

A.S.G.A.P. INDIGENOUS ORCHID STUDY GROUP.

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Welcome to our first newsletter for the new century! In this issue we have some information from members, reports of orchids seen and not seen, items from Victoria, N.S.W., Queensland, and for the first time, from Western Australia. We hope that you find something of interest .....

Jeanette, from Wardell NSW 2477 writes: " a couple of weeks ago a friend showed me a *Pseudovanilla foliata* growing up a tree in a Park that they had been cleaning up and getting rid of all the exotic ferals. They, a group of dedicated SGAPPER'S, have been working on this project for many years so it was like winning the lottery for them to find this beauty.

Another friend owning a property out in the Nimbin district has shown me a *Erythrorchis cassythoides* out in flower, growing on an old dead tree nearly knocked down by a bulldozer but saved because of the perfume which led to its discovery.

There would be a lot of terrestrial orchids in the heathlands here on the coast but I have always missed going out on excursions with the local group as they close down over the time that I am down here."

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We have mentioned in a previous newsletter that one of the privileges of being a Study Group Leader is that we receive the quarterly bulletins of the State SGAP/ASP regions. These bulletins are filled with inspiring news of "hands-on" Australian gardeners, working in climates so very different to our own, but often facing much the same problems as we do. We scour these publications for news of orchids that we can pass on, and have recently found some interesting pieces:

The *Wildflower Society of Western Australia*, in their February 2000 newsletter, mention their Flora Image Database. A request is made for slides and/or prints of various plants, including the following from the Family Orchidaceae:

<i>Calochilus campestris</i>	<i>Corybas abditus</i>	<i>Cyanicula ashbyae</i>
" <i>holtzei</i>	" <i>despectans</i>	" <i>caerulea</i>
" <i>robertsonii</i>	" <i>limpidus</i>	" <i>caerulea ssp.aperatala</i>
" <i>sp.A Kimberley flora</i>	" <i>recurvus</i>	" <i>fragrans</i>
" <i>sp. Hopetoun</i>	<i>Cymbidium canaliculatum</i>	" <i>gemmata</i>
" <i>sp.South-west swamps</i>		" <i>gertrudiae</i>
		" <i>ixioides ssp.candida</i>
		" <i>sericea.</i>

If any of our readers has slides or prints of the above, they could be sent to "Wildflower Society of Western Australia, P O Box 64, Nedlands 6909", ensuring that you include your name, address and provenance of plants photographed. Mark your envelope "For attention-Kath Napier". Kath says "we keep any slides or prints locked away and return them to you as soon as they are scanned".

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The W.S.W.A. newsletter also included a fascinating piece of Botanical info which is apposite to our study of orchids, viz:-

" Did you know Monocots evolved after Dicots? This is one of the fascinating facts that Greg Keighery revealed in his talk on Monocots at our October meeting. Dicots were probably overgrazed by dinosaurs in the Cretaceous era, allowing Monocots (with large biomass, indeterminate growth, and wind pollination) to find a niche.

They were part of the flora of the W.A. Pleiocene era, when the flora of W.A. was even more diverse than today.

The most primitive monocot is *Acornus*, a cross between a bulb and a palm. Its habitat is Europe and a specimen is growing in the Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney.

Monocots include grasses, sedges, rushes, lillies, palms, annuals, grass trees, bulbs, orchids, and kangaroo paws.

Their diversity ranges from the relatively unspecialised wind pollinated grasses to the highly specialised insect pollinated orchids. Monocots are the only flowering plants to live in the oceans.

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The SGAP Queensland Region Bulletin, March, 2000, includes a report by Barbara Henderson of the Wallum Study Group outing to Bribie Island (Moreton Bay). quote: " John had better things to show us. First, a couple of stems of pink-spotted white *Dipodium punctatum*, the Hyacinth Orchid, photographed for the record before we examined what John really wanted us to see- about thirty stems of the Small Flying Duck Orchid! With their weird reddish-brown and green flowers on fine brown stems, they don't

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exactly stand out from the other vegetation. But, find the first one, and your eyes get "in" and soon you see others.

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Reading of the Wallum Study Group's sighting of *Dipodium punctatum* reminded me of my first sighting of *Dipodium ensifolium*. This was an orchid I had looked forward to seeing ever since Len Butt, the long-term Orchid Study Group Leader, wrote of seeing them growing beside the road near Cardwell, north of Townsville, many years ago. Len's patch of beautiful roadside plants have long since succumbed to roadworks and "development", but I've always had a vain lookout for them when passing through the area.

Pauline & I attended the Atherton Tablelands SGAP Branch Christmas gathering last December. During the course of the evening, the subject of Orchids arose - to nobody's surprise! There was a rumour of some *Nervilia sp.* in flower outside Herberton, on the way to Irvinebank, and a few of us were tossing up plans to look for them next day. Len Lawler joined the conversation, and suggested that if we were heading that way, he would join us and show us "something special". Accordingly, the following morning Len led about a half dozen of us to a spot on the Range Road, and "special" was a vast understatement. Here, in a piece of open sclerophyll forest populated by small Ironbarks and with the ground littered with granite rocks on a steep slope, was a profusion of wildflowers. *Stylidium* & *Indigofera* species were in flower, as well as yellow and white varieties of *Helichrysum* among the sparse Kangaroo grass. These were all very attractive, but just a few steps from the road, and Len pointed out our first *Dipodium ensifolium* in flower! I'm always a bit surprised that real plants in the wild look just like the line drawings and photos in Dockrill & Jones - of course they should - but these were unmistakable, with their long curving stems, typical leaves, and beautiful splotched flowers. The colony sprawled for quite a distance along the hillside and into a damp gully, with quite a variation in flower colour, from quite pale to dark purple. I had to think of Len Butt, and the joy he would have experienced in such a sight. Len Lawler, however, was not finished in his "something special" exposition: he directed our gaze from ground level to the trees, and there, in plenty but not in profusion, was a presentation of flowering *Dendrobium fellowsii*. Len had, on a SGAP trip in the area some years before, pointed out a specimen of this rather unremarkable orchid, and mentioned that it was very pretty in flower, and also that it was very difficult to grow "in captivity". And now, with lots of flowers to view, we

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could appreciate their beauty; a deep chocolate-purple labellum nestling in a green-yellow perianth, tantalisingly just out of reach above our heads, but low enough for Pauline to get some good photos for the record. Such beautiful sights in a type of forest that never rates a mention in the tourist guide books.

By the way, much driving and scrambling later in the morning failed to reveal the *Nervilia* patch, but we'd had our thrill for the day, and will look for them next November.

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Mary, our Cairns member, writes in February: " For the first time *Dendrobium malbournii* has flowers and they are exactly as in the pictures in Dockrill & Jones- tiny, single, and about half a dozen. Nothing spectacular, but nonetheless exciting. I was given this nursery plant about four years ago. *Plectorrhiza brevilabris* is also flowering. In January, I found a flower on *Diplocaulobium glabrum*. This orchid I have had for many years and I had never seen a flower before. It was very small. The seedlings on the granite rock near the pond are gradually increasing in size and the only water they get is rain. I have fertilised them a few times as my New Year resolution was to be kinder to my orchids. They are *D. discolor* I think, but there may be *D. bigibbum* among them. There are also seedlings of *D. rigidum* on a *Melaleuca* under the parent plant.

I have seen lots of *Dipodium ensifolium* when walking in the granite in the Herberton ranges. They like to grow near rocks. I have even seen them recover from being badly burnt. When you see a lot in flower it is a great sight.

I had a Christmas card from an old friend now living in Brisbane and he said he flowered *Dendrobium fellowsii* last year. This orchid is extremely hard to cultivate so he has done well to have it survive, let alone flower.

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Here at home, the *Robiquetia gracilistipes* have been flowering well, but heavy rain in February literally knocked them to bits. We had 69 inches of rain over 27 days in February, and our bridge to town has so far been under water for 20 days this year. Our rainfall last year totalled 287 inches - 7.31 metres, over 222 days. It's not called the Wet Tropics for nothing, mate!

Farewell for now, from the soggy North.