

## NATURE RESERVES

# Bruce Alvar Nature Reserve

### *Catherine S. Wishart Tract*

You will discover one of nature's most spectacular rock gardens at the Bruce Alvar Nature Reserve. In 1993, the Federation purchased this property with funding through a generous bequest from Catherine S. Wishart. She requested that her gift be used to protect a property with rare and endangered plants. Bruce Alvar Nature Reserve certainly fits the bill.

This 67-hectare nature reserve has two main vegetation communities that gently grade into each other - rock barrens of dolostone bedrock dominated by a ground cover of moss and herbaceous plants such as lakeside daisy and Indian paintbrush, and semi-open coniferous forests dominated by jack pine. The rock barrens, or alvar pavements, have little or no brush cover and no tree cover. In some places, the dolostone bedrock is completely exposed and in other places a very thick layer of organic accumulations covers it. Plants that survive on these rock barrens are well adapted to extreme conditions - freezing cold in the winter; searing hot and dry for much of the summer and soaking wet in the spring and after summer rains.

The rock barren and jack pine communities support a notable array of rare plants and unusual assemblages of vascular and non-vascular plants. Nationally threatened and provincially rare species are lakeside daisy, dwarf lake iris, purple stemmed cliffbrake, Hill's thistle, roundleaf ragwort, and northern dropseed. In addition, many regionally and locally rare plant species and unusual lichens and mosses occur. Research regarding alvar communities is ongoing and there is still much to discover about the mosses, lichens and algae.

The site is also habitat for the eastern massasauga rattlesnake, a nationally and provincially threatened species.

Visitors are welcome to the Bruce Alvar nature reserve, but it is critical that all visitors stay on the marked trail. The rock barrens are extremely vulnerable to foot traffic. The trail includes a "dry land" boardwalk and small platform overlooking a portion of the alvar pavements.

## *How to get there*

The Bruce Alvar Nature Reserve is located on the Upper Bruce Peninsula on the northwest corner of Hwy. 6 and Dyer's Bay Road. The trail starts at an opening about 400 m north of the Dyer's Bay Road (on the west side of the highway). Look for the Federation nature reserve sign set back from the highway. Do not park along Hwy. 6 or at the reserve entrance.