arm's-length organization would cooperate with the government while advocating for protected areas and stewards' issues, and would enable stewards to exchange information and expertise.

### **Natural Heritage Act**

The status of natural and protected areas remains in question as this widely criticized act is before the legislature. For more insight on the NHA see Peter Lee's article on pp. 5 and 6 of the newsletter.

#### Wagner Society Executive, 1999

<b>President:</b>	<b>Pat Clayton (456-9046)</b>	<b>Past President/Treasurer:</b>	<b>Dave Ealey (422-0858)</b>
<b>V-P:</b>	<b>Irl Miller (455-3866)</b>	<b>Secretary/Editor/Membership:</b>	<b>Patsy Cotterill (481-1525)</b>
<b>Directors:</b>	<b>Leota Cummins (447-4256)</b>	<b>Alice Hendry (962-4836)</b>	<b>Beth Jenkins (458-1794)</b>
	<b>Derek Johnson (436-8231)</b>	<b>Edgar Jones (436-5327)</b>	

## Meanings and Memories: A Personal Perspective on Wagner Natural Area

by Beth Jenkins

Wagner Natural Area is more than a pretty piece of land for the Jenkins family. It is a place associated with family togetherness, special friendships, personal growth and a sense of wonder and renewal.

Our association with this place began in 1984, when Barry joined the group of volunteer stewards caring for, and managing, this natural treasure. Our whole family has always enjoyed the outdoors, and so we "tagged along" for fall and spring clean-ups, nature walks and monthly monitoring duties.

Glenn remembers the special bond with his father that built during quiet walks when Barry took his turn as monthly monitor. One icy winter day, with clear cold blue sky, and a hushed silence within the shelter of the trees along the Cabin Trail, stands out in his mind. Solo memories include mornings doing the Breeding Bird Survey, as a Naturalist Custodian (a position that gave more than one summer student a start in an environmental career).

Michael recalls the "cool" summer job he had as well. He enjoyed the solitude and the beauty even though the job had him getting up before the "crack of dawn"—in June this means 4 a.m.—to conduct the breeding bird survey.

My childhood love of wild flowers rekindled as I learned the names of so many plants from Patsy Cotterill, Alice Hendry, Derek Johnson and Pat Clayton. I shared the naming of wild flowers by pointing out the marsh marigold to the four-year-old granddaughter of a cousin, on a Mother's Day walk for the family. Four years later, I can still recall her delighted cries of "There's one! There's some more!!" as she noted the golden clusters of blooms, like patches of sunlight, gleaming beneath the dark spruce and the budding willow and aspen.

All of us felt as threatened by the road issues as if the roads were running by the front

door of the family home. We were deeply relieved when the EIA recommended a more easterly placement of the Villeneuve road extension—and even more relieved to hear that a proposed service road, parallel to Highway 16, would not be constructed—at least not at this time.

Wagner Natural Area links us to the memory of a husband and father who gave much of his time to being a volunteer steward. As volunteer stewards ourselves, my sons and I find comfort and a special connection, with memories and with friends who share the memories, as we continue to care for this special, lovely place.



Barry Jenkins' memorial bench in the solitude of the Cabin Trail.

Photo by Patsy Cotterill

*What does Wagner mean to you? We invite our members and visitors to write about special memories that they associate with Wagner. For example, a fond recollection of mine is of the spring when we cleaned up a pile of rusty metal on the east side of the Wagner property, including an old car licence plate dating back to*

*the 1930s! Beth was with us, though Barry, already unwell, was back resting in the car. It was one of those years when there were almost no mosquitoes, and we went on sitting there for ages in the dry woods under the huge white spruce...relaxing after our labours and drinking in the tranquillity and the togetherness. Ed.*

**Wagner Natural Area Society  
Annual Financial Statement for 1998**

Expenses		Revenue	
Bank Charges	\$ 2.25	Donation Box	\$ 240.85
Dues and Subscriptions	\$ 58.00	General Donations	\$ 715.66
Insurance	\$ 510.00	Dues (Membership)	\$ 330.00
Newsletter	\$ 281.35	Grants	\$9,299.00
Office Expenses	\$ 215.53	Interest (GICs)	\$ 135.63
Office Supplies	\$ 61.56	Miscellaneous (hay, research rental)	\$ 675.00
Payroll (Wages)	\$4,418.79	Sales, etc.	\$ 7.50
Payroll (Other)	\$ 531.12	<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>\$11,403.64</b>
Postage	\$ 29.79		
Printing (Copying)	\$ 8.03	<b>TOTAL REVENUE LESS EXPENSE</b>	<b>\$ 617.21</b>
Recognition Award	\$ 86.19		
Rent	\$ 50.83	Chequing at Jan. 1, 1998	\$2,267.49
Research (Moth Project)	\$4,498.81	Chequing at Dec. 31, 1998	\$2,937.09
Research (Other)	\$ 34.18	Difference	\$670.60
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$10,786.43</b>	Less Payables	\$ 52.39
		Chequebook Balance (Increase over 1997)	\$617.21 BALANCED

## TOTAL ASSETS (as of Dec. 31, 1998)

C.I.B.C. Chequing		\$ 2,937.09
Less payables		\$ 52.39
Chequebook Balance		\$ 2,884.70
G.I.C. Investment Certificates	1.	\$ 2,101.59
	2.	\$ 3,500.00
	3.	\$ 5,569.46
<b>TOTAL G.I.C.s</b>		<b>\$11,171.05</b>

**TOTAL ASSETS** **\$14,055.75**

Fixed assets such as buildings, access road, fence, trails & boardwalk and signs were valued at \$34,623.42 at Dec. 31, 1997. Depreciation at 15% leads to a fixed asset valuation of \$29,429.91 for Dec. 31, 1998.

*Submitted January 28, 1999 by David M. Ealey, Treasurer*

**Wagner Field Trips, 1999**

**Thursday, May 6. Annual Frog-and-Toad Walk with Wayne Roberts.** Meet at the main gate at 6:30 p.m. or join Wayne on the Marl Pond Trail boardwalk anytime thereafter.

**Saturday, May 8. "Mosses and lichens in the field with hand lens."** Join leader **Derek Johnson** at the main gate at 10 a.m. for a look at the less well-known flora of Wagner.

**Sunday, May 30. Annual May Count of Plant Species in Flower.** Meet at the main gate at 10 a.m. Bring a lunch if you plan to stay for the whole day. Call Patsy at 481-1525 for info.

**Sunday, June 20. Orchid Walk.** Meet Society members at the main gate at 10 a.m. for another traditionally-offered field trip.

Dress appropriately for the weather and wear footwear suitable for wet ground. Enquiries: Call Wagner voice mail at 988-4477.

## Heritage Act (Bill 15) Enshrines Conflict, Failure

By Peter Lee

The Alberta Government's Bill 15, the proposed Natural Heritage Act, will preserve neither natural areas nor our heritage. Introduced on March 2 1999 by Environmental Protection Minister Ty Lund, Bill 15 passed second reading shortly after and is now awaiting the 'slam-dunk' third reading. Yet, as drafted, Bill 15 will enshrine the primacy of industrial uses within 'protected areas.'

### Alberta Government, Tree-hugger

Alberta, like all Canadian provinces, territories and the federal government, enthusiastically committed itself to World Wildlife Fund's "Endangered Spaces" campaign, launched in 1989, which calls for lands from each of Canada's ecological regions to be set aside in sufficient sizes to have a network of protected areas with ecological integrity. This work was to be done by 2000. In fact, Alberta signed the national Statement of Commitment to Complete Canada's Networks of Protected Areas which articulates the "political will to complete Canada's network of protected natural areas by the year 2000."

Premier Klein's and Alberta's specific commitment was through the made-in-Alberta Special Places program, with a "vision to preserve representative examples of each of the province's six natural regions and 20 sub-regions." Meet the Alberta Government, tree hugger!

### Alberta's Special Places, bottom-feeding performance

Subsequent to receiving provincial, national and international accolades for enthusiastically endorsing wilderness protection, Alberta has since striven hard to be the bottom-feeder in performance on protected areas, in comparison with other Canadian jurisdictions.

Of the 46 sites claimed by Government as protected under Special Places and covering an area nearly the size of Prince Edward Island (5,176 km<sup>2</sup> or about 0.8% of Alberta), 24 were established before the Special Places process began and 10 were established in spite of the Special Places process, leaving 12 sites that were established as a result of going through the

tortuous Special Places process. Twelve sites in 4 years is a remarkable under-achievement! Ontario recently announced sweeping designations of 25,000 km<sup>2</sup> in 378 sites, bringing to 12% the protection of 45% of the province.

Of Alberta's 46 sites claimed for protection, no reputable organization or agency would count all 46 as protected areas. For example, the 1,041 km<sup>2</sup> Castle Forest Land Use Zone allows logging, petroleum drilling and rampant off-highway vehicle use. An estimated 8 of the 46 sites allow industrial uses. About 76% of all the protected lands and waters currently in Alberta were established before 1930. Since 1930, progress on establishing wilderness has moved at a snail's pace, or often not at all for years and years, while the pace of industrialization is staggering.

And now Bill 15, the proposed new Natural Heritage Act enters the scene as part of the dismal failure of Special Places.

### Industrial Primacy

Bill 15 is one of the numerous staggering outcomes of Alberta's dismal Special Places program. The Alberta Government says it will consolidate protected areas legislation, provide greater clarity to Albertans on what is protected, and enshrine a natural heritage legacy that Albertans hold dear. Meet the Alberta Government again, tree-hugger.

Bill 15 will do nothing of the sort, as numerous reviews by environmentalists and legal experts conclude. It is so bad that many environmentalists are pursuing trade sanctions against Alberta under the environmental side agreements to the North American Free Trade Agreement.

Buried within Bill 15 is a section that preserves, not natural heritage, but existing industrial rights in any land set aside for protection. And how much would that be? Well, according to the MLA chair of the Special Places Provincial Coordinating Committee, about 90% of Alberta's land "has been auctioned off to business interests." Given that another 8% of Alberta is in National Parks, thank God, that means it will be all but impossible to set aside lands unburdened by industrial use rights, so all

of the new 'protected areas' will be open to oil and gas drilling, logging and mining as they are now. Worse, Bill 15 uses language that is "enabling resource extraction or industrial activity or access to it" (Section 26). Is there a shred of intent to withdraw, phase out or negotiate the removal of industrial uses, as is the normal case in other jurisdictions' protected areas legislation? Not a shred! Even designated areas that have no industrial activities will be allowed to have new industrial activities after designation.

It gets worse. Alberta's Environmental Law Centre published a 61-page legal review of Bill 15 (available at <www.elc.ab.ca>). Among the more than 40 major recommendations is the comment on another buried bombshell—Section 10. "And what is most remarkable about this section (Section 10) is that it allows permits to be issued even though they may be contrary to the Act. This means that Bill 15 could allow nearly every kind of environmental destruction. It doesn't matter what the Act says about the category of protection, permitted or prohibited uses and so on. Bill 15 is written so that permits trump all. All that is required is a Minister's regulation that allows activities to be permitted. So, the Minister has the right, in effect, to override any protective measures in the Act by allowing a use or activity by permit... the permit could be a useful tool to get around so-called prohibitions on development."

### **Industry is Wilderness, War is Peace, Brown is Green!**

Like the Ministry of Truth in George Orwell's nightmare novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, whose lies included the famous phrase "war is peace," Minister Lund, in Bill 15, has come up with his own bit of Newspeak: Industry is wilderness.

In Section 1, Bill 15 takes the unusual step of giving the Minister the authority to define any term in the Bill by regulation. Although it is common for legislation to provide that certain definitions may be set in the regulations, it is less common for the Minister to be able to define every term in the Bill that has not been defined in the Bill. There is no justification provided for this unusual provision.

"Special Places is extremely successful."  
"The program has made tremendous progress."  
(recent Ty Lund quotes). Yeah! Industry is wilderness! Brown is green! War is peace!  
Welcome to George Orwell's Ministry of Truth!

### **What Do Albertans Want?**

The year-long public review of pending protected areas legislation was summarized in the Government's web page. On the issue of industrial activities and existing resource commitments: "the majority of respondents view the government's policy of honoring existing resource commitments as being incompatible with the purposes of protected areas." The response from Government is that "the existing policy will be maintained."

In 1994, a World Wildlife Fund poll found that 93% of Albertans favor protecting the province's landscapes and wildlife by setting aside areas where no logging, mining or other industrial activity is permitted. It also found the overwhelming majority of Albertans believe the province's performance in protecting its wilderness has an impact on Alberta's image in the international marketplace.

Bill 15 will be changed, according to Minister Ty Lund, but he is mum on what those changes might be. When asked by the University of Alberta to send any representative whatsoever to attend a public panel discussion on Special Places and Bill 15, Minister Ty Lund declined, on the grounds that bills before the legislature should not be debated by government representatives in other venues. Huh? In other jurisdictions governments actually have to debate and defend their policies, and this is considered to be normal practice. In this case, Albertans seem to deserve only managed public "consultation." Heaven forbid that Government should actually have to present a coherent defence of Special Places or Bill 15 in a reasoned dialogue with informed critics!

### **What Can You Do?**

Two simple things to do are as follows:  
Write a letter to your favorite newspaper. A letter in the *Edmonton Journal* reaches up to 450,000 of your fellow Albertans and it only costs you the price of a stamp. And write Premier Klein. Only he can rein in his Ministers.

*Peter Lee worked in the provincial government's Natural and Protected Areas program for many years. He is now Alberta director of the World Wildlife Fund. He has intimate knowledge of the Special Places 2000 program.*

## Director's Profile: Patsy Cotterill



Common threads running my life have been my interest in natural history, especially plants, and the sadness of living at a time when there are more people on earth than at any other and of having to witness the relentless

destruction of nature through human onslaught. I made my first protest on behalf of conservation in Britain when I was 8 years old: my father replaced a beautiful slope of native grass in our backyard with terraces and a sad, soggy lawn, because otherwise, he said, the neighbours would complain about our unimproved garden and call him lazy. Alas, this is a common sentiment today!

I gained a B.Sc. degree in botany from Liverpool University but was neither disciplined nor talented enough to take up a career in biological research. In fact, at university, my interest in botany was at an all-time low. However, after a stint in Cambridge, U.K., writing biological abstracts for the Commonwealth Agricultural Bureaux, I married and spent the next five years in Zambia. Here isolation in miombo on plateau (a type of Zambian landscape) along with the challenge of tropical biodiversity, revived my botanical curiosity wonderfully. In 1970 I emigrated to Canada with my family. Arriving in November in Manitoba north of '56, I waited impatiently to make my acquaintance with the flora of the boreal forest, one of North America's great ecoregions. It was nearly seven months before I

could begin to use what was to become my bible for the next eight years, Scoggan's *Flora of Manitoba*. Later, a couple of years in Winnipeg afforded me a glimpse of the tall-grass prairie, or its remnants, and a chance to be involved in planning a trail system for Assiniboine Park. I moved to Edmonton in 1981 and have lived here ever since, apart from an illuminating year in Regina, 1986-1987, which allowed me to get acquainted with the plants and wildlife of the drier southern prairies.

I first set foot in Wagner in April 1982, with a class of Dr. Dale Vitt's moss students from the University of Alberta. I was hooked immediately! I could hardly wait for the seasons to unfold as I went back time after time that year, learning the species of calcareous fens, knowledge that is applicable to similar plant communities all over the province. It was a year of revelation for me, and sparked my interest in joining the inchoate Wagner committee, then being organized in the face of a threat to the Natural Area from road development. Apart from my year in Saskatchewan, I have been associated with the Wagner Society since 1983, mostly as recording secretary, but in later years also as newsletter editor, and latterly, since Janice Cantafio's untimely death, as membership secretary. I feel privileged to contribute to this dedicated team, and have been amply rewarded, both by the friendship of my fellow committee members and by the interest and pleasure Wagner itself affords.

In the last few years as a member of the Edmonton Natural History Club, I have become involved in urban conservation, particularly in the now successful campaign to save Little Mountain Natural Area in northeast Edmonton.

Any questions or concerns? Call our answering machine at 988-4477 or write us at Wagner Natural Area Society, Box 11, Site 290, RR2, Stony Plain, AB T7Z 1X2.

## Wildflowers of Wagner No. 15\*

### Gristle Lichen

by Derek Johnson

Gristle lichen, *Ramalina roesleri* (Hochst. ex Schaer.) Hue, was reported to occur in the Wagner Natural Area by Jan Marsh in 1986 when she did her baseline study of lichens in the Edmonton area. Unfortunately, a specimen of it that was supposedly deposited in the University of Alberta herbarium (ALTA) has not yet been found (it was possibly re-identified as some other species).

This lichen is very rare in Alberta. The only confirmed specimen that I have been able to find so far is one of George Turner's collections from the late 1950s in the Fort Saskatchewan area, identified by John Thomson and deposited in the University of Wisconsin herbarium (WIS). This lichen is related to the beard lichens (*Usnea* spp.) and usually grows on twigs, especially of conifers. It is a fruticose or tufted lichen, with branches that are flattened and angular in cross section, unlike the rounded branches of the beard lichens. In addition, the branches are hollow and perforated like a coarse sieve, a characteristic it shares with punctured gristle lichen, *Ramalina dilacerata* (Hoffm.) Hoffm., a more common tree-dwelling species. Unlike the latter species it has small, granular soredia (a common means of vegetative reproduction in lichens) near the end of the often hooked branches. Stunted shade forms of cartilage lichen (*Ramalina farinacea* Ach.) can also resemble gristle lichen, but they do not have the perforated branches and the plants are less richly branched.

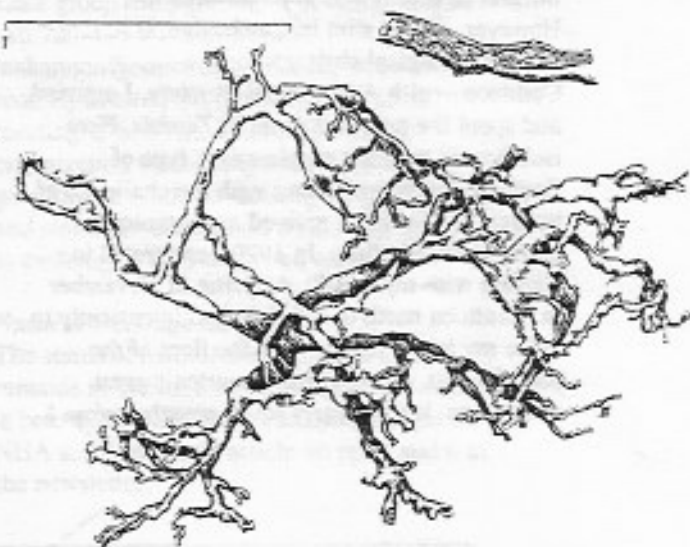
Secondary branching in gristle lichen is often at right angles to the primary stem, giving the plant quite a bushy appearance. It is a relatively small tufted lichen (1–3 cm tall) with pale greenish to whitish, smooth, shining branches, 1–2 mm wide. This species very rarely produces fruiting bodies (apothecia). In many respects it looks like a miniature reindeer lichen growing on the branches of trees. It is circumpolar-boreal, but in North America is most abundant along the west coast from Alaska to Oregon and from northern Ontario eastwards, with few records in between.

### *Ramalina roesleri* (Hochst ex Schaer.) Hue Ramalinaceae

#### References

- McCune, B. and L. Geiser. 1997. *Macrolichens of the Pacific Northwest*. Oregon State University Press, Corvallis, OR. See p. 261 for a beautiful color photograph of the species.
- Thomson, J.W. 1984. *American Arctic Lichens. 1. The Macrolichens*. Columbia University Press, New York, New York. pp. 233-235.

\* Lichens are hardly wildflowers, of course. Their distinctive bodies (thalli) are the result of a symbiotic relationship between a fungus and an alga, which until recently put them in a group all their own, but now they have been re-classified as fungi. However, we retain the "wildflower" name for this regular feature of the newsletter, which profiles plants found in Wagner Natural Area—not that a fungus is a plant, of course. Oh dear, oh dear! Ed.



Drawing from Thomson, 1984. See reference above.