

# Clintonia

Magazine of the Niagara Frontier Botanical Society An Affiliate of the Buffalo Society of Natural Sciences Volume 26, Issue 1, 2011

# Salty Species: Suaeda calceoliformis (Sea Blite) in Erie County, New to the Niagara Frontier Region

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For almost a decade now I have been commuting to western New York from Saint Louis, Missouri, along Interstate Highways 70, 270, 71, 271, and 90 in all weather and seasons. It dawned on me that perhaps I had better, from time to time (such as when the traffic was blocked, most recently by construction due to the recent federal stimulus money to the States), park the car on the side of the road and look over whatever plants grew in the asphalt corridors of travel.

Usually, drivers whiz along at about 55 (through urban areas), 65 (the general federal speed limit) and 70 (in Indiana) mph. Then the vegetation appears as a green blur, excepting mostly when the Queen-Anne's-Lace (*Daucus carota* - white) and Chickory (*Cichorium intybus* - blue) and Bird's-Foot Trefoil (*Lotus corniculata* - yellow) form mile after mile of bright color in midsummer.

Perhaps the reader may remember the days when the speed limit was 55 mph (that is, at highest fuel efficiency) on the Interstate. During the economic go-go days since Ronald Regan's presidency (a time that may come to an end in 2011), the speed limit was ratcheted up to 65 mph. This was accompanied by extremely aggressive driving manners on the road (with accompanying rise in fatalities) along with the presence of large and heavy vehicles (the SUV comes to mind, not to mention all the trucks, and the explosion of the trucking industry).

Due to the much higher risk associated with elevated driving speeds, heavier vehicles, and perhaps an augmentation of the driving population and mobility of American society in general, including the increase in children as the chief cargo of the SUV, there has been a corresponding increase in the load of salt put on the roads in winter. As anyone from Buffalo, New York, familiar with the stretch of Interstate 90 between Cleveland and the New York State border may be aware, the prevailing westerlies off Lake Erie have make glare ice on the Interstates very hazardous. One can routinely see complex traffic accidents and the most spectacular pile-ups, making gridlock around urban centers another reason to ponder the plants on the roadsides while waiting for one's lane to open up.

Salt in the past has been abundant and cheap, and governments and municipalities have had money to burn to buy and apply salt with the consequence that whole banks of roadside trees, especially horticultural conifers, have been afflicted with salt-burn, especially the roadsides exposed to the prevailing winds. I have seen State and Federal highway department plantings of evergreens turn rusty red and die from the salt.

One of the benefits to the environment of the recent economic downturn is the rise in the price of salt and other commodities, the constraints on State budgets (including personnel to disperse the salt). Though there has been no decrease in the speed limit, there are fewer fatalities due to the fact that people can no longer afford to drive like they did during the past decade, and they often chose to drive more slowly to conserve gasoline. The economic downturn also impacted aggressive driving except in those municipalities still receiving government subsidy - but this is expected to decline as well after June 30 of 2011 (the present year).

Since the speed limit was raised, the lavish hand of road salting has left a legacy of permanently elevated levels of salt in the soil along the Interstate highways. Hence, the expansion of the halophytes, or salty species, into what is perhaps a new environment stretching thousands of miles where seeds and plant fragments are dispersed in the powerful slipstreams of traffic.

Uniform disturbance regimes of gang-mowers and the regulated limit of the allowable height of grassy verges favors low-growing species that set seed early (before cutting). This also promotes growth of species that spread by rhizomes or of scapose plants that send up flowering stalks almost the minute the blades have passed over them (as does *Leontodon autumnalis*).

I would imagine that those with a botanical interest have not noticed this particular flora developing and expanding along the Interstates - due to the fact also that it is illegal to actually stop on the Interstate to indulge one's curiosity, and the inherent hazards of squatting on the asphalt with a handlens while tractor-trailer hookups thunder past, vying with one another to get up the long hill ahead of their competitors after driving all night: the prospect is daunting.

In the years beginning with 2002, I have casually watched the extension of a distinctive narrow strip of Interstate vegetation that is about three feet wide on either side of Interstate pavement that marks the extreme limit of plant growth. I have found several interesting species of plants expanding their range. Rather late in the 2010 season, I examined an area and discovered:

Suaeda calceoliformis (Hook.) Moq. Sea Blite. USA, New York, Erie Co. just west of Exit 47, highway mile post 382 on Interstate 90. October 30, 2010, growing with Spergularia media (L.) C. Presl. (BUF, MO).

The English name "blite" derives from the Latin word 'blitum' (Greek bliton), orach (i.e. Atriplex), and can refer to several plant species in the Chenopodiaceae. In Missouri, Suaeda calceoliformis is known only from historical collections with "Habitat unknown, but presumably open, disturbed areas" (Yatskievych 2006).

Suada depressa (Pursh) S. Watson of major manuals is now known to refer to a different, Eurasian species (McNeill et al. 1977). The Interstate plant would key to S. americana (a synonym) in Fernald's key (1950) ("1 or 2 sepals much more cucullate-carinate than the others"). The plant has an erect, candelabrum-like shape (not spherical) due to the erect-ascending branches (Ferren & Schenk 2003). The fleshy bracts subtending the flowers are narrowed at the base and have membranous margins that are whitish. The leaves are succulent and when dry have longitudinal lines of desiccation. The seeds are horizontal, the horned or hooded perianth segments curve over the seed margins, and the stigma tips are located centrally.

This species has a very broad distribution, concentrated in North America in the western States and extending to mid-continent. The station in Erie Co., New York, represents an eastern extension of its range along the salted interstates. The species has been recently found in St. Lawrence Co., New York, also in October, by Anne Johnson of the Bailey Hortorium (Cornell University), otherwise it is known only from Long Island and the New York City area. The NY Flora Assn. Web site indicates the plant is found at the "upper edges of coastal salt marshes," but that does not

include the Saint Lawrence station (Weldy & Werier 2011).

The map by Ferren & Schenk (2003) does not show a station in southern Ontario so the species is likely to be new to the flora of the Niagara Frontier (Eckel 2005), and is certainly new to western New York.

The genus *Suaeda* (Chenopodiaceae) is a genus of salt-marshes and saline soil. Its associated genera, *Bassia, Monolepis, Salsola, Salicornia*, are salt species as well, usually also found on unstable, sandy substrates in coastal (oceanic) areas. *Corispermum* and *Cycloloma* are not linked with salt, but with sandy beaches. *Atriplex* species associate with both sand and salt. Species of large genus *Chenopodium* grow in waste ground and disturbed (including farm) soil. Some of its species are tasty, and Spinach is a member of this family (*Spinacia oleracea* L.). Species of the closely related family Amaranthaceae share similar habitats but not particularly with salt.

Species in Caryophyllaceae, particularly those in the genus *Spergularia*, are associated with salt and sand. It is these and other saline species formerly associated with coastal habitats that are spreading along the salty Interstate verges.

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Suaeda calceoliformis from a USDA publication

# Witch Hazel Bush is Unique in a Number of Ways Allen Benton

In my childhood I had an elderly great aunt who, like any normal great aunt, took an intense interest in our welfare. She had a number of medical nostrums, but perhaps her favorite was witch hazel. This substance, made by extracting the juice of this common shrub in alcohol, was used for sprains, bruises, sore muscles and almost any injury or ailment which might be treated by external application of a liniment.

Like a great many other herbal remedies used by our ancestors, witch hazel has been pretty much replaced by more complicated chemical formulae. I haven't checked to see if it is still available in pharmacies, but certainly it is not used to the extent it once was. Meanwhile, the shrub continues to grow in profusion in our forested areas, little recognized for the fascinating details of its natural history as well as for its medicinal uses.

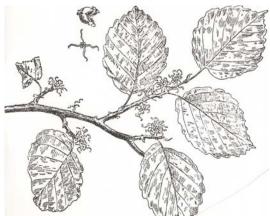
The witch hazel is unique in a number of different ways. One of its most remarkable characteristics is that it blooms in the late fall after the leaves are gone, rather than during the foliage season like most plants. Then too, the flowers are pretty weird, with long slender yellow petals which are twisted and contorted in all directions.

After the flowers are long gone, the witch hazel puts on its spring dress of green foliage. As the year passes, last year's flowers develop into seed pods – brown capsules about a half inch long. These nut – like seeds give no external evidence of being at all unusual, but they are among nature's strangest creations. When they are ripe and mature, they start to dry, and when they reach an appropriate level of dryness, they snap open with an audible pop and throw their seed up to twenty feet from the parent plant. This fantastic device assures that the growing seeds will not be under the shade of their larger relatives.

I have no idea why this interesting shrub reached its name. The hazel part is simple enough; the shrub is not unlike the common wild hazel bush, the one that produces nuts we know as filberts. The two species are not at all closely related, however. The witch portion of the name may refer to the peculiar flowering habits, but another of other plants, including the hazel-nut and spicebush flower when there are no leaves. Possibly, the exploding seeds may have suggested the name. In any case the name has been about for a great many years. In French Canada, it was known as Café du Diable, the devil's coffee, so the association with evil and witchcraft must have some basis.

The witch hazel is a peculiarly American plant, although it has some relatives in Asia. The early settlers learned of its medicinal uses from the Native Americans. Although its most frequent use has been as a liniment, it was also believed to be a useful sedative, and helpful in all kinds of internal and external problems. The list of ailments for which it has been prescribed includes diarrhea, varicose veins and hemorrhage. It is also an excellent astringent, and it was widely used by the ladies to tighten the skin, remove wrinkles and reduce bags under the eyes.

I don't know whether witch hazel is much used anymore, but it has had a long and useful history. Who knows? Maybe it has as yet undiscovered antibiotic properties which will someday return it to its place in medicinal usage.



#### **Hunters Creek Park**

Field Trip report

On December 31, 2010 a group of six gathered for a winter visit it Hunter's Creek Park in Wales. This 750 acre Erie County park contains a deep gorge, a shale bottom creek and various ravines, meadows, and wooded areas. It was an unusually warm day blessing us with ideal winter hiking conditions. We stayed away from the deep ravine A heavy snow cover was rapidly melting making it slippery at times. In a gully, overshadowed by handsome mature maples and black cherries, we found a charming little waterfall on one of the stream tributaries. Our botanical activity was confined to winter tree identification. The park contains a number of large Plantations of Red and White Pine as well as Norway spruce. Along the pathways and in some blow-down clearings a number of native species were emerging. Here and there we founds some mature stands of native trees of impressive size. We also found areas of what looked like abandoned farmland taken over by an overgrowth of hawthorn, apple, pear and buckthorn. Below is a list of the tree and shrubs found.

Acer negundoBoxelderAcer saccharumSugar Maple

Crataggus sp. Crahapple

Crabapple Crataegus sp. Fagus grandifolia American Beech Fraxinus americana White Ash Lonicera sp. Honeysuckle Malus pumila Common Apple Ostrya virginiana Hophornbeam Picea mariana Norway Spruce Pinus resinosa Red Pine Pinus sylvestris Scotch Pine Pinus strobus White Pine Cottonwood Populus deltoides

Populus tremuloidesQuaking AspenPrunus serotinaWild Black CherryPyrus communisCommon PearRibes sp.GooseberryRhamnus sp.BuckthornSalix eriocephalaStiff Willow

## Honeyoye Lake Field Trip October 16, 2010

Additional Information

In the last issue, Vol.25, Issue 4, Joanne Schlegel gave a report on a field trip to the Harriet Hollister Spencer State Recreation Area near Honeyoye Lake on October 16, 2010. Unfortunately, part of the plant list was missing from the article. Our apologies. Below is the complete plant list that should have been printed.

Castanea dentata Coptis groenlandica Epigaea repens Eurybia macrophylla Gaultheria procumbens Huperzia lucidula Lycopodium obscurum Mitchella repens Oclemena acuminata Osmunda cinnamomea Osmunda regalis Pyrola elliptica Quercus montana Rubus hispidus Sassafras albida Solidago bicolor Symphotrychum prenanthoides Thelypteris palustris

Vaccinium angustifolium

Vaccinium corymbosum

American Chestnut
Goldthread
Trailing arbutus
Large-leaved Aster
Wintergreen
Shining Clubmoss
Tree clubmoss
Partridgeberry
Whorled Aster
Cinnamon Fern
Royal Fern
Shinleaf
Chestnut Oak
Swamp Dewberry

Sassafras Silverrod Crooked-stem Aster

Marsh Fern

Lowbush Blueberry Highbush Blueberry



**American Chestnut** 

#### **BLOODROOT** Sanguinaria canadensis

by Barbara Nuffer

The white blossom of the bloodroot is one of the first flowers to greet us when we walk in the woods in early spring. Bloodroot is a native wildflower that blooms in mid-April in New York's rich acidic woodlands. As it emerges through the forest's leaf litter, the single flower stem is surrounded by the developing leaf.

This beautiful flower has 8-12 white petals with a bright yellow center and can measure up to two inches across. Unfortunately, the flower is very short-lived, lasting for several days at most. However, rainy weather can cause the petals to drop off in a single day. Like other ephemeral wildflowers bloodroot blooms, attracts pollinators, and sets its seed, before deciduous trees have leafed out. By late spring, bloodroot plants are dormant and disappear entirely until the following spring.

The seed is produced in an oblong pod that ripens in late spring. The pod opens up and the seeds spring out below the plant. The fleshy coating surrounding the seeds attracts ants, which cary the seeds into their nest to feed their larvae. The seeds germinate in the nutrient-rich debris of the ant nest. The process serves to disperse the seeds from the mother plant.

Bloodroot is a member of the poppy family. Like all poppies, the rhizome (a horizontal underground stem) contains powerful and potentially dangerous compounds. The rhizome produces a red juice that was used by Native Americans as a body paint and dye. Native Americans also used bloodroot as a treatment for various ailments, ranging from fever and bronchitis to warts. It was valued as a love charm by the bachelors of Nebraska's Ponca tribe. The men would apply the red juice to their palms and shake hands with the woman they wanted to marry. According to legend, the girl would be a willing partner within a week.

There is a beautiful garden selection of this native plant, known as double bloodroot. It blooms a few days later than the single-flowered bloodroot, and the flowers last about twice as long. Although expensive and hard to find, these plants are very long-lived and can be divided every three or four years.

The bloodroot's solitary leaf bud emerging from the ground is distinctively shaped and serves as

your first hint that the flower will soon make an appearance. Remember, you must be vigilant to spot this plant in flower. So be sure to mark its appearance in mid-April on your calendar if you want to share in the beauty of this fleeting wildflower.

From the April 2008 issue of New York State Conservationist, a publication of the NY State DEC



#### **Upcoming Trip to "The Bruce"**

Reserve your place now! Plan to join other NFBS members as we explore the spectacular scenery and plant life of the Bruce Peninsula.

We will depart Buffalo on Friday, June 10, and spend three nights at the Coach House Inn in Tobermory at the northern tip of the peninsula. We expect to spend the majority of our time at sites nearby, especially Bruce Peninsula National Park and Flowerpot Island (reached by ferry). We will also likely stop at an additional site on the way home, possibly Dorcas Bay or an alvar.

The Bruce is known for its profusion of orchids, many of which should be in full bloom in early June. Other rarities which we will likely see include Dwarf Canadian Primrose, Starflower (*Trientalis*), Lyre-leaved Rock Cress, Lakeside Daisy (*Hymenoxys*), Dwarf Lake Iris, Sand Cherry, several species of carnivorous plants, and many ferns.

Room rates at the Coach House are \$65.00 per night (room for 2), which is really a bargain. Our hosts will provide a full breakfast each day for \$6, and a box lunch for \$6. Deadline for participation will be May 15. Call Joanne Schlegel, 835-6042 to reserve a place

#### On This and That

#### More Information on Leydecker Rd. Site

The cover article of the last issue of Clintonia was about a plant survey of flora along Cazenovia Creek near Leydecker Rd. in West Seneca. survey was conducted at the request of the Town of West Seneca Environmental Committee. This area was part of the property of the W. Seneca Children's Psychiatric Center and owned by the NY State Dormitory Authority. The Authority was planning to end ownership of this property and there was concern about its fate. The survey was conducted and submitted in support of its protection. Nothing is guaranteed yet, but it appears that the DEC may take title of the parcel and Town of West Seneca officials are considering placing a conservation easement or deed restriction on the property to protect it from being stripped.

#### **Disturbing Changes at the Library**

The main branch of the Buffalo and Erie Public Library has been known for a fine collection of botanical books. Unfortunately, some disturbing changes are under way. The library system is downsizing. According to the Buffalo News, in 2010 some 67,010 books,, periodicals and other printed material were "weeded out" in 2010. Of these, 32,349 were books. It has always been a practice to cull some books from the collection, but the process has accelerated in light of budgetary issues. While some books were given to senior groups, the Holding Center and County Correctional facility, many were sent to recycling. The botany collection and all books from the upper floor have been moved to the main floor or to the stacks. This editor recently visited the new botany section. There was still a decent selection; however a few old favorites seem to be missing. A review of the catalog revealed quite a few items still in the stacks. Per the weed out policy, one criterion for culling the collection is when a book is not checked out for an extended period. Members are encouraged to make use of this wonderful collection. Use it. Or lose it.

#### **Donation from Norm Zika**

Long time members will recall the late, great NFBS member, Norm Zika. He knew and loved the study of plants. He conducted numerous plant surveys, worked at Tifft, taught classes at the Museum of

Science wrote numerous articles for Clintonia and gave several wonderful presentations at our meetings. Thanks to the generous donation of his daughter Jeanne Zika, the NFBS has received a collection of his books for the purpose of sale for the purpose of raising funds. The books are on a number of nature topics including birds and plants. Some of the books were offered for sale at the February meeting. Books will also be offered at the March meeting.

#### **Aster and Goldenrod Workshop**

Plans are in the works for a workshop, sponsored by the New York Flora Association on asters and goldenrods to be held in Western New York. It will occur on September 17th. John Semple, from the University of Waterloo in Ontario has agreed to teach the workshop. Further details will be given in a future issue of Clintonia.

#### **Nomination of Officers**

At the annual dinner meeting in April, nominations will be made for officers of the NFBS. The positions to be nominated include: president elect, vice president, secretary, treasures and two directors. Election of officers will occur during the May meeting.

#### William Bogacki



One of our long-time members, William Bogacki passed away recently. He will be remembered for his great love of the outdoors, especially birds. Years ago when working for Westinghouse he taught himself about birds during his lunch hours. He loved backpacking and was a member of the Foothills Trail Club. Bill had led several very popular birding field trips at the Allegheny Pilgrimage. After retirement he did security at the Tifft Nature Preserve. He will be missed.

#### Wildlife Gardeners' West Virginia Meetup

#### **Jason Sorens**

I am involved in an online group called Wildlife Gardeners (www.wildlifegardeners.org) with members from all over North America. We are holding our first-ever meetup in West Virginia, where we will explore the botanical wonders of the Cranberry Glades and the gorges and waterfalls of Blackwater Falls and Canaan Valley State Parks. The trip takes place June 22-26, and members of the NFBS are also welcome! If you are potentially interested in joining us, please contact me, Jason Sorens, at jsorens@buffalo.edu or 361-1259 for the detailed schedule, lodging information, etc. We will likely be a group of about 12-15.

On another note, I highly recommend the wildlifegardeners.org forums for anyone interested in native wildlife in all its forms. I have learned much from the discussions there, and certainly anyone with an interest in plant identification, gardening with native plants, nature photography, bird watching, controlling invasive species, or any related topics will fit right in.

#### **Meetings of Interest of Other Organizations**

#### **Buffalo & Erie Co Botanical Gardens Society**

Thursday, April 7, 2011, 7:30-8:30 Doug Tallamy, Bringing Nature Home: How you Can Sustain Wildlife with Native Plants Dr Tallamy is a professor & Chair of Entomology & Wildlife Ecology at the University of Delaware in Newark. He will discuss the impact of alien plants on native ecosystems, interactions between plants and insects and conservation of biodiversity. Cost: \$20 for Bot. Gardens Soc members and \$24.00 for non-members. To reserve call: 827-1584 or register at <a href="https://www.buffalogardens.com">www.buffalogardens.com</a>

#### Nature Sanctuary Society of Western New York

Thursday, March 17, 2011, 7:00PM, Jackie Swift, "Lost Medicine: Wild Plants at Risk" Every day important medicinal plants are being lost to over-harvesting and habitat destruction. Meet these amazing remedies and learn ways to aid in their protection. The meeting is at the Harlem Rd Community Center, corner of Harlem & Lincoln in Amherst and is free to the public.

#### **Western NY Land Conservancy**

These events are at the Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural National Historic Site, 671 Delaware Avenue, Buffalo and are free & open to the public. There is a free parking lot behind the site off Franklin St. Please RSVP to 697-1225 or email <a href="mailto:nnhoffman@wnylc.org">nnhoffman@wnylc.org</a>

Monday, March 7, 2011, 5:30 PM, Margaret Wooster, author of Living Waters: Reading the Rivers of the Lower Great Lakes and Somewhere to Go on Sunday, a guidebook to the "natural treasures" of the binational Niagara bioregion. Ms. Wooster will be speaking about the importance and value of the watershed surrounding Lake Erie and Lake Ontario, and how we, as ordinary citizens, can ensure that our watersheds are protected for generations to come.

Monday, April 11, 2011 5:30 PM Stan Radon, Geologist, NYS Dept. of environmental Conservation

Monday, May 2, 2010, 5:30 Paul Fuhrman, Ecology and Environment and the NYS Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management

## **General Meetings**

General meetings are normally held at 7:30 PM on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of each month, September through May at the Harlem Rd. Community Center, Harlem Rd at Lincoln St (a quarter mile south of Main St) in Snyder, NY. The meetings are open to the public and free of Charge.

**Tuesday, March 8, 2011, Reann Ehman** will give a talk on the natural history of the Pfeiffer Nature Center. Reann Ehman is the Naturalist at the Pfeiffer Nature Center, located in the town of Portville, in Cattaraugus County.

Tuesday, April 12, 2011, Annual Dinner Meeting at Sonoma Grille (See insert in this issue for details) David Werier, The New York Flora Atlas – A History of Plants in New York State

**Tuesday, May 10, 2011, Ed Fuchs** will have a slide presentation from the recently donated collection of Norm Zika. Norm, a charter NFBS member, had a great love of our local flora and loved to share his knowledge in many classes and presentations.

#### FIELD TRIPS - SPRING 2011

Field trips are coordinated by Joanne Schlegel, 835-6042. If you plan on participating in a trip, please contact trip leader to let the leader know you are coming. Leave your phone number, in case of a scheduling change. Ideas for trips are always appreciated, as is offering to lead a field trip. GUESTS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME.

**Saturday, April 30, 2011:** Woods behind the beach at Wendt Park (near Angola). Meet 9:00 a.m. at the Home Depot on Mile Strip Road, just east of I-90 at Exit 56. (Note: this will be a voyage of exploration--a walk there last June found numerous remnants of Blue Cohosh, so it is hoped other good things will be discovered.) Leader: Ed Fuchs, 598-1307.

**Saturday, May 7, 2011: Turkey Point Provincial Park** (near Long Point in Ontario): Meet 8:30 a.m. at Front Park adjacent to the Peace Bridge. Bring passports and lunch. This will be a trip to see rare Bird's-foot Violets in flower. This trip is tentative. If a phone call ahead to the park finds that the violets are not yet in bloom, we will choose an alternate site for the day and try again next year. Leader: Joanne Schlegel, 835-6042.

**Saturday, May 14, 2011: Pfeiffer Nature Center, Portville** (east of Olean): Meet at 8:30 in East Aurora, behind the movie theater on Main St. Our destination encompasses 650 acres in southern Cattaraugus County, and includes 9 miles of hiking trails. Leader: Michael Siuta, 822-2544.

**Saturday, May 21, 2011: Tom Draves Arboretum, Darien:** Meet at 9:00 a.m. at I-90 Park-and-Ride on Transit Road. This privately-owned arboretum encompasses 25 acres and includes 500 trees acquired from such sources as the National Arboretum & the Holden Arboretum. We will see Willowleaf Magnolia, Bigleaf Dogwood, Japanese Oak, Winged Elm, Yellowwood, Carolina Allspice, Korean Mountain Ash, and many other rarities. Mr. Draves, who is a 3<sup>rd</sup>-generation professional arborist, will act as our guide. Walking will include some hills & steps. Bring lunch. Leader: Joanne Schlegel, 835-6042.

Friday-Monday, June 10-13, 2011: Bruce Peninsula. See article elsewhere in this issue.

# CLINTONIA, Volume 26, Issue 1, 2011

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