ANPSA INDIGENOUS ORCHID STUDY GROUP **ISSN 1036-9651**

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WESTERN AUSTRALIAN ORCHIDS STILL A VERY BIG DRAWCARD

LOOKING FOR ORCHIDS AND FINDING A GOOD BOOK

Lynette Reilly

Last year as part of our 'long-service leave from fifteen years of retirement commitments', Peter and I spent four months travelling along a lot of Australia's desert tracks. By mid-trip we were in southern WA and looking for the ground orchids we had loved on our previous visit for the Perth ASGAP conference.

First I'd like to review briefly a very useful book which I wish we had found at the beginning of our trip rather than almost at the end. Called *A Guide to Native Orchids of South Western Australia,* it is written by Bob Liddelow, published in 2006 by R&R Publications Aust. Pty Ltd and cost me $35 in the Denmark Visitors' Centre. (This is the same book Margaret Bradhurst used on her WA sojourn SQ it must be good. P)

The author has found, photographed, described and located all of the 142 orchids in this book, although these represent only half WA's orchid species. He admits the locations described are no guarantee of finding these orchids there in following seasons (due to fire, flood, drought, activities of animals and orchid enthusiasts...). However his notes are a valuable guide to where to start looking, instead of blindly bush-bashing.

Each of the book's full-colour pages is devoted to one species. After a note on hybrids and a glossary with labelled diagrams of a donkey and a spider orchid, come the wonderful mud maps. The index lists scientific then common-.names.

The book's end plates show his arbitrary division of southern WA into SW, SC, SE, E and N areas as well as the locations of his 55 mud maps. For example in the south central (SC) area, mud map SC7 (near Mt Barker) refers to "gravel pit, Woogenilup Rd, off Albany Highway, Mt Barker" and lists: Jug Orchid (Sep); Pink Enamel Orchid (Oct); Purple Enamel Orchid (Sep); Rattle Beaks (Sep) and Stark White Spider Orchid (Oct). What enticements!

The book can also be used simply for ID by flicking through the pages, arranged with Caladenias first (white to coloured), then other genera as listed on the contents page by scientific and common names. Tucked into the plastic book jacket is a small ruler, useful when deciding for example if your flower is "very small" (2-4cm) or just "small" (3-6cm).

Rare species are photographed and described, but their locations are listed as "confidential" to try to ensure their survival.

Some wonderful memories from our trip:

- At the Bush Heritage property 'Eurardy' one of the helpful volunteers showed us clumps of Rosycheeked Donkeys *Diuris* aff. *corymbosa* and Small Snails *Pterostylis nana* growing under bushes with lots of Cowslips *Caladenia flava.*

- in Kalbarri National Park we found a Kalbarri Cowslip *Caladenia flava* subsp. *maculata.*

- On a 4WD tagalong from the Western Flora campground, an Arrowsmith Spider *Caladenia crebra* shared *a Eucalyptus erythrocorys* woodland with fields of pink everlastings. Alan Tinker has found over 60 orchid species on his Western Flora property. We had hoped to find the fabled Queen of Sheba here, but Alan told us that instead of the 200 he usually sees, he'd ticked just three this season. His best explanation was that because of the excessive rain, the orchid tubers were content to sit fatly underground, not wasting energy on putting up their sexual displays.
- At Mt. Barker, while waiting for the Banksia Farm tour with Keith Collins, we explored a 'spare block' in town where he had marked out **and named** more than a dozen blooming beauties.
- Using the book on the Mt Barker to Hyden road near Tenterden we found a wide country road verge with lots of Stark White Spider Orchids *Caladenia longicauda* subsp. *eminens,* a few Little Pink Fairies *Caladenia reptans* subsp. *reptans* and some Pink Candy Orchids *Caladenia hirta subsp. rosea.*

Caladenia longicauda ssp. *eminens*

Caladenia hirta ssp. *rosea*

- On the path from the Wave Rock campground to the Rock, Hyden, we spotted a Clown or Jack-in-the-Box *Caladenia roei* under some melaleucas.

This may not come under the category of 'useful research', but I wanted to share the FUN we had looking for and then trying to name some of the wonderful WA terrestrial orchids.

We welcome this contribution from Lynette, the well-known travel writer.

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE ORCHID KIND IN NEW ZEALAND Linda Rogan

Our first visit to New Zealand was made in October and November 2009. We quickly discovered that in NZ it is necessary to get close in order to see and appreciate their unique orchids. It was well worth our trouble as many are little jewels.

We were about a month too early for the optimum orchid blooming in the South Island, but found greenhoods and a Caladenia from our first day, and an Earina in bloom by the last. Most memorable to me, were tiny spider orchids. You will have noticed from Don's birthday card (last issue), NZ spiders are not arachnids, nor are they Caladenias *(Arachnorchis)* but from the *Corybas* family.

It was the day we crossed Arthur's Pass, where Keas or mountain parrots (Sulphur-crested sized) were selecting and tossing pebbles in the parking lot, perhaps frustrated that we obeyed the signs and didn't feed them. There were still a few hours of daylight when we pulled into Jacksons Retreat on the west side of the divide; plenty of time to take their bushwalk to a small waterfall. We had gotten into the habit of checking out any patches of small kidney-shaped leaves amongst the moss but had so far found only tiny buds or seed pods on their extended scapes.

This time, tiny whisker-like lateral sepals, about 50mm long, extended above the leaves. These gave away the hiding place of the flowers. I think these are in the *Nematoceras trilobum* group. (photo). In the photo, the leaves have been gently moved back to reveal the entire orchid flower. Though closely related to our helmet orchids the extended sepals give a very different appearance. Fungus gnats are their pollinators and fungus gnat eggs have been found in the pocket in the labellum channel.

Nematoceras trilobum

Nematoceras acuminatum

***Corybas* sp.**

Many similar orchids were seen along the west coast wherever we walked among the lush beech and podocarp rainforests. A different orchid from the Corybas group was sighted on a walk on the nature reserve that is Ulva Island Open Sanctuary. A short boat trip from Stewart Island at the far south end of the South Island, Ulva Island can only be visited on day trips and is one of few places where all feral animal pests have been removed. It offers sighting of very special birds such as the Saddleback and is not to be missed by the nature enthusiast. The birds were wonderful, but so were the orchids, if only in a small way. Drizzle did not put us off our search.

Umbrella in one hand and camera in the other I bent down to inspect a pale spider, the largest I had seen on this trip, with a long pointed dorsal sepal instead of a hood. I believe it to be the Dancing Spider Orchid, *Nematoceras acuminatum.* (photo on page 3)

My favourite orchid was seen on our last walk on Stewart Island the morning before we flew back to the mainland. We were reluctant to leave the island as the weather was starting to improve. One more night and we may have been able to take an evening boat trip in search of Kiwis on the beach. Instead, we made the most of our last days walking. The Rakiura track passed through a grove of native Fuchsia trees *Fuchsia excorticata.* Tuis, iridescent blue-black birds with a natty white tuft of feathers at the throat, were alternately sipping from the green to red flowers and singing, chortling and generally putting on a show. The Tuis' song always makes me smile.

Still the crowning event on this walk was the discovery of the tiniest spider orchid I have ever seen.
(Peter's finger in one of the accompanying photos shows the relative size of the orchid. It sits in near perfection on its cupped leaf with only the tip of one petal starting to wither - photos unable to be scanned) I have sent a copy of the photo off to Ian St. George; for identification.

I find it interesting to compare differences and similarities between eastern Australian and NZ orchid flora. There are complex influences from Gondwana connections, seed dispersal on the winds and NZ long term island status. A unique feature that has developed is that about 60% of NZ orchids are capable of self-pollination. A future trip to the South Island will be later in the season.

This article from Linda confirms the breadth of interests and knowledge of many of our study group members.

Thank you to Lyn and Linda for this issue of our newsletter - articles from members for members.

We have received the following request from the National body. Could you please, ASAP, pass this information on to your Study Group members:

On the ANPSA website, under 'Australian Native Seed Suppliers', a business called *Australian Bush Products Strathalbyn* is listed. This company has not been in existence for several years. I was told that the lady who now has the telephone number which used to belong to the company is fed up with getting phone calls for them!