Flower ID

a: black huckleberry
b: chokeberry
c: Rhodora
d: wild lily of the valley
e: wild sarsaparilla
f: blue bead lily (corn lily)
g: bunchberry
h: serviceberry in fruit
i: pitcher plant
j: witherod (wild raison)
k: starflower
L: pink lady's slipper (moccasin orchid)

The Bluff Trail: Counts of Flowering Lady's Slipper Orchid 2014-2016

Section	Dave 16Jn2014		Dave 15Jn2015	Kai 15Jn2015		Kai 16Jn2016	Sascha 16Jn2016
To Big Boardwalk (BW)			61	121		217	181
Big BW to next (2nd)BW			8	17		38	20
2nd BW to Whaleback			50	87		100	93
Whaleback to Junction			28	37		79	70
TOTAL	**137**		**147**	**262**		**434**	**364**

Procedure

Counts were made on June 15 or 16th when it could be expected that all orchids that would flower in the particular year were in flower. Counts were made from the trailhead to the junction of the Pot Lake Loop by Cranberry Lake. Observers recorded the number of orchids that could be seen from the trail. In 2015 and 2016, there were two observers. Each counted the number of orchids on one side of the trail going in and on the other side going out, then numbers were combined to give a count for each of four sections along the route. Dave is "a senior citizen", Kai and Sascha are 21st century guys.

Results

The total number counted by Dave for 2015 (147) was only marginally higher than the number counted by Dave in 2014 (137), suggesting there was not much change in actual numbers between 2014 and 2015. Kai's count for 2015 (262) was substantially higher than Dave's count (147). Dave checked Kai's observations out a few times and it was clear that Kai was seeing orchids that Dave had missed, so the difference can be attributed to superior eyesight/observational skill on the part of Kai.

The total number counted by Kai in 2016 (434) was substantially higher than the number he counted in 2015 (262), suggesting a real increase in the number of flowering orchids. The number counted by his younger brother, Sascha, (364) was lower than the count by Kai (434), but was still higher than Kai's number for 2015 (262) further supporting the evidence for a higher number of flowering orchids in 2016 compared to 2015.

Changes in the number of flowering orchids between years could be due to changes in the number of plants, in the proportion of plants flowering or to some combination of those two factors (as well as due to error in the counts), so we cannot say unequivocally that the population of plants is increasing over time. However, I think we can say the results suggest a stable or increasing population.

As in 2015, no exotic plant species were observed between the trailhead and the junction of the Pot Lake Loop.

- David Patriquin, June 20, 2015