Restoration of Red Cedar Savanna Plant Communities in Point Pelee National Park

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*Red cedar savanna communities occur on dry sandy soils. They are early successional plant communities which contain some woody species, but mainly, red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*), and a mix of prairie forbs, many of which are listed as rare in Ontario, while some are listed nationally. Red cedar savanna is maintained by disturbance, in particular fire. In Point Pelee National Park, there is concern that in the absence of fire, that the Red cedar savanna communities will disappear in the next 25 to 50 years, due to unchecked forest succession. In 1996 and 1997 we carried out a study to restore conditions which would enable the regeneration and maintenance of red cedar savanna in the park. This involved applying and evaluating fire as a management tool, as well as examining the effectiveness of disking as a soil disturbance that was aimed at stimulating germination of any remaining seed bank of the red cedar savanna plant community. Along with a presentation of our results, we will address the question of why we should attempt to preserve such disturbance-dependent plant communities, when this means that extremely labour-intensive activities must be undertaken to halt or reverse the tide of succession.*