



BULB LOG 29.....20th July 2016
Alaska special





This week's Bulb Log is a photo essay sharing some of the highlights from my trip to Alaska. On July 3rd I flew from Aberdeen, transferred in Iceland, arriving into Anchorage where, after passing through border control, I caught another flight down to Cordova. During that flight some mountain tops appeared above the cloud.



Independence Day, the 4th July, was my first full day in Cordova where I was staying with Clay, who is Mayor of Cordova, and Lila Koplin. Many of you will know Clay from the forum. It seemed like the whole town was out enjoying the fun and games in the main street with races and games for children of all ages

followed by a mass free barbeque where the main dish was salmon donated by the local cannery - salmon and halibut fishing dominate the local economy.



Mayor Clay Koplin, standing on a large plastic fish box, gives his speech.



Later in the afternoon we took a hike up to Crater Lake taking two hours of hard walking to reach this high level lake and as we climbed we passed through a number of fascinating habitats, such as rain forest before we reached the alpine zone around the lake.



The rivers and lakes are all fed with water from the glaciers giving them the most wonderful colours.



All the way up we snacked on a variety of delicious berries including Salmonberries (*Rubus spectabilis*).

**Aquilegia
formosa**

I was attracted by the bright scarlet and yellow flowers of *Aquilegia formosa* which jumped out from the lush green rain forest undergrowth.



Lysichiton americanus

The massive leaves of *Lysichiton americanus* formed dense colonies down the water courses showing why this plant can become some invasive.



After two hours of climbing we emerged from the trees as we headed upwards towards the alpine zone however things were not exactly clear.



We were now in the clouds which prevented me from seeing any of the landscape around the lake never mind the views beyond



**Fritillaria
camschatensis**

Here I saw a bulb, *Fritillaria camschatensis*, very familiar to me from our garden, in the wild for the first time. The main flowering of this species was over but in the cool conditions at this elevation there were a few still in flower.



Anemone narcissiflora

While the low cloud spoiled my view the high moisture levels explained how the flora was so lush.



I was very taken by this beautiful *Castilleja*, which despite a number of suggestions I am still not sure of the specific name. – it does seem likely to be *Castilleja parviflora*.



Castilleja parviflora?



No doubting the name of **Rhododendron camschatensis** which again was mostly past flowering with just a few late flowers still in bloom. Below a **Dodecatheon** and a **Saxifraga** showing the fascinating habitat.





I often find myself more fascinated by the habitats than the individual plants and this mossy habitat is exactly the type I have been trying to mimic in some of our troughs.



Clay beside an ancient tree sculpted by the harsh conditions.



Yellow and white species of **Spiranthes** were thriving in the wet conditions.



One of the many highlights and probably the most scenic sight was Sheridan glacier.



Sheridan glacier, Cordova Alaska





Everything about the glacier was fascinating and beautiful, especially the reflections where it merged into the water. Even the dirty peaks of ice covered in ground rock dust and sitting in the water clouded by mud were stunning.



Chamerion latifolium and Lupins grew right alongside the glacier.



I also visited a water meadow where there were thousands of **Spiranthes** in bloom, many coming up to my waist.



While the most spectacular sight in this water meadow was currently the **Spiranthes** the large seed heads of **Fritillaria camschatensis** suggest it was equally beautiful when they were in bloom.



Fritillaria camschatensis seed pods



The view from the water meadow back towards the Sheridan glacier.



From Cordova I flew back up to Anchorage over some spectacular glacial scenery and I spent most of the short flight taking pictures out of the window.



Glacier and mountains on Prince William Sound.



The next habitat I visited was Hatcher Pass with many fascinating habitats and plants, I was especially taken by the many *Salix* species and I suspect hybrid dwarf willows.



I also saw *Cornus canadensis* and *Cornus suecica* plus a number of plants that looked to be hybrids.



Primula cuneifolia



I was also delighted to find the tiny **Primula cuneifolia** flowering on Hatcher Pass.



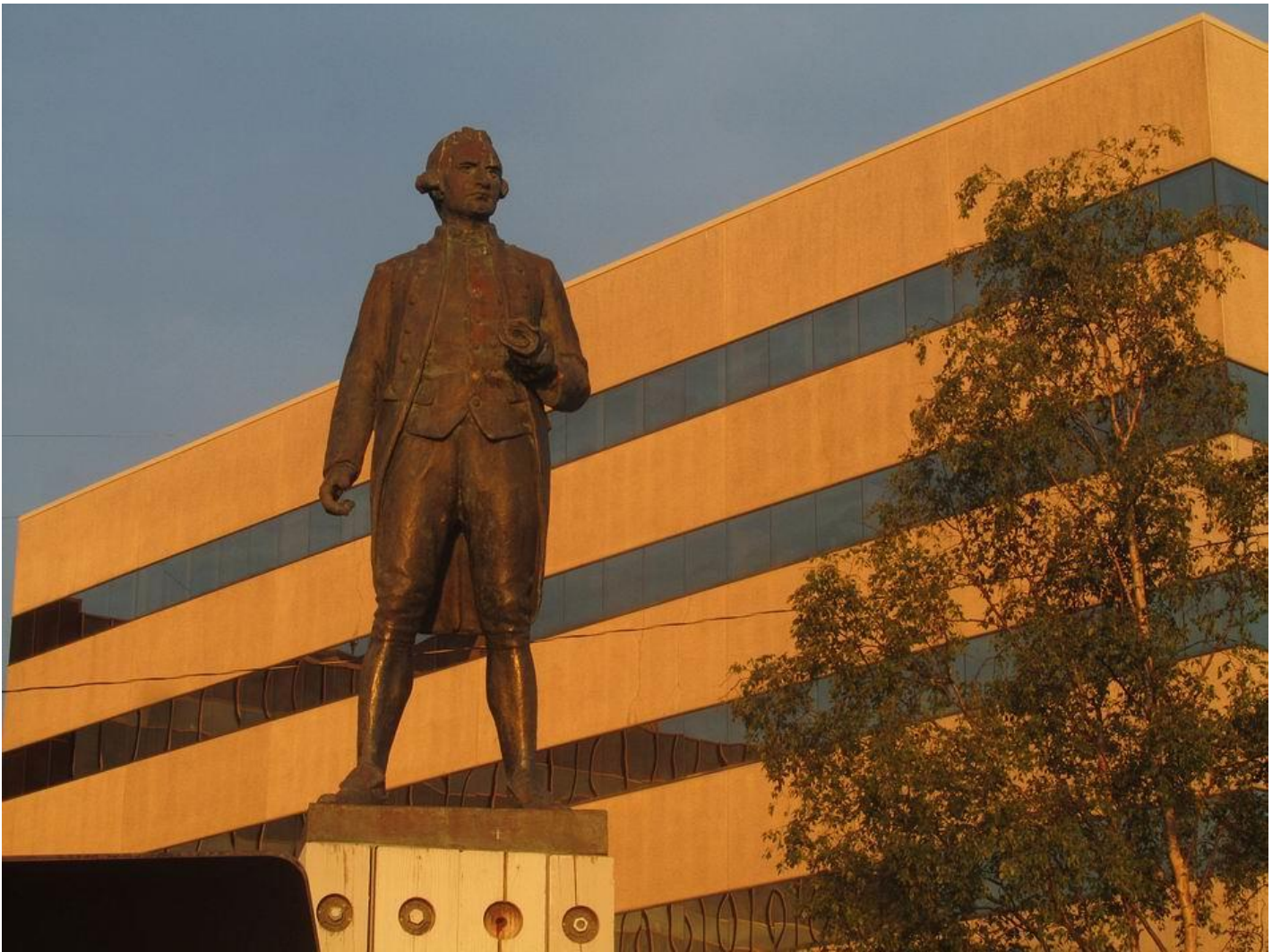
Another of my favourite species to see in the wild is **Diapensia lapponica** seen here growing at Hatcher pass.



After a night in Willow I returned to Anchorage where I spent a day visiting the [Heritage Centre](#) a fascinating insight into the customs and way of life of the native people of Alaska including performances of song and dance – I even got to join them on stage to take part in a traditional welcome dance!



While in Anchorage I was hosted by a member of the Alaskan Rock Garden Society and should you ever find yourself in Anchorage I can recommend his [City Garden guest house](#), it was only a short walk from there to view the sunset over Cook Bay.



Thomas Cook Statue



My last two nights in Alaska were spent in Homer where I enjoyed the most spectacular boat and fishing trip.



I would like to thank the [Alaska Rock Garden Society](#) and Clay Koplin for sponsoring and organising my trip to Alaska – also all my hosts and those who so kindly drove me around - they gave me the perfect introduction to their spectacular country and I very much enjoyed their very friendly hospitality. Additional pictures (with me) by Clay Koplin.

Normal Bulb log resumes next week.....