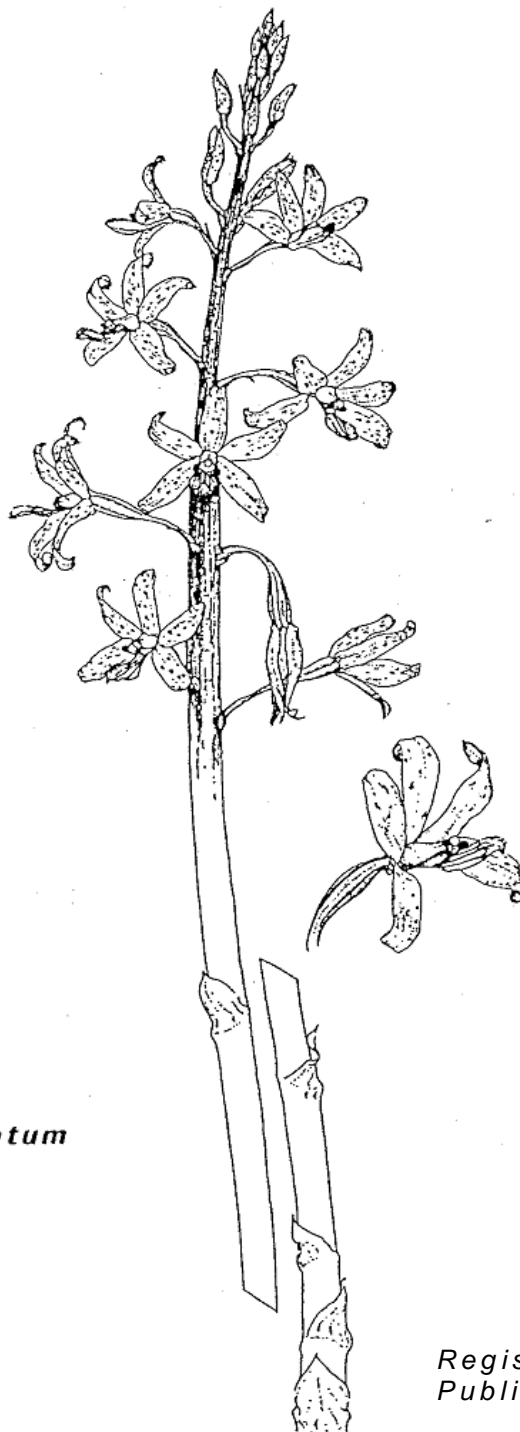


NATIVE ORCHID SOCIETY
of
SOUTH AUSTRALIA INC.
JOURNAL



Dipodium punctatum

Registered by Australia Post
Publication No. SBH 1344

Volume 12, Number 2
April 1988

NATIVE ORCHID SOCIETY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA INC.

THE NATIVE ORCHID SOCIETY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA PROMOTES THE CONSERVATION OF NATIVE ORCHIDS THROUGH CULTIVATION OF NATIVE ORCHIDS, THROUGH PRESERVATION OF NATURALLY-OCCURRING ORCHID PLANTS AND NATURAL HABITAT.

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| PAGE No: | CONTENTS: | AUTHOR |
|----------|---|----------------|
| 11. | NEXT AND LAST MEETING | |
| 11. | PLANTS ON DISPLAY and COMMENTARY | |
| 12. | DON WELLS - LIFE MEMBERSHIP | W. WALLOSCHECK |
| 12. | GROWING <i>Pterostylis revoluta</i> | K. WESTERN |
| 13. | FERTILISER FORMULAE & TECHNIQUE | K. WESTERN |
| 15. | F.W. PADDOCK MEMORIAL PROJECT | L. NESBITT |
| 16. | <i>Diuris sulphurea</i> | R. ROBJOHNS |
| 17. | S.A. TERRESTRIAL ORCHID CALENDER | R. BATES |
| 18. | <i>Eriochilus</i> in S.A. 'BUNNY ORCHIDS' | R. BATES |
| 19. | NOSSA JOURNAL INDEX Vol 1 (1977) | K. WESTERN |

NEXT MEETING TUESDAY 26th April, 1988 at 8.00 p.m.
St Matthews Hall, Bridge Street, Kensington

SPEAKER

Bob Markwick will present slides and commentary on his recent trip to the Grampians.

LAST MEETING

Edda Viskic, using a collection of her own slides, taken during her own wilderness excursions and complemented by slides from the NOSSA slide-library, provided an entertaining display and commentary describing and displaying numerous orchids and their habitats. In particular we saw more of Northern Queensland material than usual. Numerous orchids were shown growing in-situ, providing the most valuable type of information available to those engaged in their cultivation. Further aided with maps, Edda showed more orchids in their habitats ranging from northern Queensland south to Tasmania, covering situations from wet tropical rain forest or cloud forest to dry, open sclerophyll forest, rocky knoll or mountain. Numerous members of the genera, *Bulbophyllum*, *Cirrhopetalum*, *Cymbidium*, *Dendrobium* and *Sarcochilus* were shown and described.

PLANTS ON DISPLAY March meeting.

TERRESTRIALS

Eriochilus dilatatus, *Geodorum pictum*, *Prasophyllum brachystachyum*, *Pterostylis aestiva*, *P. baptistii*, *P. laxa*, *P. longicurva*, *P. aff. parviflora*.

EPIPHYTES

Cadetia taylori, *Cymbidium suave*, *Dendrobium bigibbum* var. *superbum* subvar. *compactum*, *Dendrobium bigibbum* var. *bigibbum*, *Sarcochilus ceciliae*.

COMMENTARY on the epiphytes was given by Ted Chance who noted that the specimen of *Cymbidium suave* on display comprised one old growth carrying an unusually late raceme of flowers and one vigorous, new emerging growth. Ted further noted that most hobbyists seem to have more success in rotting this species than cultivating it. With respect to *Sarcochilus ceciliae*, Ted noted that NOSSA members generally seemed to cultivate this species more successfully than many other hobbyists. Noting that *Dendrobium bigibbum* generally grew

better when heat was provided, Ted considered that the more cold tolerant var. *compactum* should be used to remake hybrids and should be the preferred form to hybridise with for Adelaide conditions. Ted queried the owner of *Cadetia taylori* regarding its growing conditions to discover that it has been grown under shadehouse conditions in Adelaide and that is likely to "flower at odd times".

Commentary on the terrestrials was provided by George Nieuwenhoven who noted that *Geodorum pictum* was a semi-tropical terrestrial species which is dormant during our Adelaide winters and active during summer. The specimen benched has been grown in Adelaide for only 12 months and was in excellent and vigorous condition. It has been grown under shadehouse conditions. George noted that the flower-spike, currently arching, converts to an upright form after pollination to aid seed dispersal.

DON WELLS:- LIFE MEMBERSHIP by W Walloscheck.

At the March 1988 Annual General Meeting of NOSSA, Don Wells was nominated for, and granted Life Membership of the Society. I nominated Don for Life Membership because I believe him to be most deserving of the honour.

Don and his wife Bubs were foundation members of NOSSA and have been keen growers of native orchids for many years. It is well known, particularly by the early members, that Don was the tuberbank convenor for its first seven years (from 1979 to January 1986) when health forced him to relinquish the position. This consuming task was carried out with fervent endeavour for the entire time that he was coordinator.

The "M.O.P. Group" was formed and functioned under his guidance. This group has been active in obtaining all necessary permits and has virtually rescued tubers from the path of the bulldozer during land clearing. Many of the descendants from those tubers are now being cultivated far and wide.

The Society journal was another of his voluntary tasks. During the 9 years that the journal was printed by duplicator, Don was one of the small select band who handled the monthly chore of printing and enveloping it.

The Upper Sturt Primary School and numerous other organisations have experienced the generosity and warmth of this man who has, particularly as a speaker on native orchids, spread the knowledge and interest of native orchids, particularly in country areas. As such Don has been a good ambassador for the Society.

I would like to point out that Don has worked quietly for the society, never holding office, preferring to be an ordinary member and to carry the tasks that he has for so long and so well.

Well done Don!

GROWING *Pterostylis revoluta* K Western

At the February 1988 General Meeting I was fortunate to be able to bench a healthy pot of *Pterostylis revoluta* with many plants in full bloom and numerous non-flowering plants in early emergence. I must confess that the quality of the plants and the early flowering was purely accidental, but an "accident" which I suspect could be repeated at will by anyone.

Historically, during our last cold, continuously-wet winter the pot which was displayed remained so wet that the plants fungussed and died long before they should have become dormant. I assumed that the tubers would have rotted too and put the pot aside on a low wall in the shadehouse under hanging baskets of *Dendrobium* seedlings and amongst other pots of orchids intending to check or dispose of the pot and its contents - luckily I forgot to do so.

When summer came, shading in the wall area was increased from 50% to 75% with shadecloth. There was additional shading from adjacent pots of orchids and taller plants on a nearby more northerly bench. This shading plus the closeness to the ground meant that the pot was kept quite cool.

Further the pots above and about the forgotten pot were VERY REGULARLY fertilised with an Aquasol / Magnesium Sulphate / Iron Chelate or Calcium Nitrate fertiliser solutions which poured, in copious amounts, on to and through the pot. To say the least, the tubers were frequently flood-fertilised and must have been almost permanently damp to wet.

The emerging *Pterostylis revoluta* plants were discovered during the removal of a large and vigorous weed from the pot. The by now missing half inch of soil, washed away during past waterings, was replaced with a brew of Hills top-soil, chopped bracken, white-ant eaten eucalypt heart wood and blood and bone. The plants grew to full height and flowered in 14 to 20 days.

Currently the plants are extremely healthy, located under benches of cymbidiums and dendrobiums to keep the heat and light to comfortable levels during our recent spell of hot weather (30 to 36 deg Centigrade days). The flowers have collapsed but the plants are still vigorous. Further, the orchids above are still receiving regular fertiliser and watering at 2 to 4 day intervals depending on prevailing wind and temperature.

There is another example of regularly wet tubers flourishing in the garden, namely *Pterostylis curta* and *P. nutans*. They are in a raised bed of hills soil, modified by the addition of gypsum and blood and bone some years ago and planted with, largely, Western Australian species of plants. The tubers are close to an irrigation dripper system which is frequently used. Again there is a strong shade component both from the house and the shrubs. Each year the orchids emerge marginally earlier than expected and fare quite well. I suspect that the shading and consequent coolness is the reason for their survival despite the wetness.

A FERTILISER FORMULA AND TECHNIQUE FOR NATIVE EPIPHYTES. by K. Western

Generally I used to find fertilising orchids to be a time-consuming task which therefore happened too rarely. Then, frustrated by the vigour of plants in other hobbyist's collection it was decided that regular fertilising had to be organised. Accordingly an IN-LINE DILUTER, specifically designed to draw up and dilute concentrated fertiliser solutions was purchased for about \$25.00 from an orchid dealer at O'Halloran Hill. The diluter mixes the concentrate between 16 and 20 times with tap water and has thus enabled the orchids to be fertilised as they are watered. The plants are both foliar and pot watered quickly and conveniently during the early morning on 'appropriate' days. All epiphytes both native and exotic, whether potted or mounted, adult or deflasked

seedling, receive the same fertiliser applied in the same manner. Plant growth and vigour has improved vastly.

The system comprises, the diluter, a handy plastic 10 litre drum whose screw-cap has had a hole drilled in it through which is inserted the concentrate take-up hose of the diluter, a length of hose sufficient reach all orchids and a special sprinkler head.

The diluter is strapped on to the handle of the drum for simple convenience. The input to and output from the diluter have been coupled to a set of 'snap fit' connectors which are readily purchased 'off the shelf' at hardware or gardening stores. The hose used to deliver the diluted fertiliser from the diluter to the orchids is kept as short as possible - not exceeding 8-9 metres - to avoid excessive 'back-pressure' on the output side of the diluter which effectively stops the diluter from functioning. Should a longer hose be needed, then the input to the diluter system should be made long enough for the diluter to be carried to one or more locations in the orchid house, still leaving the output hose length at not more than 8-9 metres. The sprinkler rose is a cheap plastic device but has numerous largish holes to avoid the 'back-pressure' problem already mentioned. Using this system I have been able to fertilise my plants without taking more time than is normally required to water them by hand.

With respect to fertiliser solutions, I alternate two formulations which cannot be mixed with each other at the concentrations required without chemical interaction and formation of precipitates of Calcium Sulphate and/or Calcium Phosphate. The formulae used are as follows :-

FORMULA A

| | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| 1. Aquasol (or Growlush or Top Soluble) | 16 x level Aquasol spoons |
| 2. Magnesium Sulphate (Epsom Salts) | 6 x level Aquasol spoons |
| 3. Iron Chelates (I use Hortico Brand) | 1 x level Aquasol spoons |
| 4. Concentrated Hydrochloric Acid | 1 x full Aquasol spoon |
| 5. Tap water | To a FINAL volume of 10 litres |

To speed dissolution of the above salts, it is advisable to measure each of the above components (excluding the Hydrochloric acid) into a 2 litre tub or jug and pour in successive about 200 ml lots of boiling water followed by a quick stir. The fluid is then poured off into the 10 litre drum and more hot water is poured on to the solids which have not been dissolved and the process repeated until about one to one and a half litres of hot water has been used. Now tap water is added until about 7 to 9 litres of water is in the drum and the Concentrated Hydrochloric acid is added and mixed in thoroughly. The drum is now filled to the 10 litre mark with tap water, mixed thoroughly again and is then ready to be applied to the orchids after 16 to 20 times dilution by the diluter system. The Hydrochloric acid is optional but slightly acid solutions are better assimilated by the plants than alkaline ones. This may be important in Adelaide or where the tap water supply is quite alkaline. Conversely in any area where the tap water is normally acid, the Hydrochloric acid should be omitted.

FORMULA B

| | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| 1. Calcium Nitrate (Dry flakes - Top Brand) | 4 x level Aquasol spoons |
| 2. Concentrated Hydrochloric Acid | 1 x full Aquasol spoon |
| 3. Tap Water | to a FINAL volume of 10 litres |

Calcium Nitrate is readily soluble and is quickly dissolved by

adding it directly to the drum with about a litre of warm to hot water and a little agitation to aid dissolution. A further 6-8 litres of cold tap water should be added before the Hydrochloric acid (which is again optional as above) is added. then the contents should be made to 10 litres with more tap water and mixed thoroughly. The solution is now ready to apply to the orchids after 16 to 20 times dilution by the diluter system.

Formula A and Formula B are not applied on the same day nor are they ever mixed with each other. I apply one formula at one watering and the other formula the next time. There would be no harm in any number of fertiliser-free waterings between fertilising events if so desired; I find this situation necessary with the mounted orchids which need watering each day in hot weather even though potted specimens may not require a further watering at the same time.

The above formulae were those which were inadvertently applied to the *Pterostylis revoluta* as described in the previous article. I do not advocate the same treatment of terrestrial orchids generally, rather on a limited experimental basis. Certainly though, the above routine has produced numerous, sturdy and vigorous growths on all epiphytic species and hybrids in my collection.

THE F. W. PADDOCK MEMORIAL PROJECT

The project is sponsored by the Australian Orchid Foundation. This competition is open to anyone.

THE COMPETITION

Describe in writing :-

What is the greatest problem experienced by the entrant in their interest in native orchids be it pests, diseases, cultural, conservation, environmental or whatever problems that may be experienced as long as it relates directly to native orchids.

Problems relating to VIRUS diseases are specifically excluded from the competition.

THE PRIZE

The Australian Orchid Foundation will provide \$250.00 to the winning entrant from native orchid enthusiast from throughout Australia.

Address all entries to Mr L. T. Nesbitt, 18 Cambridge Street, Vale Park, South Australia, 5081.

CLOSING DATE:-

31st May 1988.

For problems relating to other than native orchids, another division of the competition is available for all South Australians with a separate \$250.00 prize. Send these entries to the Orchid Club of South Australia Inc., Box 730 G.P.O. Adelaide 5001 by the same date.

As a followup, the A.O.F. may provide up to \$2000.00 to support research and study into the subject matter of the winning entries.

Diuris sulphurea (Common name Tiger Or Hornet Orchid)
by R. T. Robjohns

The genus was established by Sir J. Smith in 1804 with the description of 3 taxa and contains over 40 species limited to Australia except for one species found in Timor. It is a terrestrial glabrous plant with tubers and hybridises freely in nature causing taxonomic problems. The genus name *Diuris* is derived from the Greek words 'dis' meaning 'two' and 'oura' meaning 'a tail', referring to the lateral sepals extending into tails, hence the common name of 'Double Tails'.

Diuris sulphurea var. *sulphurea*. R.Br. 1810

This variety grows to a height of 15-60 cm. and may be robust or slender having two or three lax or drooping leaves about 20 cm. long.

It bears 1-7 sulphur yellow flowers on long slender stems with usually two bracts. The flowers are slightly perfumed and extremely variable in dimension and have distinguishing brown markings. The dorsal sepal is usually shorter than the petals, very broad and often recurved, with two conspicuous dark brown spots near the middle. The lateral sepals are 2.5-3 cm. long and never greatly exceeding the petals, they are normally linear and more brown than green, usually parallel but sometimes crossed. The petals are 2-3 cm. long, oval and recurved on a short brown claw. The labellum is three-lobed and shorter than the dorsal sepal, the mid-lobe has a ridge running the full length and a brown band crosswise, the lateral lobes are broad and short, barely half as long as the mid-lobe. Most *Diuris* are pollinated by bees which are attracted by a honey disc which the animal can only obtain by exerting pressure on the opening between the labellum and the base of the column. In the process the disc is firmly pressed against the insect's head and when it departs it takes both the disc and the pollen mass (pollina) with it and the pollen is transferred to the next flower visited. This is the usual manner of pollination of the *Diuris* species, however while the mechanics of the pollen transfer is the same, with *D. sulphurea* it is believed that the lure is not the nectar but sex, the flower deluding the visiting insect by simulating, in some fashion, the female of the insect species.

D. sulphurea var. *brevifolia*. Rogers 1922. (short leaved).

D. brevifolia was, for many years, regarded as a separate species but has now been reduced in status to a variety of *D. sulphurea* and should now be described as *D. sulphurea* var. *brevifolia* (R.S. Rogers) J.Z. Weber & R. Bates. The var. *brevifolia* differs from var. *sulphurea* in that it has shorter but relatively more numerous leaves which are very erect and a shorter labellum which is usually longer than the dorsal sepal and free of markings.

| | var. <i>sulphurea</i> | var. <i>brevifolia</i> |
|------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Flowering period | September/November | November/December |
| Locale | S.A., Tas., Vic., N.S.W., Qld. | Coastal areas N.S.W., and S.A. |
| Habitat | Moist bushland | Damp areas or swamps |

Cultivation

Diuris are amongst the easiest of terrestrial orchids to grow. They are deciduous and die back in late Spring to lie dormant through the Summer. The plants may be left for 2-3 years but should then be lifted and repotted during their dormancy period.

A suitable potting mix is 40% soil, 40% coarse sand and 20% peatmoss with the addition of a little blood and bone fertiliser. The pots, which to prevent premature drying out, should be nothing less than 12.5 cm. and preferably 25 cm.; should be topped with a layer of chopped Casuarina or pine needles and be kept slightly damp until the re-emergence of the leaves.

As *Diuris* grow in grass plains or open forest they need plenty of light. In cultivation a shade of 25 to 30% is suggested.

D. sulphurea is one species that reproduces vegetatively and they may also be propagated from seed sown around parent plants.

Most tuberous terrestrial orchids can be persuaded to produce more than one new tuber by removing the plant from the pot shortly after flowering and severing the new tuber with a sharp knife. Provided that the old tuber is still attached to the plant when repotted, it will grow on and produce another new tuber. The exised tuber is treated as a dormant tuber and repotted. *D. sulphurea* will respond successfully to this treatment.

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| Rosa Fiveash's Australian Orchids | N. Lothian |
| Victorian Naturalist | Edith Coleman. |

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN TERRESTRIAL ORCHID CALENDER by R. Bates

APRIL:- species in flower this month include *Eriochilus cucullatus*, *Leporella fimbriata* and *Prasophyllum rufum* in the Adelaide Hills, *Prasophyllum nigricans* in the mallee, *Pterostylis parviflora* and *Prasophyllum archeri* in the South-East.

In the orchid house *Eriochilus dilatatus*, *Pterostylis obtusa* and many small *Prasophyllums* will be in bloom and each day should see new plants emerging from the soil (in most genera). It is amazing to see the effect of rain; within two days of a good soaking rain leaves just burst forth. Pots which have been hand-watered for weeks without a sign of new growth suddenly have numerous leaves showing.

There are plenty of jobs to do now after the late Summer - early Autumn break. If the weather is dry then hand-watering of all pots is recommended: allowing a pot to dry out completely now will greatly reduce flowering later. Slugs and snails are emerging and must be eliminated. Now is the time to sow seed. Sow on the damp surface of the pot and cover with fine leaf litter - pine needles, chopped gum leaves or similar. Pull out all those tiny weeds now for if they are allowed to become too large before being removed the weeding disturbance will damage orchid roots or germinating seeds. Insulate all pots with a layer of leaf litter to prevent erosion of the surface by rain or watering. The leaf litter is also an excellent source of slow release fertiliser.

At the time of writing this article *Eriochilus* is accepted as a genus of 3 species :- *E. dilatatus* and *E. scaber* from Western Australia and *E. cucullatus* in the eastern states. All three species have very similar flowers, the most noticeable features being the broad spreading lateral sepals on slender claws and the fleshy, revolute, glandular and hairy labellum.

In the eastern states *E. cucullatus*, in the broad sense is very widespread and occurs in an amazing range of habitats, from coastal sandhills to alpine meadows; from permanent bogs to bare limestone in the mallee; from pine plantations to grassland. Some of these are Summer growing while others are Winter growers. I must admit that I am always dubious that a single species can behave like this - but if the flowers are all so similar how can we recognise more than one species?

For a start, there is flower colour. On my recent trip to the eastern states I was most impressed by the brilliant pink flowers of the sub-alpine *Eriochilus* which were actually flowering as early as December (this is natural of course as Spring, Summer and Autumn are all rolled into one in alpine areas).

In South Australia it has long been recognised that there are two forms of *Eriochilus*, readily separated by their different leaf forms. Most of us are familiar with the common Adelaide Hills form with its very dark green, strongly ribbed leaf displaying rows of stiff antrorse bristles above and glistening purple tints below. Compare these with leaves of the common South-east and mallee forms which have smooth yellow-green leaves without bristles and without the purple tints on the underside - yet the flowers of both forms are the same -or are they? I for one will be making a more careful analysis of both forms this autumn. There are already other names available for the South Australian forms. *Eriochilus autumnalis* R.Br is one.

But are there still other *Eriochilus* in South Australia? On granite outcrops in the South-east from near Mt Monster to Mt Boothby there are pale pink flowered *Eriochilus* with very small leaves. In peat bogs near Myponga and Mt Compass in the Mt Lofty Ranges is a very narrow sepalled form which I have seen flowering in February. These have smooth, shiny leaves! What forms occur on Eyre Peninsula and Kangaroo Island? I've never seen these in flower. There is still so much study that needs to be done even with a small genus like *Eriochilus*! This is where cultivation of the various forms involved would be beneficial as it should enable us to check how constant leaf and flowers forms, flowering time and flower colour are when plants from different localities are grown side by side under the same conditions.

INDEX TO VOLUME 1 JOURNALS (1977)

APRIL 1977

| Page No. | TOPIC/SUBJECT | AUTHOR |
|----------|---|------------|
| 1. | AIMS AND OBJECTIVES | Editorial |
| 1. | Inaugural Meeting | " |
| 2. | Foundation Member List - | " |
| 3. | Ground Orchids- 7 Culture for April - May | L. Nesbitt |

MAY 1977

| Page No. | TOPIC/SUBJECT | AUTHOR |
|----------|---|------------|
| 4. | Our Rarest Orchids (1) <i>Thelymitra matthewsii</i> | R. Bates |
| 5. | <i>Prasophyllum nigricans</i> (Dark Leek Orchid) | L. Nesbitt |
| 5. | Orchids of Wilpena Pound | R. Bates |
| 7. | Pollination of Orchids (Part 1) | R. Bates |
| 7. | S.A. Ground Orchids - Culture for May - June | L. Nesbitt |

JUNE 1977

| Page No. | TOPIC/SUBJECT | AUTHOR |
|----------|---|------------|
| 4. | Our Rarest Orchids (2) <i>Chiloglottis cornuta</i> (Bird Orchid) | R. Bates |
| 5. | Pollination in Orchids | R. Bates |
| 6. | Effects of Bushfire on S.A. Native Orchids | R. Bates |
| 7. | S.A. Ground Orchids - Culture for June - July. | L. Nesbitt |
| 8. | Orchids of the Mt Lofty Ranges | P. Hornsby |

JULY 1977

| Page No. | TOPIC/SUBJECT | AUTHOR |
|----------|---|--------------|
| 4. | Field Trip Report/Belair National Park | - |
| 6. | Our Rarest Orchids (3) <i>Caladenia cucullata</i> | R. Bates |
| 6. | Methods for Extinction | R. Nash |
| 7. | Man-made Hybrids | - |
| 8. | Observations in the Field | W.J. Clayson |

AUGUST 1977 Vol 1, No 5.

| Page No. | TOPIC/SUBJECT | AUTHOR |
|----------|--|--------------|
| 3. | Our Rarest Orchids (4) <i>Pterostylis cucullata</i> | R. Bates |
| 4. | Field Trip Report-Montacute Conservation Park 31.3.77 | - |
| 6. | Observations in the Field (continued) | W.J. Clayson |
| 7. | Pollination in Orchids | R. Bates |
| 8. | Culture Notes August/September (Terrestrials) | L. Nesbitt |
| 8. | A S.A. <i>Pterostylis</i> for each Month | R. Bates |

SEPTEMBER 1977 Vol 1, No 6.

| Page No. | TOPIC/SUBJECT | AUTHOR |
|----------|--|--------------|
| 4. | A Trip to Southern Yorke Peninsula | R. Bates |
| 5. | Our Rarest Orchids (5) <i>Calochilus campestris</i> | R. Bates |
| 6. | Field Trip Report/Kyema Conservation Park 31-7-77 | - |
| 7. | Frost Resistance of S.A. Orchids | L. Nesbitt |
| 8. | Pollination in S.A. Orchids | R. Bates |
| 9. | Observations in the Field (continued) | W.J. Clayson |
| 10. | Fern Gorge visit - Flinders Ranges | - |

OCTOBER 1977 Vol 1, No 7.

| Page No. | TOPIC/SUBJECT | AUTHOR |
|----------|--|------------|
| 5. | Our Rarest Orchids (6) <i>Gastrodia sesamoides</i> | R. Bates |
| 7. | Field Trip Report - Morialta and Horsnell Gully Conservation Parks. 2/10/77 | - |
| 8. | Western Australia Visit for A.O.C. Conference | J. Hocking |
| - | N.O.S.S.A. Constitution | - |

NOVEMBER 1977 Vol 1, No 8.

| Page No. | TOPIC/SUBJECT | AUTHOR |
|----------|---|---------------|
| 3. | Our Rarest Orchids (7) <i>Diuris fastidiosa</i> | R. Bates |
| 4. | Eucalyptus Sawdust as Humus | R. Nash |
| 5. | Field Trip Report/30-10-77 | R. Hargreaves |
| 5. | Recovery of Small Tubers at Repotting | R. Nash |
| 6. | Terrestrial Orchids - Is There a Life Cycle? | W.J. Clayson |
| 7. | Controlled Burning - For and Against | R. Bates |
| 8. | Resumed Field Trip 9/10/77 | - |
| 9. | Plants Recorded 9/10/77 Field Trip | - |
| 10. | Showtime Special 1977 | P. Hornsby |
| 12. | Pollination of S.A. Orchids (6) | R. Bates |