

# MENZIES' PIPSISSEWA *CHIMAPHILA MENZIESII*: A WIDESPREAD BUT PREVIOUSLY OVERLOOKED SPECIES ON HAIDA GWAI

Stephen A. Stockton and Liann L. Bobeckko

Research Group on Introduced Species, Queen Charlotte City, B.C., V0T 1S0

[sstock@science.uottawa.ca](mailto:sstock@science.uottawa.ca)

## ABSTRACT

Further records of Menzies' Pipsissewa in Haida Gwaii are detailed, confirming earlier suggestions that the plant is widespread in the archipelago.

On July 13, 2001, Menzies' pipsissewa *Chimaphila menziesii* was recorded blooming in the forest interior of Reef Island. On August 6, 2001, it was recorded blooming approximately 120 km north of this point, on Graham Island, in the forest interior near the Golden Spruce Trail, west of Port Clements. These occurrences are the third and fourth records for this species in Haida Gwaii and bear out earlier predictions that this species is widespread in the archipelago (Smith & Buttler 1999, Stockton & Buttler 2001).

While only four and three individuals were found on Reef Island and Graham Island respectively, several hundred individuals were observed on Haswell Island on July 21, 2001. Only sixteen individuals of *C. menziesii* have previously been detected on Haida Gwaii, eight on East Limestone Island (Smith & Buttler 1999), and eight on Haswell Island (Stockton & Buttler 2001), both in Laskeek Bay. The new records of *C. menziesii* demonstrate a substantial increase in the known range and the number of individuals of this species on Haida Gwaii.

In most instances, the habitat in which *C. menziesii* was found is largely consistent with that on Limestone Island: a thick bed of moss, primarily *Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus*, beneath mature Sitka spruce *Picea sitkensis* and western hemlock *Tsuga heterophylla* (Smith & Butler 1999). However, in many cases, individuals grew in *P. sitkensis* or *T. heterophylla* needle litter (Figure 1). Given the ubiquitous nature of these habitats, the occurrence of this species on other islands of the archipelago is expected.

The vegetation on Reef Island, East Limestone Island and Haswell Island, is radically modified by Sitka black-tailed deer *Odocoileus hemionus sitkensis* (Daufresne & Martin 1997). The large number of *C. menziesii* individuals found on Haswell in 2001 is thought to be the consequence of a recent decrease in the intensity of deer browsing on that island. Since June 22, 1999, the vegetation on this island has apparently experienced a small recovery. Many individuals of species known to be highly susceptible to deer browse, western redcedar *Thuja plicata* and red huckleberry *Vaccinium parvifolium* (Pojar *et al.* 1980), previously browsed to the level of the thick moss layer, have since grown several centimetres above this level. Browsed individuals of *C. menziesii* are also thought to have been present beneath this moss layer, but overlooked due to a lack of identifiable leaves and flowers.

As anticipated by Smith & Buttler (1999), browsing of *C. menziesii* appears to constitute a major impediment to the successful identification of this small and inconspicuous plant species.

## REFERENCES

- Daufresne T. and J.L. Martin. 1997. Changes in vegetation structure and diversity in relation to the presence of a large herbivore: the impact of introduced black-tailed deer on old-growth forests in Haida Gwaii (Queen Charlotte Islands). Pages 2-26 in Gaston, A.J. (ed.) Laskeek Bay Research 7. Laskeek Bay Conservation Society, Queen Charlotte City, B.C.
- Pojar J, T. Lewis, H. Roemer, and D.J. Wilford. 1980. Relationships between introduced black-tailed deer and the plant life of the Queen Charlotte Islands, B.C. Unpublished report B.C. Ministry of Forests, Smithers, B.C.

Smith J. and I. Buttler 1999. First record of Menzies' pipsissewa, *Chimaphila menziesii*, on Haida Gwaii. Page 29 in Gaston, A.J. (ed.) Laskeek Bay Research 9. Laskeek Bay Conservation Society, Queen Charlotte City, B.C.

Stockton S.A. and I. Buttler 2001. Second record of Menzies' pipsissewa, *Chimaphila menziesii*, on Haida Gwaii. Page 21 in Gaston, A.J. (ed.) Laskeek Bay Research 10. Laskeek Bay Conservation Society, Queen Charlotte City, B.C.

**Figure 1**

**Menzies' pipsissewa *Chimaphila menziesii* growing amongst the needle litter of western hemlock *Tsuga heterophylla* in the forest interior of Reef Island. The individual in the foreground is approximately 12 cm tall. Photo by S.A. Stockton near permanent vegetation plot 2 on 13 July 2001.**



