

Project Update: July 2005

During two trips in June-July and August 2005 to the Lower Choper Park rare and threatened species were investigated. New habitats for such species as *Linum ucrainicum*, *Silene cretacea*, *Artemisia hololeuca* were discovered.

Several northern species were found at floodland of Buzuluk and Choper Rivers, which grow there at the southern border of their natural distribution. A series of descriptions were made at places of threatened species. More than 1,000 photos of rare and common plants were pictured by digital camera. The general and most important types of landscape and vegetation were also photographed.

Certain remote places of territory were specially visited, especially that once, from where herbarium collections had been absent (environs of Stanitsas (Cossack villages) Lukovskaya and Upornikovskaya, and at border between Volgograd and Rostov regions).

During business trip of Vjacheslav Byalt to Moscow in January 2006 all available herbarium collections in Herbarium of Main Botanic Garden (MHA) were studied. It was stated, that in 1970-1990's there were several (about six) expeditions of Moscow's botanists to the Lower Volga area, who visited also the north-west of Volgograd region. About 100 species were added to our total list of flora, which we have not discovered personally yet.

If earlier, for previous nine years 1996-2004, about 4,500 specimens of herbarium had been collected by us, in season 2005 another 1,500 sheets were picked and added. So, our general herbarium of the Lower Choper Nature Park now consists of about 6,000 specimens. At present all collected material is sorting, labelling, checking and analysing.

Points for 129 threatened species for territory of the Park and adjacent territories were marked on the maps.

The article about floating islands of the Babinsky Lakes near Stanitsa Alexeevskaya, in common with Deputy Director of the Park Mr. Alexej Sidorov, was written and accepted to the *Palmengarten Journal*.

If earlier our Total List of flora included 1,015 species of vascular plants, during 2005 it was replenished for at least 250 new species.

We work in close contact with local management of the Park, and in vegetative season 2006 we are planning 2-3 trips to that area, to cover all territory, as far as possible, and to see general flora during different seasons of a year. The first trip we are planning to do in the middle of April, not to miss early flowering plants, bulbs and efemeroids.