

W.A. NATIVE ORCHID STUDY
AND
CONSERVATION GROUP (INC)

NEWSLETTER

JUNE 1977

Patron: Sir C. Nalder K.B.

President: Mr H.E. Foote
Secretary: Ms L. Penny
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The July topic was given by Mr Alex George in place of Graham Kierath, who tendered his apology and now will give the June topic at the July meeting.

Alex George spoke on the underground orchid *Rhizanthella*, *Prasophyllum*, & *Corybas*:

" Helmet Orchids The genus *Corybas* (from the Greek *korybas*, one of the dancing priests of Phrygia) was named by the English botanist Salisbury in 1805. There are about 50 species, and the genus extends from the Himalayas through south-east Asia to Polynesia, Australia and New Zealand. In W.A. there are 4 species, 3 discovered in the past 14 years.

The commonest is known as *C. dilatatus* but may be different from the Eastern Australian species of that name. Previously known only from the wet karri and Jarrah forests of the far South-West, it is now known from Ludlow, Gingin and the Fitzgerald River.

Corybas unguiculatus was found at Walpole in 1963, 'lost' for several years, and re-discovered in some numbers in 1976. It is distinguished by the narrow flower and the red underside of the leaf. A new species was discovered near Albany several years ago, growing on coastal dunes near Gull Rock. It is similar to *C. dilatatus* but has a translucent dorsal sepal and flowers later, in September-October. It has also been found at Denmark.

Last year another new species was found, on the Busselton golf course. The dorsal sepal is bright green and the flower is quite small. It is hoped to collect specimens this year.

In all *Corybas* species the stem elongates after flowering to a height of several centimetres, thus assisting seed dispersal.

" Leek Orchids *Prasophyllum* (from the Greek *prason*, a leek and *phyllon* a leaf) was named in 1810 by Robert Brown, the botanist who accompanied Mathew Flinders. One of Brown's specimens, of *P. gibbosum* collected at King George Sound in Dec. 1801, is kept at the W.A. Herbarium. The genus contains about 100 species, mostly in Australia, with a few in New Caledonia and New Zealand. There are 17 + species in W.A., several being unnamed as yet. They range from the tiny *P. nigricans*, flowering in autumn, to the 2 metre high *P. regium*, flowering in late spring. The approximate flowering order during the year is *nigricans*, *parvifolium*, *fimbria* (also in Spring) *macrostachyum* var *ringens*, *ovale*, *hiens*, *elatum*, *cyphochilum*, *sargentii*, *macrostachyum* var *macrostachyum*, *gibbosum*, *lanceolatum*, *triangulare giganteum*, *grimwadeanum*, *drummondii*, *regium*, *brownii*. The species are separated on shape and size of flower parts including the inner plate of the labellum and the column wings as well as on flower colour. In this genus the flowers are actually the right way up, with the labellum at the top. Some species are strongly scented e.g. *parvifolium*, *fimbria*. Some are stimulated to flower by fire, e.g. *gibbosum*, *regium*. Most W.A. species are endemic i.e. restricted to the State, but *nigricans* and *elatum* occur also in the eastern states. A new species has been discovered near William Bay and Ravensthorpe. Any specimens of *Prasophyllum* will be welcomed at the Herbarium as they are currently being studied by botanists in Sydney and Melbourne.

" Underground Orchid *Rhizanthella* has been found only 4 or 5 times since the original specimens of 1928. There is a possible earlier sighting from Wubin, in about 1912, but all the others have been

" Underground Orchids (cont)

between Goomalling and Corrigin. Named by R.S. Roger in 1928, the genus contains only 1 species restricted to W.A. The name apparently is derived from the Greek rhiza, a root, anthos a flower, and ella a diminutive suffix, and refers to the small flowers borne in a head on a thick rhizome. The inflorescence has the aspect of a daisy. It appears to remain underground, though the plant has never been found by deliberate searching, and its actual habit is still uncertain. It seems to flower in years when there is unseasonal late summer rain followed by early winter rain...

... A.S. George."

The July 31st Field Day meeting place - Carousel Car Park at 9 am.

A busy bee will be held to make the display for the Australian Orchid Conference, at Mr Herb Foote's big shed on the 3rd July at 10 am. Please bring something to barbeque.

A meeting for the display at the Royal Show will be held later.

At the Hollywood Reserve quite a few plantings have been made and the plants at this stage are in good heart. There is still quite a bit of weeding to be done. The Veldt Grass is the problem but this is slowly being thinned out.

Report of Excursion - Sunday 29th May 1977

"A Group of about 15 group members held the first rescue dig of the 1977 growing season on the last Sunday in May, when three sites in the Metropolitan area were visited.

The first site was the Applecross Pine Plantation, on Leach Highway which is in the process of being felled. Growing in the leaf litter that had accumulated were several small patches of Pterostylis scabra and/or P.nana and/or P.recurva. Many plants were in the non-flowering, rosette condition, while the flowering plants possessed shoots about 2 cm tall at the time of collection. There were also scattered plants of P.vittata with well developed shoots up to 12 cm high. None of the orchids were blooming at the time of collection. Several other plants such as hovea and kangaroo paws were taken for planting at the Hollywood Reserve.

The next area visited was at Canning Vale and had been extensively burned during the summer. This made it easy to see the many flowering plants of Eriochilus dilatatus close to the road. The population included few-flowered and many flowered individuals, and variation in the lip coloration was noticed, with some plants having solid deep red lateral markings while others had irregular patches of faded red along each margin. The other orchid found in the area was Rare Orchid Leporella fimbriata of which several plants were found in slightly lower ground away from the road. Variations in lip marking were also noticed in this species, some plants having a dull maroon coloration instead of pale green on the central exposed region of the labellum. Some small dark bees were observed on several Eriochilus flowers, and one bee was seen to have a large pollen mass attached to its head,

The greatest variety of orchids was found in Canning Vale, beside Nicholson Road, in an area due to be developed as one acre home. Orchids found there are listed below:

- Pterostylis vittata - flowers almost open
- Leporella fimbriata - flowers nearly finished, most plants seen were non-flowering.
- Lyperanthus nigricans - many plants were found in a level area at the top of a shallow rise. No sign of flowering.

Caladenia flava - a few plants were found in the same area as Lyperanthus.

Caladenia merziesii - with Lyperanthus. Both species of Caladenia were in very early stages of growth and showed no signs of flowering.

Specimens of all species were transplanted at the Hollywood Reserve.