### VASCULAR PLANTS OF BROWNE LAKE ECOLOGICAL RESERVE

### Peter Courtney, March 2021

### INTRODUCTION

At the request of Don Guild, warden of the Browne Lake Ecological Reserve (BLER), the Central Okanagan Naturalists' Club (CONC) began cataloguing the vascular plants of the BLER in 2015. Typically 2-4 visits were made per year by members of CONC, often accompanied by the warden. Photographs were used to assist with initial plant identification and later verification. This report includes a working list of the vascular plants and summarizes counts done on moonworts (*Botrychium* and *Sceptridium spp*).

### VASCULAR PLANT SURVEY

According to the Purpose Statement "The primary role of the Browne Lake Ecological Reserve is to protect a small wet meadow ecosystem and surrounding forest in the Interior Douglas-fir-Montane Spruce transition. The wet meadow, once used as pasture, is reverting to the original sedge community. A rock outcrop on the central hill holds a small seepage-influenced community ...."

CONC identified 229 species during the 2014-2019 (June 13-Aug 29) periods as listed in the Appendix. The area surveyed included the meadow, the runoff area from the meadow to McCulloch Road, forested areas immediately surrounding the meadow and the hillside nearest the meadow, including the seepage-influenced area (Figure 1). Much of the forested portion of the reserve is covered in dense deadfall making getting around in those areas difficult, and there are no trails. There are large forested portions of the BLER that CONC has not visited.

The greatest diversity of plants was found in the transition zone between meadow and forest and in the runoff area between the meadow and McCulloch Road. There are small pockets of plants unique to the seepage-influenced area on the hillside, such as *Lewisia pygmaea*), *Sanicula graveolens*, *Saxifraga occidentalis*, *Polygonum polygaloides ssp kelloggii*, *Hydrophyllum capitatum*, *Eremogone capillaris*, and *Orobanche uniflora*. Even in dry years there was at least a small area of standing water containing aquatic plants such as *Nuphar sp.*, *Persicaria amphibia var. stipulacea*, *Ranunculus gmelini*, and *Sparganium emersum*.

### MOONWORT SURVEY

While no red-listed species of vascular plants were found, six species of moonwort were identified (Figure 2). One of these, *Botrychium michiganense*, is currently blue-listed. Moonworts are a group of ferns in the Ophioglossaceae family that bear their spore sacs on a specialized stalk rather than on green leaves as in most of the true ferns. Zika et al. (1995) recommended that any site with five or more Botrychium taxa should be considered highly significant and worthy of special management and conservation. Recognizing this uniqueness we have given special attention to determining numbers and distribution of moonworts in the BLER.

Detailed counts of moonworts were made in 2019 and 2020, often using tapes to section off areas where necessary. An initial visit in late May-early June helped locate growing areas

before seasonal vegetation growth made finding moonworts difficult. Detailed counts were done in June-early July. A final survey in mid-August was done in shaded areas where growth was slower (eg. along the meadow's edge) to find any late-blooming previously undetected individuals. Moonworts in all areas were checked for spore casting condition.

Most of the moonworts were found within the meadow but some also grew along its edge with the surrounding forest (Figure 1). *Sceptridium multifidum* (aka *Botrychium multifidum*) was found in all survey years and was by far the most abundant species. *Botrychium lanceolatum* was the second most numerous in most years, while fewer numbers of *Botrychium michiganense*, *Botrychium minganense*, and *Botrychium pinnatum* were found in some years. *Botrychium neolunaria* (aka *Botyrchium lunaria*) was found in 2015 only. Particularly low numbers were observed in 2017 and 2018, then high numbers in 2019 and 2020. The greatest number and diversity of moonworts occurred in 2020 when 217 *Sceptridium multifidum*, 149 *Botrychium lanceolatum*, 83 *Botrychium michiganense*, and 14 *Botrychium pinnatum* were counted.

The moonwort counts are summarized by area in Table 1. The area descriptions follow:

**Northwest:** mostly unshaded meadow with grasses (*Calamagrostis canadensis*, *Phleum pretense*, *Agrostis spp.*), *Trifolium aureum*, *Fragaria virginiana*, *Symphyotrichum foliaceum*, *Solidago lepida*, *Lupinus arcticus*, and *Antennaria sp*.

**Southwest:** mostly shaded forest edge with mosses, *Fragaria virginiana*, *Pyrola asarifolia*, *Orthilia secunda*, *Athyrium filix-femina*, *Pseudotsuga menziesii*, *Arnica cordifolia*, *Symphyotrichum foliaceum*, and *Salix sp*.

**East:** mostly unshaded meadow with grasses, mosses, *Fragaria virginiana*, *Solidago lepida*, *Lupinus arcticus*, *Castelleja miniata*, and *Achillea millefolium*.

Photos of the ground cover in areas East, Southwest and Northwest are shown in Figures 3, 4, 5, and 6. In the meadow, grasses predominated whereas along the meadow's edge, mosses were the main plant associate.

## DISCUSSION

Competition with grasses may be a limiting factor for moonworts. Ahlenslager and Potash (2007) note meadow populations of moonworts in Washington and Oregon are maintained by cattle grazing. They suggested that removal of grazing may be detrimental especially if succession to woody vegetation occurs. Cattle and hay making occurred in the reserve before it was established in 1973. Therefore, the BLER has been recovering now for at least 47 years. Encroachment of *Pinus contorta*, and to a lesser extent *Picea engelmannii* into the Northwest area and *Pseudotsuga menziesii* into the Southwest and East areas, may eventually give rise to forest and the disappearance of the moonworts. *Botrychium minganense* is shade tolerant and a forest dweller and while it has been found in the meadow, it has not yet been found in the adjacent forest.

We have found that doing surveys too early or too late produces inaccurate results and that 2 or 3 counts spread throughout the growing season produce the best results. Early

blooming/early senescing individuals may not show up on late surveys, and late blooming individuals may not show up on early surveys. Early counts underestimated peak numbers in the East area and along the meadow's edge, where growth was slowed due to shading effects.

When there is significant herbivory, multiple counts can provide perspective on low numbers. In 2019 and 2020 there was little visible evidence of significant herbivory (i.e. partially chewed plants, missing plant parts) or missing plants when areas were recounted. We saw no evidence of rodents, a common predator of moonworts (Ahlenslager, K. and L. Potash. 2007). Few insects were observed except for ants, which were abundant in many of the moonwort areas. Their relationship to the moonworts is unknown.

The meadow-forest edge survey found almost entirely *Sceptridium multifidum* with a few *Botrychium lanceolatum* in area East. Of the 217 *Sceptridium multifidum* found in 2020, 40% were found in the partially shaded meadow edge, 8% were in shaded forest edge and 52% were in open unshaded meadow. While it appears *Sceptridium multifidum* grows best in full sunlight, we have seen them growing and maturing in heavily shaded areas at another Kelowna area site and at Manning Park. Typically their growth and spore production was slower in shaded areas than in full sunlight.

Spore casting represents the seasonal end of a moonwort's development, after which it senesces and withers away. At BLER, we saw *Botrychium lanceolatum* and *Botrychium michiganense* cast relatively early and *Sceptridium multifidum* late, and the rest were in the middle. *Sceptridium multifidum* and *Botrychium lanceolatum* cast spores later in shaded areas than in fully exposed areas.

Moonwort surveys at BLER continue to be done in conjunction with moonwort surveys at several other locations in the Kelowna area.

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#### REFERENCES

Ahlenslager, K. and L. Potash. 2007. Conservation Assessment for 13 Species of Moonworts (Botrychium Swartz Subgenus Botrychium). USDA Forest Service Region 6 and USDI Bureau of Land Management, Oregon and Washington

Zika, P. K., R. Brainerd, and B. Newhouse. 1995. Grapeferns and Moonworts (Botrychium, Ophioglossaceae) in the Columbia Basin. US Forest Service, Washington

#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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Table 1. Counts of moonwort numbers by area at Browne Lake Ecological Reserve

Location	Area (see Fig 1)	Species	2015	2018	2019	2020
Browne Lake	Northwest	Botrychium minganense			0	0
Ecological Reserve		Botrychium pinnatum			3	9
		Botrychium michiganense	$\checkmark$		20	83
		Botrychium lanceolatum	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	28	58
		Sceptridium multifidum	$\checkmark$		143	201
		Botrychium neolunaria	$\checkmark$		0	0
	Southwest	Sceptridium multifidum	$\checkmark$		9	5
		Botrychium pinnatum			6	5
		Botrychium lanceolatum			35	91
	East	Sceptridium multifidum			3	11
	Totals	All species			247	463

# FIGURE 2: MOONWORTS OF BROWNE LAKE ECOLOGICAL RESERVE



**Common Moonwort** (Botrychium neolunaria)

Mingan Moonwort (Botrychium minganense)

Michigan Moonwort (Botrychium michiganense)



**Triangle Moonwort** (Botrychium lanceolatum)

Leathery Grapefern (Sceptridium multifidum)

Northwestern Moonwort

(Botrychium pinnatum)



Figure 3: Area Northwest containing B. lanceolatum, B. michiganense and S. multifidum



Figure 4: Area Northwest containing B. lanceolatum, B. pinnatum and S. multifidum



Figure 5: Area East containing B. lanceolatum, B. pinnatum and S. multifidum



Figure 6: Area Southwest containing only S. multifidum

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## SPECIES

Angelica arguta Cicuta douglasii Heracleum maximum Lomatium ambiguum Osmorhiza berteroi Sanicula graveolens Aralia nudicaulis **Oplopanax** horridus Marianthemum racemosum Marianthemum stellatum Achillea millefolium Adenocaulon bicolor Agoseris aurantiaca Anaphalis margaritacea Antennaria luzuloides Antennaria racemosa Antennaria rosea Arnica chamissonis Arnica cordifolia Arnica latifolia Cirsium arvense Cirsium foliosum Hieracium albiflorum Hieracium aurantiacum Hieracium gracile Matricaria discoidea Microseris nutans Packera pseudaurea Petasites frigidus var frigidus Petasites frigidus var palmatus Senecio triangularis Solidago lepida var salebrosa Symphyotrichum foliaceum Symphyotrichum subspicatum Taraxacum officinale Tragopogon dubius Mahonia aquifolium Alnus incana Alnus viridis ssp sinuata Cryptantha sp Myosotis laxa Cardamine pensylvanica Rorippa curvisiliqua Linnaea borealis Lonicera involucrata Lonicera utahensis

## **COMMON NAME**

Sharptooth Angelica **Douglas' Water-Hemlock** Cow-Parsnip Swale Desert-Parsley Mountain Sweet-Cicely Sierra Sanicle Wild Sarsaparilla Devil's-Club False Solomon's-Seal Star-Flowered False Solomon's-Seal Yarrow Pathfinder **Orange Agoseris** Pearly Everlasting Silvery-Brown Pussytoes **Racemose Pussytoes Rosy Pussytoes** Meadow Arnica Heart-Leaved Arnica Mountain Arnica Canada Thistle Leafy Thistle White Hawkweed **Orange-Red King Devil** Slender Hawkweed **Pineaple Weed Nodding Microseris** Streambank Groundsel Palmate Coltsfoot Palmate Coltsfoot Arrow-Leaved Groundsel Canada Goldenrod Leafy Aster **Douglas's Aster Common Dandelion** Yellow Salsify Tall Oregon-Grape Gray Alder Sitka Alder Cryptantha Small-Flowered Forget-Me-Not Pennsylvania Bitter-Cress **Curvepod Yellowcress** Twinflower Black Twinberry Utah Honeysuckle

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# SPECIES

Sambucus racemosa Symphoricarpos albus Viburnum edule Cerastium fontanum **Eremogone** capillaris Stellaria borealis Stellaria crispa Stellaria graminea **Stellaria longipes** Paxistima myrsinites Hypericum perforatum Cornus canadensis Cornus stolonifera Juniperus communis Thuja plicata Carex aquatilis Carex atheroides Carex aurea Carex brunnescens Carex canescens var canescens Carex disperma Carex hoodii Carex kelloggii var kelloggii Carex lasiocarpa Carex pachystachya Carex preslii Carex utriculata **Eleocharis** palustris Athyrium filix-femina Cystopteris fragilis Dryopteris expansa Woodsia oregana Equisetum arvense Arctostaphylos uva-ursi Chimaphila umbellata Ledum glandulosum Moneses uniflora Orthilia secunda Pterospora andromedea Pyrola asarifolia Pyrola minor Vaccinium caespitosum Vaccinium membranaceum Vaccinium scoparium Lupinus arcticus Trifolium aureum

# **COMMON NAME**

Red Elderberry **Common Snowberry Highbush-Cranberry** Mouse-Ear Chickweed Slender Mountain Sandwort **Boreal Starwort Crisp Starwort Grass-Leaved Starwort** Long-Stalked Starwort Falsebox Common St. John's-Wort Bunchberry **Red-Osier Dogwood Common Juniper** Western Redcedar Water Sedge Awned Sedge Golden Sedge **Brownish Sedge Grey Sedge** Soft-Leaved Sedge Hood's Sedge Kellogg's Sedge Slender Sedge **Thick-Headed Sedge** Presl's Sedge **Beaked Sedge Common Spike-Rush** Lady Fern **Fragile Fern** Spiny Wood Fern Western Cliff Fern **Common Horsetail** Kinnikinnick Prince's Pine **Trapper's Tea** Single Delight **One-Sided Wintergreen** Pinedrops Pink Wintergreen Lesser Wintergreen **Dwarf Blueberry** Black Huckleberry Grouseberry Arctic Lupine Yellow Clover

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# SPECIES

Trifolium hybridum Trifolium pratense Gentianella amarella **Ribes hudsonianum Ribes oxyacanthoides** Hydrophyllum capitatum Juncus balticus Juncus ensifolius var ensifolius Juncus filiformis Juncus tenuis Luzula comosa Luzula hitchcockii Luzula multiflora ssp multiflora Mentha arvensis Prunella vulgaris Clintonia uniflora Fritillaria affinis Lilium columbianum Prosartes trachycarpa Streptopus amplexifolius Lycopodium annotinum Trillium ovatum Veratrum viride Zigadenus venenosus Claytonia lanceolata Lewisia pygmaea Nuphar (polysepala?) Shepherdia canadensis Epilobium angustifolium **Epilobium ciliatum Epilobium** palustre Botrychium lanceolatum Botrychium michiganense Botrychium minganense Botrychium neolunaria Botrychium pinnatum Sceptridium multifidum Calypso bulbosa Corallorhiza maculata Goodyera oblongifolia Listera cordata Piperia unalascensis Platanthera aquilonis Platanthera dilatata Spiranthes romanzoffiana Castilleja hispida

# **COMMON NAME**

Alsike Clover **Red Clover** Northern Gentian Northern Blackcurrant Northern Gooseberry **Dwarf Waterleaf Baltic Rush** Dagger-Leaf Rush Thread Rush Slender Rush Pacific Wood-Rush Hitchcock's Wood-Rush Many-Flowered Wood-Rush Field Mint Self-Heal Queen's Cup Chocolate Lily Columbia Lily **Rough-Fruited Fairybells Clasping Twisted-Stalk** Stiff Club-Moss Western Trillium Indian Hellebore Meadow Death-Camas Western Springbeauty Alpine Lewisia Pond-Lily Soopolallie Fireweed Purple-Leaved Willowherb Marsh Willowherb **Triangle Moonwort** Michigan Moonwort Mingan Moonwort Common Moonwort Northwestern Moonwort Leathery Grape Fern Fairyslipper Spotted Coralroot Rattlesnake-Plantain Heart-Leaved Twayblade Alaska Rein Orchid Northern Green Bog Orchid Fragrant White Bog Orchid Hooded Ladies' Tresses Harsh Paintbrush

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# **SPECIES**

Castilleja miniata Euphrasia nemorosa Orobanche uniflora Pedicularis bracteosa Pedicularis racemosa Rhinanthus minor Erythranthe moschatus Abies lasiocarpa Larix occidentalis Picea engelmannii Pinus contorta Pseudotsuga menziesii Collinsia parviflora **Hippuris vulgaris** Penstemon confertus Penstemon fruticosus Plantago major Veronica americana Veronica serpyllifolia Agrostis scabra Agrostis stolonifera Alopecurus aequalis Bromus ciliatus Calamagrostis canadensis Calamagrostis rubescens Cinna latifolia Deschampsia elongata Elymus glaucus ssp glaucus Elymus repens Festuca occidentalis Glyceria elata Melica subulata Phalaris arundinacea Phleum pratense Poa palustris Poa pratensis Poa wheeleri Tristetum canescens Collomia linearis **Microsteris** gracilis Polemonium pulcherrimum Persicaria amphibia var stipulacea Polygonum polygaloides ssp kelloggii Rumex acetosella Dodecatheon pulchellum Aconitum columbianum

# **COMMON NAME**

**Common Red Paintbrush** Eastern Eyebright Naked Broomrape **Bracted Lousewort** Sickletop Lousewort **Yellow Rattle** Musk-Flower Subalpine Fir Western Larch **Englemann Spruce** Lodgepole Pine Interior Douglas-Fir Small-Flowered Blue-Eyed Mary Common Mare's-Tail **Yellow Penstemon** Shrubby Penstemon **Common Plantain** American Brooklime **Thyme-Leaved Speedwell** Hair Bentgrass **Creeping Bentgrass** Little Meadow-Foxtail Fringed Brome Bluejoint Pinegrass Nodding Wood-Reed **Slender Hairgrass** Blue Wildrye Quackgrass Western Fescue **Tall Mannagrass** Alaska Oniongrass **Reed Canarygrass** Timothy **Fowl Blue Grass** Kentucky Blue Grass Wheeler's's Blue Grass Tall Trisetum Narrow-Leaved Collomia **Pink Microsteris** Showy Jacob's-Ladder Water Smartweed Kellogg's Knotweed Sheep Sorrel Few-Flowered Shootingstar Columbia Monkshood

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# SPECIES

Actaea rubra Aquilegia formosa Clematis occidentalis Delphinium nuttallianum **Ranunculus** acris Ranunculus gmelini Ranunculus macounii Ranunculus uncinatus Thalictrum occidentale Amelanchier alnifolia Comarum palustre Fragaria virginiana Geum macrophyllum Potentilla biennis Potentilla gracilis var fastigiata Rosa nutkana Rosa woodsii **Rubus** parviflorus **Rubus** pedatus **Rubus** pubescens Sorbus scopulina Spiraea betulifolia Galium trifidum Galium triflorum Populus balsamifera Populus tremuloides Salix sitchensis Geocaulon lividum Acer glabrum Heuchera cylindrica Lithophragma glabrum Micanthes occidentalis Mitella breweri Mitella nuda Mitella trifida Saxifraga bronchialis Tiarella trifoliata Verbascum thapsus Sparganium emersum Urtica dioica Viola adunca Viola canadensis Viola glabella Viola nephrophylla Viola palustris

## **COMMON NAME**

Baneberry Red Columbine **Blue Clematis Upland Larkspur** Meadow Buttercup Small Yellow Water- Buttercup Macoun's Buttercup Little Buttercup Western Meadowrue Saskatoon Marsh Cinquefoil Wild Strawberry Large-Leaved Avens **Biennial Cinquefoil** Graceful Cinquefoil Nootka Rose Prairie Rose Thimbleberry **Five-Leaved Bramble Dwarf Red Raspberry** Western Mountain Ash White Meadow-Sweet Small Bedstraw Sweet-Scented Bedstraw Black Cottonwood **Trembling Aspen** Sitka Willow **False Toadflax Douglas Maple Round-Leaved Alumroot** Smooth Fringecup Western Saxifrage Brewer's Mitrewort **Common Mitrewort Three-Toothed Mitrewort** Spotted Saxifrage **One-Leaved Foamflower** Great Mullein **Emersed Bur-Reed Stinging Nettle Early Blue Violet** Canada Violet Stream Violet Northern Bog Violet Marsh Violet