

Native Plant Society of Northeastern Ohio

Thompson Ledges in Geauga County

Wildflower Walk Archives



9 April 2014



Thompson Ledges rock cap ferns & geology

Lisa K. SchlaG 2014

Semi-warm and sunny weather encouraged ten people to attend the second spring wildflower walk of 2014. We were not the only group at Thompson Ledges that evening. A geology class was also there. I began the walk by sharing some of the history of the Thompson Ledges site and by passing around a photograph of the sixteen room hotel and dance hall that once stood at the location of the current shelter house overlooking the ledges.



Hemlock, *Tsuga canadensis* Lisa K. SchlaG 2014

We proceeded to spend the evening walking along the Sharon Conglomerate ledges pointing out members of the hemlock/northern hardwood community. This plant community occurs here due to the cold Lake Erie winds that blow up and over the ledges dropping snow and rain due to the orographic lifting.

Several other plants were observed during the walk. The many deeply furrowed chestnut oak trees, *Quercus montana*, produced a large crop of acorns last fall. Many of the ground fallen nuts had begun germinating. Rock cap fern, *Polypodium virginianum*, hung over the edges of the rocks.

Untouched by wildlife despite the harsh winter, groundcovers such as partridgeberry, *Mitchella repens*, and wintergreen, *Gaultheria procumbens*, were full of last year's berries. Common along the ledges, lowbush blueberry, *Vaccinium angustifolium*, had yet to show signs of leaves or flowers.



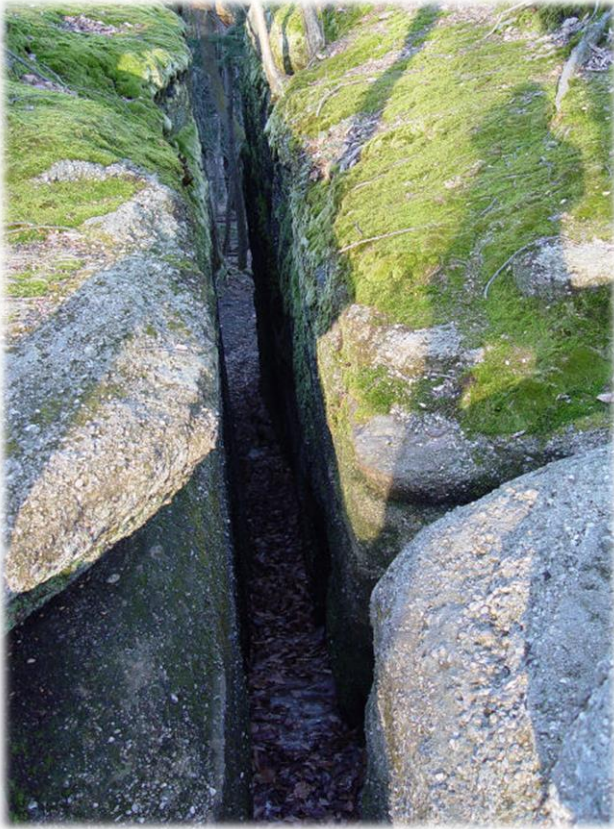
Partridgeberry, *Mitchella repens* Lisa K. SchlaG 2014



Wintergreen, *Gaultheria procumbens*
Lisa K. SchlaG 2014

Our main goal for the evening was to see the trailing arbutus, *Epigaea repens*, also known as mayflower, blooming. Though it's usually in bloom by this time, this year the flower buds of

the three patches observed were still tightly formed and about three weeks behind. According to folklore, this was the first plant the Pilgrims saw their first spring and as a symbol of life anew they named it after their ship the Mayflower.



Thompson Ledges geology

Lisa K. SchlaG 2014

Other geological aspects of the site were interesting to observe -- from the cracks and crevices in the rocks to the long-distance view of Pennsylvania from the gazebo with the Grand River valley in the foreground. The group proceeded along the south end of the ledges where we viewed the Sidley's mining operation and the fine sand produced before making our way back to the parking lot.

Naturalists Kent Scott, Doug Yates, and Tom Yates shared information about the plants we encountered. This made for an enjoyable evening of sharing.

Judy Barnhart