

2015 February *Guess that Plant*



Prunus serotina stump, weathered by sand and wind

The February *Guess that Plant* was a difficult guess since nothing about it said “cherry”. What this stump represents is the distorted and windblown conditions found on the Cape May peninsula at Higbee Beach. For those not familiar with Higbee Beach, it is a wonderland of ancient sand dunes. The stump is readily visible on the Delaware Bay beach near the south canal jetty, eroding from the dunes recently cut by the Hurricane Sandy.

This site is a relic of the late Pleistocene. Modern vegetation somewhat stabilizes the large dunes that once “roamed” the peninsula. Their position along the eastern edge of Delaware Bay is a perfect trap for sands eroded by the ancient Delaware River. These sands bounced and blew their way west to east into dunes that today reach as high as 30’. These are currently vegetated with blown and sheered black cherry (our stump), hackberry, beach plum, red cedar and the ever-present poison ivy.

Anyone wishing experience this unique habitat can do so in the state land that supports these relics of our Pleistocene past.

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