

Plants of Coats Island, Hudson Bay, Keewatin District, Northwest Territories

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Abstract. The combined plant collections of A. E. Porsild, H. B. Collins, and the author from Coats Island, Hudson Bay, Northwest Territories are brought together into one comprehensive report. The list of species comprises 20 mosses, 1 hepatic, 14 lichens, and 116 species of vascular plants. The species of lichens, mosses, the hepatic, and 36 species of higher plants are additions to the known flora of Coats Island.

Résumé. Les collections de plantes cueillies sur l'île Coats, Baie d'Hudson, Territoires du Nord-Ouest, par A. E. Porsild, H. B. Collins et l'auteur, sont réunies dans un seul rapport complet. La liste des espèces comprends 20 mousses, 1 hépatique, 14 lichens, et 116 espèces de plantes vasculaires. Les lichens, mousses, hépatique, et 36 espèces de plantes vasculaires sont des additions à la flore déjà connue de l'île Coats.

During the period 21-27 July 1975, I had an opportunity to accompany one of our museum ornithologists, Henri Ouellet, on a short visit to Coats Island, Hudson Bay, site of the now extinct Sadlermiut culture (Bruemmer 1969). As I can ascertain, the number of plant collections taken from this island is relatively small. There are two collections in the National Herbarium, one made by A. E. Porsild¹ on 18 September 1930 from the east coast, and another made by Henry B. Collins, Jr. of the Smithsonian Institution (Collins 1955, 1956) from the north coast directly across from Bencas Island, 19-20 July 1954. Polunin (1940) did not refer to any earlier collections from Coats Island nor did he cite any publications pertinent to the subject in his papers on the equally interesting Mansel Island situated to the east of Coats Island (Polunin 1938b, 1947) nor in his paper on Southampton Island (Polunin 1938a). Hence it appears that we have rather scant botanical information on this southern arctic island, some 130 km long and 70 km wide. Porsild's collections were made in approximately the same portion of the island as mine but because each of us found species that the other did not, then presumably the localities,

or at least the habitats, were not identical. The description of the area visited given in Porsild's report does not altogether accord with that of the area I visited. My cryptogamic collections are probably the first for the area, but owing to time limitations and insufficient acquaintance with the species of the group, are obviously incomplete.

The island is seldom visited except by Eskimo hunters in the fall. The arctic explorer Thomas Button saw it in 1612 and named Cape Pembroke; he also named the southwest tip Cape Southampton and the southeast tip Carys Swan Nest. A Hudson Bay Company post was set up in 1918 but this was moved to Coral Harbour in 1924 (Stewart 1935). A number of caribou surveys have been carried out both to assess the numbers of animals and to transfer them to 100-mi(160-km)-distant Southampton Island. All of the remaining surveys were by air and include those of Tener,² Harington,³ Look,⁴ and Parker,⁵ so no collections could have been made.

¹Porsild, A. E. 1930. Report. Northwest Territories and Yukon Branch, Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, Ottawa. 42 pp.

²Tener, J. S. 1961. Coats Island caribou survey. Canadian Wildlife Service Report 893. 2 pp.

³Harington, C. R. 1965. Coats Island caribou survey, 1965. Canadian Wildlife Service Report 1420. 9 pp.

⁴Look, A. L. 1967. Coats Island caribou survey. Report to the Regional Administrator of the Arctic. 2 pp.

⁵Parker, G. R. 1970. Coats Island caribou survey. Canadian Wildlife Service Report 1419. 10 pp. + map.

In his action-packed report, Manning⁶ did not mention any biological collections made by any member of his team.

Our collections were taken from the south side of Cairn Cove at 62°49' N, 81°56' W (Map 45J, UTM Ref. 17V/MV 452/6967). The camp was set up on the beach near the site of some Sadlermiut ruins. We also had an opportunity to visit for a few hours the edge of the high portion of the island between Cape Pembroke and Cairn Cove at 62°53' N, 81°55' W (Map 45J, UTM Ref. 17V/MV 453/6974) on 25 July 1975. The trip was made by rubber boat powered by an outboard motor.

Although a thorough botanical survey of the entire island has never been made, it is evident from a perusal of the total species obtained by three collectors from the northeast part of the island that the number is low (Table 1). The absence of many species may be explained by isolation. Many species may simply have never been able to reach the island or, having reached it, may not have been able to become established through lack of suitable habitats. Porsild¹ suggested that seeds of species of the Leguminosae are too heavy for wind transportation. Because Coats Island is located at the mouth of Hudson Bay and midway between the east and west shores, its floristic composition could include either eastern or western elements, or both.

An analysis of the floral list by comparison with the species lists by Hultén (1958, 1964, 1970) indicates that 68 (60%) of the 114 species of vascular plants can be classified as "circumpolar," and 21 (18%) can be considered as "Amphi-Atlantic." Twenty-five remain which do not fit into either category. Twenty-two (19%) of these have a general Canadian arctic distribution (Porsild 1957) and 3 (3%) can be considered to be eastern Arctic in their affinities. Evidently Coats Island, geographically southern Arctic and isolated from the major land mass, possesses a flora consisting chiefly of northern and eastern elements. This indicates that colonization following retreat of the ice has probably

taken place from those directions rather than from the west. But this may be true only for the northeast corner of the island whence the collections were made. It would be of considerable interest to collect from the southwest corner and to compare the lists.

The location of Coats Island is shown in Figure 1. Except for a high Precambrian area with steep cliffs rising to about 180 m in the extreme northeast corner, the island consists chiefly of relatively flat-lying Paleozoic rocks with an undulating surface that does not rise above 100 m. On the flat portion, the most prominent topographical feature seems to be the raised beaches and the numerous tundra ponds associated with them. The complex pattern of abandoned beaches record the rise of the land as the sea regressed from the Paleozoic terrain following deglaciation. A large irregular lake occupies the center of the island.

Coats Island has been deglaciated in rather recent time (7500–8000 years B.P.) and is isolated from the mainland. Geologists are of the opinion (W. Blake, personal communication) that, as the glacial ice melted, the first open channel ran along the east side of Hudson Bay. This would suggest that the melt continued towards the center of the Keewatin ice sheet. Whether Coats Island emerged before or after the west coast of the Bay is not known. Probably only the high northeastern part of Coats Island remained above the sea following the retreat of the glaciers.

The Precambrian rocks are represented by a wide variety of gneisses and migmatites. The gneissic units consist of quartz-feldspar gneiss, garnet gneiss, and amphibolite gneiss. Layering is well developed and in places the layers are extremely folded and contorted. The migmatites range from massive to foliated granitic-textured rocks that contain discontinuous patches and remnants of layered gneiss. Quartz monzonite sills are locally present.

The Paleozoic terrain is underlain by limestones and dolomites of Late Ordovician and Middle Silurian age. These relatively undeformed strata onlap Precambrian crystalline rocks and dip gently southward at one or two degrees.

Because Coats Island is uninhabited, information regarding climate must be extrapolated

⁶Manning, T. H. 1967. A report on the transfer of Barren-ground Caribou from Coats Island to Southampton Island, N.W.T. Canadian Wildlife Service Report 1143. 29 pp.

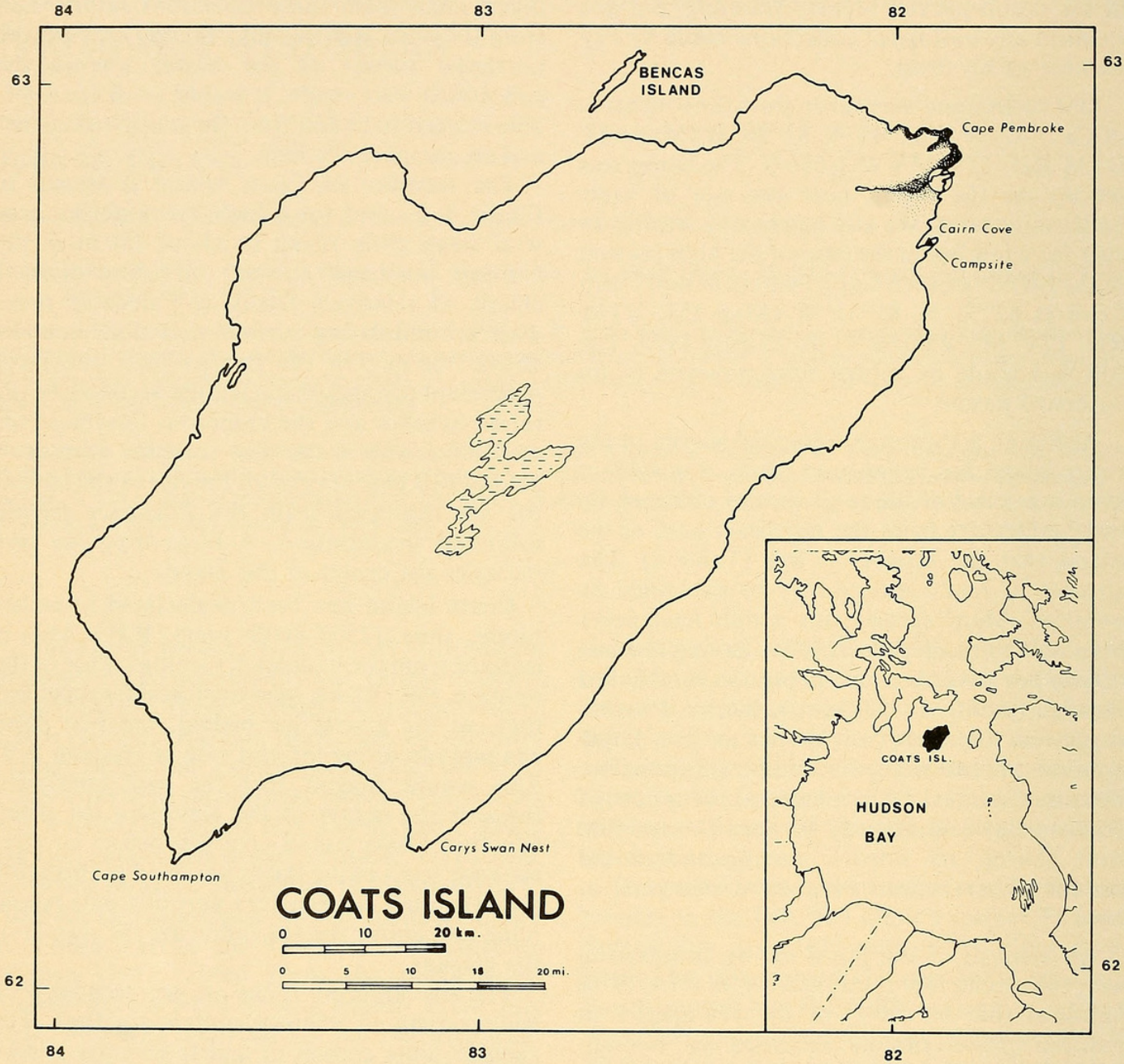


FIGURE 1. The study area, Coats Island, Hudson Bay, Northwest Territories.

from data for adjacent areas which have weather stations, such as Coral Harbour and Chesterfield (Bryson and Hare 1974). Of these two, the former is closer and perhaps approximates conditions on Coats. The mean daily temperatures for Coral Harbour, Southampton Island during the summer months are as follows: June 2.3°C, July 8.3°C, August 7.6°C, and September 0.9°C. Precipitation for the same months runs 26, 35, 38, and 33 mm, respectively. It was clear and comfortably warm while we were on the island except for a shower when we arrived and strong winds during one night.

TABLE 1 Checklist of the known flora of Coats Island—Species collected by A. E. Porsild are prefaced by an asterisk (*) and those collected by Collins by a plus (+); if no mark precedes the name, the species was collected only by the author; my collections are indicated by my collection number. The first set of vascular plants is deposited in the National Herbarium (CAN) and over a dozen replicate sets will be distributed.

Lichens

Cladoniaceae

Cladonia coccifera (L.) Wild. admixed with *Ochrolechia frigida* (Sw.) Lynge — 16892C; on rocks of ridge

Lecideaceae

- Rhizocarpon geographicum* (L.) DC. — 16912A; on pebbles

Parmeliaceae

- Alectoria minuscula* Nyl. — 16914; on pebbles
A. nigricans (Ach.) Nyl. — 16808B; dry tundra
Cetraria delisei (Borg ex Schaer.) Th. Fr. — 16808A; 16893; dry tundra
C. islandica (L.) Ach. — 16778; on rocky ridge
C. nivalis (L.) Ach. — 16792; on rock ledges
Parmelia alpicola Th. Fr. — 16912C; on pebbles

Stereocaulaceae

- Stereocaulon alpinum* Laur. — 16892A; on ridge rocks

Teloschistaceae

- Xanthoria sorediata* (Vain.) Poelt — 16921; on dry tundra

Umbilicariaceae

- Omphalodiscus decussatus* (Vill.) Schol. — 16911A; on rock
Umbilicaria havaasii Llano — 16911B; on rock
U. hyperborea (Ach.) Ach. — 16892B; 16912B; on ridge rocks and pebbles

Verrucariaceae

- Verrucaria* sp. — 16912D; on pebbles

Mosses

Ditrichaceae

- Distichium capillaceum* (Hedw.) B.S.G. — 16724, 16917; sand dunes and beaches

Dicranaceae

- Dicranum muehlenbeckii* B.S.G. — 16756; among rock litter with *Luzula confusa*

Pottiaceae

- Tortella fragilis* (Drumm.) Limpr. — 16829A; (admixture) on rock
Tortula ruralis (Hedw.) Gaertn., Meyer & Scherb. — 16843; habitat for *Draba nivalis* on rock ledges

Grimmiaceae

- Grimmia alpicola* Hedw. var. *rivularis* (Brid.) Wahlenb. — 16829; (admixture with *Tortella fragilis*)
Racomitrium lanuginosum (Hedw.) Brid. — 16713, 16920; rocky dry outcrops, a very common species

Bryaceae

- Bryum calophyllum* R. Br. — 16748; sandy beach
B. cryophilum Mart. — 16859; along a stream

Mniaceae

- Plagiomnium ellipticum* (Brid.) Kop. — 16702; wet beach slope

Aulacomniaceae

- Aulacomnium palustre* (Hedw.) Schwaegr. — 16860, 16706; meadows

Catosciaceae

- Catocarpium nigrum* (Hedw.) Brid. — 16786; admixture with *Campylium stellatum* on moist tundra; 16918; associated with *Carex atrofusca* Schk.

Amblystegiaceae

- Calliergon giganteum* (Schimp.) Kindb. — 16810; admixture with *Drepanocladus revolvens* at edge of pond
Campylium stellatum (Hedw.) C. Jens. — 16786; admixed with *Catocarpium*
Drepanocladus exannulatus (B.S.G.) Warnst. — 16725A, 16747
D. lycopodioides (Brid.) Warnst. — 16725; in a pond with *Hippuris vulgaris* and admixed with the above moss species
D. revolvens (Sw.) Warnst. — 16810; admixture with *Calliergon giganteum* at edge of a pond
D. uncinatus (Hedw.) Warnst. — 16696, 16728; pebble beach

Hypnaceae

- Hypnum revolutum* (Mitt.) Lindg. — 16695A; on beach pebbles

Hylocomiaceae

- Hylocomium splendens* (Hedw.) B.S.G. — 16779; on rocky ridge

Polytrichaceae

- Pogonatum alpinum* (Hedw.) Roehl. — 16919; on dry tundra

Hepaticae

Marchantiaceae

- Marchantia polymorpha* L. — 16913; on wet depression behind sea beach, large patch with *Ranunculus hyperboreus*

Vascular Plants

Polypodiaceae

- Cystopteris fragilis* (L.) Bernh. — 16846; at base of cliff
 * *Woodsia alpina* (Bolton) S.F. Gray

Equisetaceae

- Equisetum arvense* L. — 16855; about Sadlermiut dwelling remains
 * *E. scirpoides* Michx. — 16743; rocky stream gully
 + *E. variegatum* Schleich. — 16803; sandy margin of stream

Lycopodiaceae

- Lycopodium selago* L. — 16716, 16830; rock outcrops and ledges

Gramineae

- +* *Alopecurus alpinus* L. — 16707; abundant on grassy slopes
 +* *Arctagrostis latifolia* (R. Br.) Griseb. — 16722, 16782, 16907; abundant in wet meadows
 +* *Arctophila fulva* (Trin.) Anders. — 16741; sand beach
 +* *Deschampsia brevifolia* R. Br.
 + *Dupontia fischeri* R. Br. — 16721, 16794; wet meadows
Dupontia fischeri ssp. *psilosantha* (Rupr.) Hult. — 16807, 16905; pond margins
 + *Elymus mollis* Trin. — 16690; dominant beach grass, often forming a zone
 * *Festuca brachyphylla* Schultes — 16759, 16840; soil pockets on rock outcrops

- **Hierochloa alpina* (Sw.) R. & S. — 16771, 16840; dry rocky ridges
 +**H. pauciflora* R. Br.
 +**Pleuropogon sabinei* R. Br.
 **Poa alpina* L. — 16849; about Sadlermiut site
 +*P. alpigena* (Fr.) Lindm.
 +**P. arctica* R. Br. — 16751, 16764, 16770; chiefly in bolder litter, some grassy areas
P. glauca Vahl. — 16841, 16865, 16858, 16895; wide range of habitats
Puccinellia langeana (Berl.) Th. Sor. — 16739, 16890; on sandy beach and in soil patches on rocky ridge
P. phryganodes (Trin.) Scribn. — 16740; abundant on tidal flats
Trisetum spicatum (L.) Richt. — 16730, 16852; common on beach in *Elymus mollis* zone and about Sadlermiut ruins

Cyperaceae

- **Carex atrofusca* Schk. — 16817, 16867, 16901; abundant in wet tundra meadows
C. bicolor All. — 16898, 16899; wet mud at border of pond
C. bigelowii Torr. — 16818, 16904; wet tundra ponds
C. capillaris L. — 16897; in tufts in a meadow; mentioned by Porsild, but no specimen found in CAN nor is species listed in his notes
 **C. glacialis* Mack.
C. glareosa Wahlenb. var. *amphigena* Fern. — 16823; moist tundra
 **C. lachenalii* Schk. — 16795, 16827, 16848, 16864; common in several habitats, grassy meadow, about ruins, gravel stream beds
C. maritima L. — 16903; wet meadow back of beach area
 +**C. membranacea* Hook. — 16784, 16834, 16850; meadows and about ruins
 **C. misandra* R. Br. — 16712, 16799, 16801; dry rock outcrops
 **C. nardina* Fries — 16717; rock outcrops
C. rariflora (Wahlenb.) Sm. — 16787; wet soggy tundra
 +*C. saxatilis* L.
C. scirpoidea Michx. — 16757, 16802, 16806, 16900; wet tundra and sandy stream beds
 +**C. stans* Drej. — 16815; edge of pond
C. ursina Dewey — 16734, 16856; small clumps on tidal beach
 **Eriophorum angustifolium* Honck. — 16790; margin of ponds, wet tundra
 +*E. scheuchzeri* Hoppe — 16789, 16906; sparse on wet tundra
Kobresia simpliciuscula (Wahlenb.) Mack. — 16839; dry rocky ridge

Juncaceae

- **Juncus biglumis* — 16785; wet soggy tundra
 **Luzula confusa* Lindeberg — 16752, 16908; occasional in rock litter and on grassy slopes
 **L. nivalis* (Laest.) Beurl.

Liliaceae

- **Tofieldia pusilla* (Michx.) Pers. — 16745; common on

Dryas-covered plain

Salicaceae

- +*Salix arctica* Pallas — 16775, 16776; among rocks
S. arctophila Cockerell — 16729; sand and rocks of beach
 +*S. herbacea* L. — 16714, 16774; sheltered areas of rocky outcrop
 **S. lanata* L. ssp. *calcicola* (Fern. & Wieg.) Hult. — 16732, 16804; banks of stream
 +*S. reticulata* L. — 16782A; common on tundra slopes

Polygonaceae

- +*Oxyria digyna* (L.) Hill — 16847; ledges of cliffs and about ruins
 +*Polygonum viviparum* L. — 16780; dry *Dryas*-covered tundra

Caryophyllaceae

- Arenaria humifusa* Wahlenb. — 16700, 16785, 16761; deeply rooted in sand
 +*A. peplodes* L. — 16694; in clumps on sand beach
A. uliginosa Schl. — 16826; sparse among rocks
 **Cerastium alpinum* L. — 16701, 16742, 16820, 16855; beaches and meadows
 +**Melandrium apetalum* (L.) Fenzl. ssp. *arcticum* (Fr.) Hult. — 16720, 16782, 16857; wet meadows, tundra hummocks
Silene acaulis L. var. *exscapa* (All.) DC. — 16715, 16821; scattered on rock outcrop
Stellaria humifusa Rottb. — 16763, 16793; top of shore of a salt-water pond
S. laeta Richards. — 16736; between beach dunes. Can be distinguished from *S. longipes* by the larger flowers and brownish leaves
 **S. longipes* Goldie — 16735, 16737, 16837; beach dunes and cliff ledges

Ranunculaceae

- Ranunculus aquatilis* L. var. *eradicatus* Laest. — 16813; floating in pond
R. hyperboreus Rottb. — 16749, 16805, 16915; beaches, often in areas of decomposed seaweed
R. pedatifidus Sm. var. *leiocarpus* (Trautv.) Fern. — 16708, 16811, 16851; abundant on grassy slopes and in meadows
R. pygmaeus Wahlenb. — 16766; sheltered rock outcrop at beach level
R. sulphureus Sol. — 16869; meadow

Papaveraceae

- +**Papaver radicum* Rottb. — 16750, 16861; sparse among rock litter

Cruciferae

- Arabis alpina* L. — 16862; along a stream
 +**Cardamine pratensis* L. var. *angustifolia* Hook. — 16731; tidal flat at mouth of a stream
 +*Cochlearia officinalis* L. — 16703; common in the *Elymus mollis* beach zone
Draba glabella Pursh — 16910; gravel area
 +*D. lactea* Adams — Porsild's material under this name
 +**D. alpina* L. — 16809, 16767, 16865, 16727, 16858, 16698, 16909, 16709; the common *Draba* species of beaches, occasional in meadows

- **D. nivalis* Liljebl. — 16845, 16842, 16758A; rock ledges and edges of ponds
- +*D. groenlandica* Ekm.
- +**Eutrema edwardsii* R. Br. — 16699, 16753, 16768, 16777, 16862; common in mossy damp places
- **Lesquerella arctica* (Wormsk.) Wats. — 16819; sparse in a blow-out area of stream estuary

Saxifragaceae

- **Chrysosplenium tetrandrum* (Lund) Fries — 16704; abundant in meadows and on grassy slopes
- **Saxifraga aizoides* L. — 16733, 16812; common but widely spaced on the estuary plain
- +**S. caespitosa* L. — 16693, 16726, 16796, 16822, 16836; abundant everywhere but extremely variable
- +**S. cernua* L. — 16705; abundant on grassy slopes
- +**S. hirculus* L. — 16709; common in meadows
- **S. nivalis* L. — 16754; widely scattered in rock litter
- +**S. oppositifolia* L. — 16695, 16765; abundant in most dry habitat. Past flower when we arrived
- **S. rivularis* L. — 16825, 16916; hidden among rocks
- **S. cf. tenuis* (Wahlenb.) Sm.
- +**S. tricuspidata* Rottb. — 16755, 16894; common in patches in dry areas

Rosaceae

- +**Dryas integrifolia* M. Vahl — 16821; common on dry tundra
- **Potentilla hyparctica* Malte var. *elatior* (Abrom.) Fern. (no specimen in CAN under this taxon)
- P. pulchella* Pursh — 16760, 16896; dry sandy gravel on ridge
- **Rubus chamaemorus* L.

Empetraceae

- Empetrum nigrum* L. — 16891; common on dry slopes

Onagraceae

- **Epilobium latifolium* L. — 16738; occasional patches on rocky slopes

Hippuridaceae

- Hippuris vulgaris* L. — 16710; in ponds and along streams

Pyrolaceae

- **Pyrola rotundifolia* L. ssp. *grandiflora* (Rad.) Andres — 16866; cliff ledges

Ericaceae

- **Arctostaphylos alpinus* L.
- **Cassiope hypnoides* (L.) D. Don
- C. tetragona* (L.) D. Don — 16798; snow-melt areas in lee of rock outcrops
- **Ledum decumbens* L. reported by Porsild (1930) but no specimen found (CAN)
- **Rhododendron lapponicum* L.
- **Vaccinium vitis-idaea* L. — Several Ericaceous plants which Porsild collected and I did not, were probably restricted to the igneous hill which I did not have an opportunity to visit

- **V. uliginosum* L. var. *alpinum* Bigel.

Diapensiaceae

- **Diapensia lapponica* L. — 16828; hollows on dry ridge

Boraginaceae

- Mertensia maritima* (L.) F.J. Gray — 16692; sparse on sandy beach

Scrophulariaceae

- +**Pedicularis flammea* L. — 16719; on hummocks in wet tundra
- +**P. hirsuta* L.
- **P. sudetica* Willd. — 16711, 16788, 16814; common on wet soggy tundra

Campanulaceae

- **Campanula uniflora* L. — 16773, 16838; among rocks on dry ridge

Compositae

- Antennaria canescens* (Lge.) Malte — 16844; on rock ledges
- **Chrysanthemum integrifolium* Richards. — 16718; on a flat dry rocky place on raised beach
- **Erigeron unalaschkensis* (DC.) Vierh (= *E. humilis* Grah.) — in Porsild's notes but no specimen found in CAN
- +*Matricaria ambigua* (Led.) Kryn. — common on beach. This species was photographed but I neglected to take a specimen
- +*Senecio congestus* (R. Br.) DC.

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R. R. Ireland identified the mosses and Pak-Yau Wong the lichens; these collections are in CANM and CANL respectively. G. A. Mulligan, Agriculture Canada, checked my determinations of *Draba*.

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