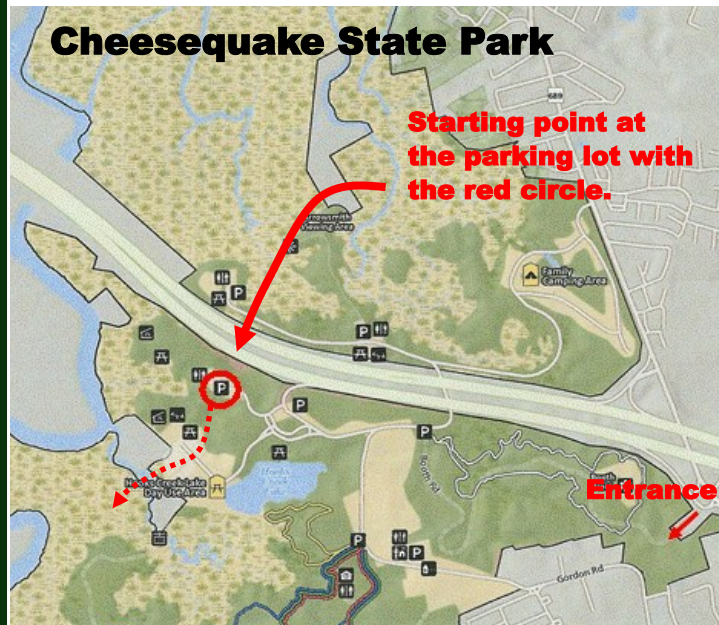


## ***Cypripedium acaule* in Cheesequake State Park, NJ**

Back in 2017 Deep Cut OS set up a group visit to the blooming *Cypripedium acaule* in Cheesequake State Park the weekend before Mothers Day. Unfortunately Mother Nature did not cooperate, as a Nor'Easter forced us to cancel. We rescheduled for the following Sunday, but being Mothers Day only your writer and guide (Bonaventure Magrys) showed up.



My going was not overly popular on the home front, but I have wanted to see the *Cypripediums* in Cheesequake State Park for years, and I had no clue where to go on my own.



*Cypripedium acaule* is not a large plant, but it is certainly noticeable when in bloom. Here with my travel tea mug for reference:

The site is a mixed forest across from the main parking lot by Hook Lake. There is a board walk across

the marsh, so it only takes a couple of minutes to reach the target area:



Where the board walk ends, continue straight ahead on the path about 2-300', and then look to your right. There are two main colonies, which have been fenced to protect against poaching.



There were a lot of seedlings growing outside of the enclosures, so the population appears to be spreading (at least in 2017). Some were trampled by people not sufficiently careful, but I saw a lot of young plants, many at considerable distances from the enclosures.





While there is a mix of both deciduous trees and conifers in the area, this *Cypripedium* grows almost exclusively where the ground is covered in pine needles, in moderate to high light levels and only in non-swampy ground. It is known to require high acidity (pH 4.5 or so), making this plant very difficult to grow away from the natural habitat.

Having camera problems, I was forced to use my tablet, but I lost some of the photos taken when I attempted to transfer them off the device. Being just a tad stubborn, I went back on Monday to replace the lost photos. Having by then learned what to look for, I discovered several plants to the left of the path, including a few that had sprouted in unfortunate spots:



I was able to get up close to these non-fenced plants. Here is one with the flower just opening; at this stage the pouch is cream colored, with the pink deepening as the flower matures.



This compares with freshly opened & mature flowers:



As I continued to look around, I discovered a 3rd colony, which was not fenced in. It was not quite as densely populated as the two in the fenced areas, but it covered a significantly larger area. The photo at the top of the next column shows where I noticed the first flowering plant in the 3rd colony.



As you can see, they can be well camouflaged! However, as I started scanning this area, I found many more plants towards the rear. Being a slightly more shaded location, there were fewer plants in bloom in this area though.

