

Plant Inventory of Bering Glacier Region, Alaska

Marilyn Barker (UAA) and Alan Batten (UAF)

The Bering Glacier region is part of the boundary zone between the Coastal Temperate Forest and the Boreal Forest. Its floristic elements primarily include those from the Aleutian/ Asian connection, the SE coastal ranges and the Cordilleran range of the interior. It is probable that some of the higher mountains are glacial refugia.



Historically the region south of the Bagley Ice Field between the Copper River and Icy Bay was virtually unexplored botanically. No specimens from this region (other than those from the current study) reside in herbaria at the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAAH) or the University of Alaska Fairbanks (ALA). Previously, the only specimens from the Bering Glacier Quad at ALA were collected north of the Bagley Ice Field.

The present study in Bering Glacier Region began in 1999 with a one-day foray to Weeping Peat Island. Since then botanists have searched for plants on nunataks, mountain ridges, lakes, fens, forests, and beaches. Three hundred and seventy-eight taxa have been identified; 50 of these were added in the 2002 field season. This represents nearly one fourth (24%) of the plant species in the Flora of Alaska. Many of the species found were in expected ranges, however, 44 species are range extensions. Some of the range extensions are short, just over the Bagley Ice Field; others represent distant extensions from interior Alaska, the Aleutians, or SE Alaska. In addition 43 species serve to fill in distribution gaps between disjunct populations. Ten species encountered at the Bering Glacier are on the Alaska Natural Heritage Program Vascular Plant Tracking List. These are *Carex enanderi* (*Carex lenticularis* var. *dolia*), *Carex phaeocephala*, *Limosella aquatica*, *Lonicera involucrata*, *Minuartia biflora* *Platanthera chorisiana*, *Poa laxiflora*, *Podagrostis thurberiana* (*Agrostis thurberiana*), *Ranunculus pacificus* and *Romanzoffia unalaschcensis*.



Primula eximia (Greene) Pors.

To date, our study shows the Bering Glacier Flora to include 68 families, 188 genera and 378 species; a total of 384 taxa when subspecies are included. Three hundred and sixty two species are documented at the UAF Herbarium. Two hundred twenty are documented at the UAA Herbarium.

Three exotic species have been noted in the Bering Glacier region. Two of the exotics, *Taraxacum officinale* and *Poa annua*, are found near camp and the third, *Prunella vulgaris*, is found at Berg Lake.

Plans for 2004. In 2004 we have 3 goals:

1. to continue the floristic inventory.
2. to continue gathering vegetation data and run additional transects.
3. revisit sites to voucher the 20 plants which are known from Bering field notes and/or photography, but are currently not at either Alaska Herbaria.