

A.S.G.A.P. INDIGENOUS ORCHID STUDY GROUP NEWSLETTER NO. 8

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Hi friends,

This has indeed been a year of great things. Another really good book on orchids for us in the revised and updated Australian Indigenous Orchids by Alick Dockrill. Indeed now out in two volumes. David L. Jones having filled the gap between Dockrill's first effort and now by his own native orchid book.

My advice get them both and if possible the two books of Dockrill! Here is another little orchid story I can pass on to you for what it is worth. A.N.O.S. was only not long started, Col. Harman was just considering maybe building a sanctuary at O'Reilly's mountain, and most orchid members still brought in their plants and filled the benches of S.G.A.P. Qld. Region.

A local shell and butterfly collector who dabbled in orchids told me of a lovely Vanda that climbed trees and had a delicious perfume. All this and it grew in the Currumbin hinterland.

Always willing to see a few of us went to Currumbin and headed west along the river (creek) whichever till after opening a few gates, we were on a narrow track around a small mountain in what we were told is the lost world country.

Through an old deserted sawmill, up through a disused banana crop until tired and dirty we were about to give up. Then on turning a bend I smelled honey and on clambering over a great red mound of an earthslide found a partially covered vine of hundreds of 5 cm. yellow orchids all with red spotting in the labellum.

At last the vanda, torn down from its tree perch from the slide. Great excitement trusses of flowers bits of vine and roots we all came back happy. Back at home and off to the Botanical Gardens and of course Dr. Stan Blake. End of story, suffice to say we had found a giant climbing orchid now psuedovanilla but then Galeola Foliata (which I still name it.)

L.P. Butt.

October is a good month for observing the genera *Diuris*. There are four common (or at least extensively distributed) species consisting of *Diuris maculata*, *D. sulphurea*, *D. aurea* and *D. punctata*. All of these can be found either coastal or on the adjacent escarpment with *D. maculata* and *D. sulphurea* likely to be observed in most open forest. *D. aurea* and *D. punctata* are less common but can be found right throughout the local region. Usually these orchids will be found growing together and in some areas all four can be found. Natural hybrids in some areas are common and in one particular highland area *D. punctata* hybridises with both *D. aurea* and *D. sulphurea*.

Diuris maculata

This orchid is extremely common being especially numerous away from the coastal plains. *D. maculata* is relatively small and yellow in colour with dark spots and blotches. The two features which assist in identifying this orchid are the spotting on the lower surfaces

of the petals and sepals and the lateral sepals being short, crossed and green with dark purple markings. *D. maculata* tends to be the first to flower as was the case this year when flowering plants which originated from the Victorian tuberbank were brought into the August meeting.

Diuris sulphurea

This orchid is also common and can be readily identified by its sulphur yellow colour and the two distinctive dark spots on the dorsal sepal. It can be variable in size but is often a robust plant with large flowers. I have seen it growing at least 80cm tall in high grass along the verge of the Wingello Road. However the best clones in my opinion come from the coastal areas of the Illawarra down to Jervis Bay.

Diuris aurea

Diuris aurea can be found both on the plains and highlands very often in very open grasslands. It is less common but makes a spectacular sight when a field of it is out in full flower. It is a largish flower, yellow with a few brown markings while the lateral sepals only occasionally cross.

Diuris punctata

Diuris punctata because of its different colour and large size usually attracts a great deal of favourable comment when displayed. The *D. punctata* found locally is also referred to as *D. punctata forma blakeyae*. It is the most variable of the local *Diuris* in that the flowers vary enormously in size and colour shadings and to a lesser degree in respect to shape. I especially like the clones which have very long lateral sepals. In one highland location the uncommon pure white form which was displayed at the September meeting is found. I have already pollinated these plants to attempt raising them by seed so that they in years to come will be available to the tuber bank.

The common *Diuris* usually grow together or at least in close proximity to each other. This can often lead to natural hybrids being found. In one area in the highlands all four species can be found as can the natural hybrids of *D. punctata* x *D. aurea*, *D. punctata* x *D. aurea* and *D. aurea* x *D. sulphurea*.

When growing *Diuris* they require a well drained mix and can take more light than *Pterostylis*. They also respond well to tuber cutting. A GOOD REFERENCE BOOK FOR THESE ORCHIDS IN THE SOCIETY'S LIBRARY IS 'AUSTRALIAN TERRESTRIAL ORCHIDS' BY COLLIN AND DOROTHY WOOLCOCK.

Pterostylis hildae Nicholls

G. BRADBURN



Pterostylis hildae has a limited distribution in the Illawarra being found on the margins of wet sclerophyl forest and rainforest on the eastern side of the escarpment. It can readily be found at Mount Keira, Mount Kembla and Macquarie Pass where it is abundant. P. hildae can usually be found in flower from the middle of July to early spring. Presently the flowering at Macquarie Pass is extremely good with large numbers being found in flower in last week of July.

The range of P. hildae extends from southern Queensland in the north to near Kiama in the south. It would be expected that it would extend further south but I know of no recordings. Within the Illawarra P. hildae can often be found growing and flowering with P. pedunculata, P. erecta, P. curta, P. nutans and P. longifolia.

P. hildae was for a long time confused with P. curta but was finally described as a species by Nicholls in 1937. Although it has similarities to P. curta it is easily differentiated from it. Pterostylis hildae has a slightly smaller flower, a straight labellum (twisted for P. curta) which is lighter in colour and a rosette of up to three leaves (usually three to five for curta). It also has strong similarities with P. stricta and some yet to be named species from Barrington Tops and Queensland.

Pterostylis hildae is an easy orchid to grow as it flowers and multiplies freely. If you do find this species further south do let me know so that its known range can be accurately recorded. This orchid is usually available in the tuberbank.

Pterostylis gibbosa R.Br.

Pterostylis gibbosa is endemic to the Northern Illawarra where it is rare and endangered. It is known from Yallah and a few other locations within a very limited area with the population numbering not much over 1000 plants. It is one of the larger flowering 'rufa' species and flowering in early August is one of the first to flower.

Pt gibbosa was first collected at Arthursbury (near Parramatta) in 1809. Later on another rare unnamed species adopted the name since it is similar in appearance (superficially) but brownish in colour. *Pt gibbosa*'s first known rediscovery was in the 1940's by Roy O'Meley. Although sent to the Sydney Herbarium, it was not correctly identified and so remained unnoticed until 1967 when refound by Brian Whitehead. It was named *Pt ceriflora* by Blackmore and Clemesha but this later became a synonym of *Pt gibbosa* when Mark Clements checked the original material held in Kew Gardens.

Of interest also is the story of the species which for a while was misnamed *Pt gibbosa*. This little known species was only very rarely found in the lower Blue Mountains. Its best known sites are just outside the Northern Illawarra and it shares a similar fate to *Pt gibbosa* in being at present a very rare orchid which is threatened by development.

Pt gibbosa is now known in a few isolated pockets near Lake Illawarra. A single plant was found in South Nowra but that location is now a housing development. Despite further searches it has not been found in the vicinity since.

Growing in the same areas as *Pt gibbosa* are a number of other orchid species. These include *Pt rufa*, *Pt aciculiformis*, *Pt bicolor*, *Pt truncata*, *Pt longipetala*, *Pt nutans*, *Pt curta*, *Diuris sulphurea*, *Caladenia carnea* and *Theymitra pauciflora*.

At the beginning I mentioned that *Pt gibbosa* was rare and endangered. It is found on both private and public land. Where it is found on private land it was until 19th December 1988 protected by a interim conservation order. At present it has no effective protection and some areas have in the past few years been cleared. Most privately owned sites are grazed by cattle and in time it is probable that *Pt gibbosa* will be lost. Letters have been written to both the Hon. Tim Moore the Minister for the Environment and the Hon. David Hay Minister for Planning outlining our concerns for the orchid.

They have both stated that it is in the hands of the National Parks and Wildlife. What this means that the orchid on private land would only be given security if its officers can persuade the owners to enter into voluntary conservation agreement. This obviously is not a very satisfactory situation for these sites.

On public land the orchid appears to have a more secure future. Hopefully present negotiations will result in permanent protection on these sites. Even so this would only present a starting point for its conservation. In the shortrun obvious

problems such as the clearing of lantana would need to be carried out. In the long term a management program would need to be implemented to ensure that the habitat remains suitable for the orchid. This would be needed as the orchid is only now found on very small strips of land which is constantly threatened by weed infestation from surrounding agricultural areas. Studies need to be carried out to determine the best habitat for the orchid. It could be for example that the orchid favours a habitat effected by fire or as a comparison a stable mature open woodland. We are working toward *Pt gibbosa* being the subject of a longterm study to ensure that the management of the orchid ensures its longterm survival.

Pt gibbosa is also threatened by the illegal collecting. It is hoped that our flasking program will provide adequate numbers of this plant so that collecting from the wild will cease. *Pt gibbosa* represents a local example of the threat of urbanisation to many of Australia's orchid species. It is appropriate that it was chosen as the logo for the first Australasian Native Orchid Conference and Show in 1990 and I hope by then it can be an example of how threatened orchid species can be successfully saved.

G. Bradburn.



DEN. RUPPIANUM SYN. *FUSIFORME*