Manitoba Native Orchids Compendium

Tall Northern Green Orchid (*Platanthera huronensis* (Nuttall) Lindley)

The Latin name is taken from Lake Huron where this species, originally considered a variety of Platanthera hyperborea, was first collected.

Plants previously collected and deposited in herbariums in Manitoba are listed as Platanthera hyperborea and not as Platanthera hyperborea or Platanthera aquilonis thus it is difficult to determine the distribution. Both of these species are found in Manitoba and further research will be required to determine distribution patterns. (Please note that during a trip to Churchill with Dr. Charles Sheviak in July of 2003, we did find both Platanthera aquilonis and Platanthera huronensis at various locations between Winnipeg and Churchill including locations at Churchill.)
Single stems to clumps of several stems range from dwarf 10cm plants in the arctic to tall robust specimens that reach nearly a meter high in fens to the south. The flowering spike varies from being very lax to very dense with few to extreme numbers of blossoms. The individual flowers are not particularly showy, green in colour with the lip often whiter than the other flower parts. The author observed and photographed a white flowered form of this species at Churchill.This orchid has a long blooming period from mid-June to mid-August with the prime period in mid-July. Look for it on the slopes of ditches and moist meadows in the prairies and parklands, and in open fens and bogs or in moist sedge meadows of the northern coniferous forests. Identification of this species and distinguishing it from Platanthera aquilonis is a difficult task and a magnifying glass is a necessity. See the identification key from "Flora of North America"

Most populations of this species are pollinated by bumblebees and moths (Catling & Catling 1989), although some are self-pollinating (autogamous). In self-pollinating flowers the pollinia are not contained within the anther sacs but fragment and the pollen falls loosely downward onto the stigma (see accompanying photograph).