



### A Popular Place for Tours!



The RM hosted two tours recently. On October 4<sup>th</sup>, 75 students from Wheatland Middle

School visited, to learn about the RM, meet a few plants that live near their homes, and try their hands at using an identification key. The students, hosted by the Biodiversity Institute, investigated many facets of biodiversity science during their annual visit, a tradition now in its sixth year.

New Vice President for Research and Economic Development, Dr. Ed Synakowski, happened to drop by the RM while the students were visiting, then came back a few days later for a fruitful conversation about the resources, activities, and needs of the RM. Dr. Ed seemed duly impressed by what he saw and heard during his visits.



**But it's not all party time at the RM,** especially for graduate students Crista O'Connor and Caitlin DeCastro. Crista has completed her second season of field work, and is settling in for the winter, and to complete her thesis. She took some time out to write about her work:

There has been no greater curiosity and awe fostered in my life than by scrupulous observations of nature's diversity, particularly within kingdom Plantae. As a M.S. candidate of floristics in the first-class Rocky Mountain Herbarium, I have the privilege to hone my skills as a taxonomist while enhancing understanding of biogeography by conducting a novel, broad-scale floristic inventory of the vast Clearwater National Forest of north-central Idaho. This diverse landscape is home to ecologically significant coastal refugia and exceptional communities of endemic species, such as the narrowly distributed borage, Rocky Mountain whitethroat (*Dasynotus*

*daubenmirei*, aka Daubenmire's dasy-notus). In my two field seasons of collection, I have documented numerous populations of noxious and



non-native plants, new occurrences of species within the forest, as well as several species of conservation concern—most notably, Idaho state-listed (S1), maidenhair spleenwort (*Asplenium trichomanes*). This new site within the Lochsa River drainage—the second of only two known populations within the state—will be protected and federally managed for conservation indefinitely. As I work meticulously over the coming months to complete determinations of the remainder of collected specimens, I am hopeful to unveil additional novelties in the unique communities of the northern Rockies.

### Volunteer Spotlight



The love of the mountains, clean air, and a small town brought Mary Bower to Laramie 37 years ago. For 24 of those years, she ran her own printshop, which began as a type-setting service and then expanded into a printing business. But Mary always wanted to be a botanist and didn't get that chance in life (until now). Fortunately for us, she attended an RM Friends open house, and it has been history since. She loves being around plants for "their diverse aesthetics, and because they are important for our survival." She doesn't mind if they're dead or alive, she likes working with them! She especially enjoys volunteering at the RM because she's never felt so appreciated for her efforts, and no matter how mundane her question is, she is treated with respect. Currently she is updating decades-old label entry guidelines. This is a feat we are thankful for, and very glad that Mary is our person to complete it!