

Volunteer botanists contribute to Hawk Ridge study - Duluth News Tribune | News, weather, and sports from Duluth, Minnesota

Teri Cadeau



The Arrowhead Native Plant Association, after its annual foray at Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory on June 7.

Contributed / Paul Hlina



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DULUTH — Volunteer retired botanist Paul Hlina and a group of about a dozen native-plant enthusiasts spent June 7 collecting approximately 60 specimens around the Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve.

For members of the Arrowhead Native Plant Explorers, an organization dedicated to appreciating and promoting native plants, the event was part of the group's annual native plant foray.

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Pedestrians walk along Skyline Parkway at Hawk Ridge Nature Preserve in 2019.

Clint Austin / File / Duluth Media Group

A foray is an event where group volunteers work with plant experts to collect specimens to donate to the University of Minnesota Duluth's Olga Lakela Herbarium.

"The first purpose of this project is to get people excited about botany and the native plants," Hlina said. "But further, Hawk Ridge is in the running to become a Duluth Natural Areas Program, and we hope, with through some of our research on the flora of the area, we can see more restoration of and protection of the Ridge."

Hlina is working on a three-year project at Hawk Ridge collecting specimens of common plants in the area and possibly discovering new collections of rare plants to allow for future conservation, preservation and restoration.

"The area has some unique features that make it a super migratory area. But if the vegetation changes, would the birds continue to gather there?" Hlina said. "If so, then maybe some protection or restoration projects will need to be put in place in order to ensure it's a quality habitat. But first we need to see what's there right now and see how it changes over the three years."

The Duluth Natural Areas Program designates certain lands with environmental value as permanently protected natural places, [according to the city of Duluth website](#). Three places are currently designated: Hartley Natural Area, St. Louis River Natural Area and Magney Snively Natural Area.

Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory is co-managed by the city and the observatory. So with this research, Hlina and others hope to provide a permanent and viable record of the flora of the ridge to make future plans and determinations.

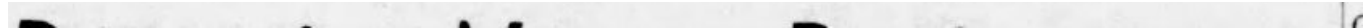
For Hlina, the project is also a chance to work with organizations such as the Arrowhead Native Plant Explorers and educate them. Hlina has been a botanist for 40 years, owned a native plant business and worked for 22 years as a research botanist for the University of Wisconsin Lake Superior Research Institute.

"Getting people excited about native plants has been a passion of mine for years," Hlina said. "I've done several presentations for the native plant explorers and helped with their previous forays."



Dr. Olga Lakela examines plants in the UMD greenhouse.

(Staff Photo.)



Dr. Olga Lakela is shown in the UMD greenhouse in 1939.

Duluth News Tribune archives

Hlina said he's also honored to continue the work of [Olga Lakela](#), a famed Duluth botanist.

"I once saw Olga's book for the first time in a bookstore in the '90s. And I wanted it so badly, but I had \$40 worth of children's books and it was before Christmas, so I couldn't spend \$60 on her book," Hlina said.

"But then when I retired in 2017, I went to another bookstore and found it once again. It still cost \$60, but it's such a neat book to have. It's still relevant today."



Teri Cadeau is a features reporter for the Duluth News Tribune. Originally from the Iron Range, Cadeau has worked for several community newspapers in the Duluth area, including the Duluth Budgeteer News, Western Weekly, Weekly Observer, Lake County News-Chronicle, and occasionally, the Cloquet Pine Journal. When not working, she's an avid reader, crafter, dancer, trivia fanatic and cribbage player.

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