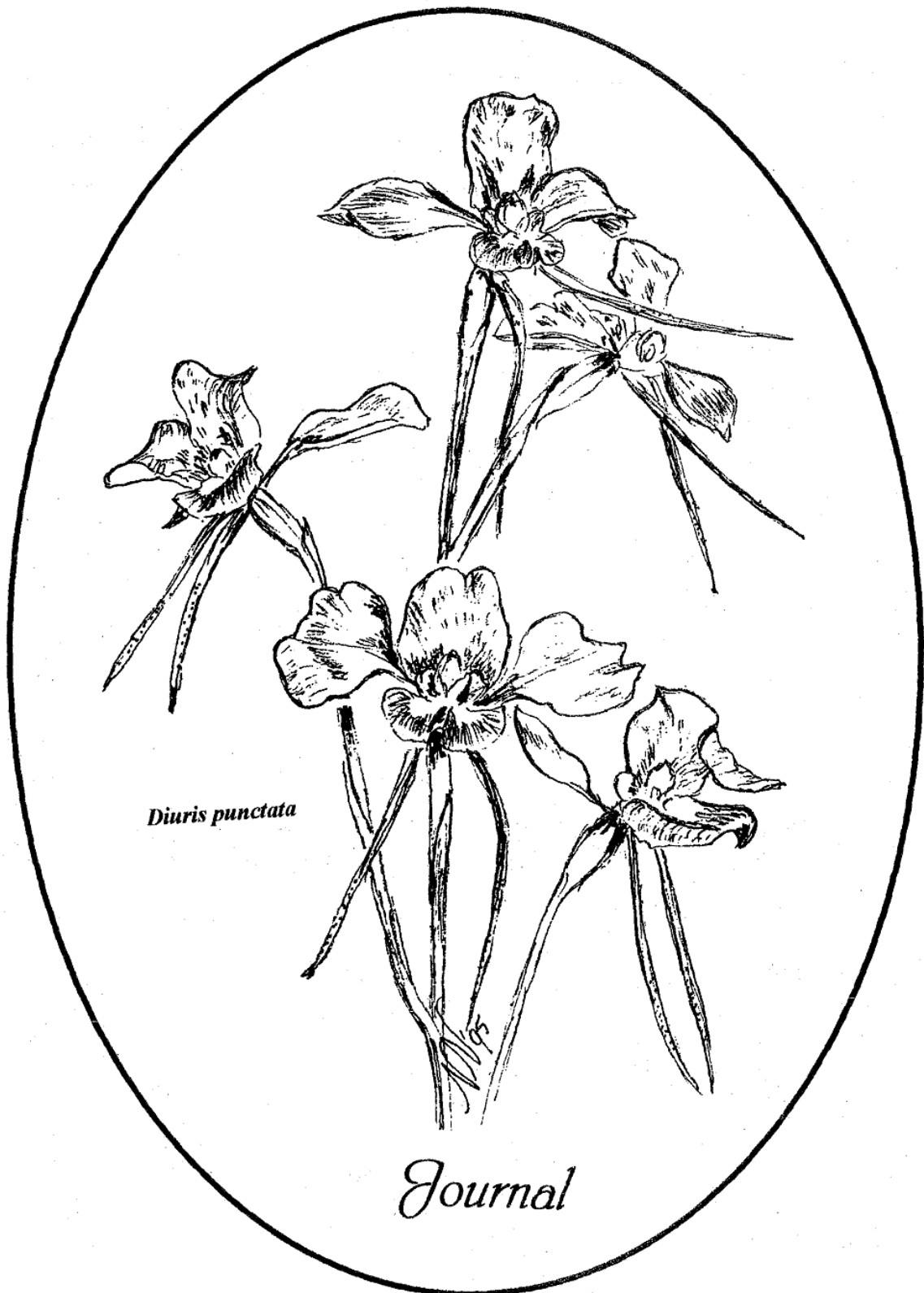


Native Orchid Society
of
South Australia Inc.



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OCTOBER 1995

NATIVE ORCHID SOCIETY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA INC.

P.O Box 565,
UNLEY S.A 5061

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.

Except with the documented official representation from the Management Committee of the native orchid society of South Australia, no person is authorised to represent the society on any matter.

All native orchids are protected plants in the wild. Their collection without written Government permit is illegal.

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NATIVE ORCHID SOCIETY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA INC

OCTOBER 1995 Vol. 19. No. 9 JOURNAL

OCTOBER MEETING

Tuesday, 24th October, 8.00 pm: at St Matthews Hall, Bridge Street, Kensington. our patron (since inception of NOSSA) Mr Noel Lothian will talk on a topic to be announced. Doors to the hall will be open at 7.15 pm for those wishing to borrow books from the library or take in items for the trading table.

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COMMITTEE MEETING

To be held at 7.30 pm Friday October 27 at the home of Thelma & Terry O'Neill, Parana Avenue, Flinders Park.

DIARY DATES

Oct 29 Belair Conservation Group Meeting
Nov 5 Kuitpo Field Trip, *Monadenia* threat
Nov 26 Christmas Barbecue

FIELD TRIPS

Conservation Group. Next excursion to Knott Hill and Kuitpo Sunday November 5. *Monadenia* threat. Meet Kuitpo Woods and Forest headquarters at 10am.

THANKYOU TO MRS PERRYMAN who donated several books on orchids to our library. These books were given in memory of her husband, John, who passed away recently. The books included a copy of Nicholls Orchids of Australia still in its original box.

NEW MEMBERS:

The society welcomes -

Mary & Ken Gregg of Eden Hills

Peter Carrigg & Helene Hollinshead of MayLands

Trevor Gill of Port Pirie

TUBER BANK 1996

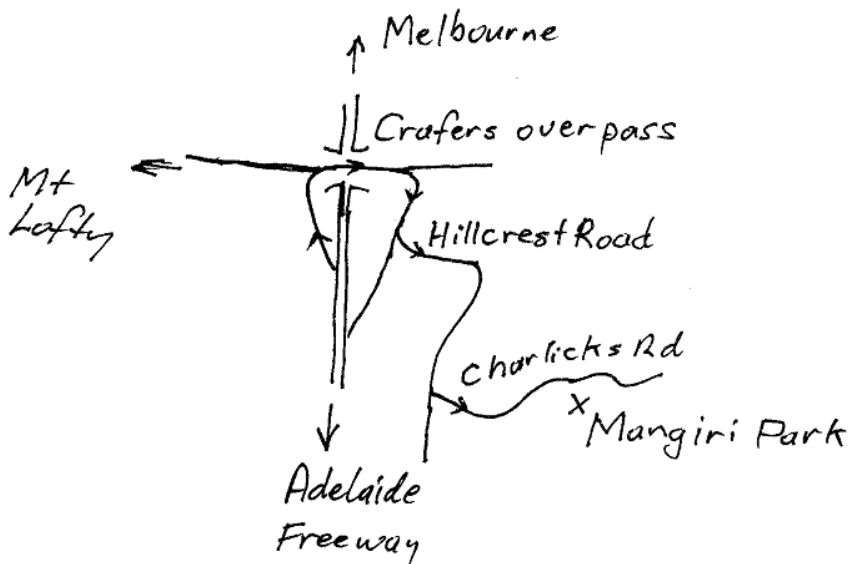
Are you able to donate tubers this year please? Every donation helps our Tuber Bank and small quantities are always acceptable.

Initially, we need DETAILS ONLY of species and hybrid tubers that you have available. We appreciate your co-operation with the careful naming of tubers thus ensuring an accurate listing which will appear in the December Journal.

Thankyou for slide-boxes already received. Further box donations will be most welcome.

1. Details of tubers by November 30th to T & T O'Neill
19 Parana Street, Flinders Park 5025 (phone 08 436535)
2. Arrangements for tuber collection - December
3. Tuber Bank List - December Journal.

XMAS BARBECUE



To be on Sunday November 26th at Mangini Park (Charlicks Road, Crafers) see attached map. Starting time 11 am
Cost is a gold coin donation.

NOSSA will provide the meat.

You will need to bring salads, dessert, condiments, drinks and barbecues. There will be a garden tour to follow lunch. SEE YOU THERE

ON THE BENCH

Terrestrials: *Caladenia arenaria*, *C. carnea*, *C. cleistogama*, *C. cardiochila*, *C. flava* ssp. *sylvestris*, *C. longicauda*, *C. flava* x *C. latifolia* "Harlequin", *Calochilus robertsonii*, *Diuris abbreviata*, *D. carinata*, *D. corymbosa*, *D. pitta*, *D. Pioneer*, *Leptoceras menziesii*, *Microtis frutetorum*, *Prasophyllum lindleyanum*, *D. aff. macrostachyum*, *Pterostylis arenaria*, *P. baptistii* x *P. cucullata* (*P. Cutie*), *P. biseta*, *P. biseta* x *P. woolsii*, *P. bicolor*, *P. curta*, *P. falcata* x *P. ingens*, *P. foliata*, *P. hamata*, *P. Jack Warcup*, *P. pedunculata*, *P. ovata*, *P. smaragdina*, *Thelymitra fragrans*.

Epiphytes: *Bulbophyllum nasica* (New Guinea, *Dendrobium kingianum* "Tamborine x Red no.2), *D. kingianum* "Corrigans red x K. Lord", *D. linguiforme*, *D. monophyllum*, *D. striolatum*, *D. Bardo Rose* x *Aussie Mist*, *D. Brolga*, *D. Colonial Blush*, *D. unknown*, *Sarcochilus hartmannii*.

There were some very interesting terrestrials and stories to be told about them. The fragrant *Prasophyllum lindleyanum* of which there were many in a pot was sent to Bob Bates as a single tuber about 15 years ago by the then president of ANOS, Victoria, Clive Lloyd. Multiplication of plants over the years had been achieved by the 'tuber removal' process and continued on by the present owner George Nieuwenhoven. An unexpected hybrid flowering for the first time was *Pterostylis woolsii* x *P. biseta* created by Les Nesbitt and flaked almost 5 years ago. Unfortunately it had lost the long sepals of *P. woolsii*. It was also interesting to see *Caladenia flava* "ssp. *sylvestris*". This tall forest form is apparently easier to cultivate than the typical short form which quickly dies out in cultivation. Of further interest was the presence of a hybrid made from this same clone ie *C. latifolia* x *flava* "sylvestris" popularly known by the unregistered name *C. 'Harlequin'* due to its orange, pink and white flowers. David Jones in his book says of the sun orchid *Thelymitra fragrans* "usually found in clumps of *Dendrobium* especially *D. kingianum*". It was no surprise then to hear that the origin of these attractive plants was from a clump of bush collected *D. kingianum*!

Les Nesbitt gave the commentary on the Terrestrials
Reg Shooter spoke on the Epiphytes.

POPULAR VOTE: Terrestrials: *Leptoceras menziesii* grown by John Peace (Note that John had induced flowering by watering with dissolved aspirin)

Epiphytes: *Dendrobium* Colonial Blush grown by Wally Walloscheck

COMMENTATORS CHOICE: Terrestrial Species: *Caladenia flava* grown by George Nieuwenhoven.

Terrestrial Hybrid: *Caladenia* 'Harlequin' From R.S. Rogers house at Black Hill.

Epiphyte Species: *Bulbophyllum nasica* grown by George Nieuwenhoven.

Epiphyte Hybrid: *Dendrobium* Colonial Blush grown by Wally Walloscheck.

APOLOGY: Last months popular vote, best *Dendrobium* Aussie Zip was grown by Steve and Betty Meszaros (my apologies Ed.)

SEPTEMBER MEETING

Past President Gerry Carne spoke on the Natural Pollination of Native Terrestrial Orchids by deceit and entrapment. Gerry used excellent slides to illustrate his points.

Gerry began with mention of the David Attenborough special on pollination recently seen on television where the photographer manages to film a wingless female wasp emerging from the soil (how did the photographer know she was there?) climb a twig and be captured by a winged male wasp who had located her from the pheromone she had produced and mate in mid air (don't worry it was the wasp female this happened too, not the photographer!). Wasps who missed out on the real female were then shown mating with orchids.

Gerry went through the following forms of deceit used by the orchids:

- Yellow colouration representing false pollinia
- Fermenting fruit or rotting flesh odours
- Fungus mimics
- Sexual deception As well he dealt with orchids providing real rewards ie nectar, and self pollinated species.

He also treated us to a variety of traps and catapults used by orchid flowers to position their pollinators.

THE NATIVE ORCHID SOCIETY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA 1995 SPRING SHOW CHAMPIONS

Grand Champion Native Orchid of the Show

ANOS medal (Donated by NOSSA)

Dendrobium x delicatum 'Kerry'

Bruce Mules

Champion Terrestrial Species

The Roy Hargreaves Prize (Donated by Roy Hargreaves)

Glossodia major

Mr & Mrs D. Williams

Champion Terrestrial Hybrid

The Kay Nesbitt Trophy (Donated by Les Nesbitt)

Caladenia flava x latifolia

R.S. Rogers Shade House

Champion Epiphytic Species

The Wells Trophy (Donated by Don & Bubs Wells)

Dendrobium atrovioleaceum

Les Nesbitt

Champion Epiphytic Hybrid

Dendrobium delicaturn 'Kerry'

Bruce Mules

Champion Floral Art Exhibit

Shoulder Spray of Native Orchids

S.I. Creed

The Bill Murdoch Trophy (Best Australian Species)

(Donated by the Ira Butler Trophy Committee)

Dendrobium Speciosum var. *grandiflorum*

Peter Barnes

The Ira Butler Trophy (Best Australian Hybrid)

(Donated by the Ira Butler Trophy Committee)

Dendrobium delicatum 'Kerry'

Bruce Mules

DISPLAYS SECTION 1 - Commercial Display

1st Nesbitts Orchids

2nd Bruce Mules

SECTION 2 - Non Commercial floor Display

1st Mr & Mrs D. Wells

2nd R .T. Robjohns

SECTION 3 - Tabletop Display

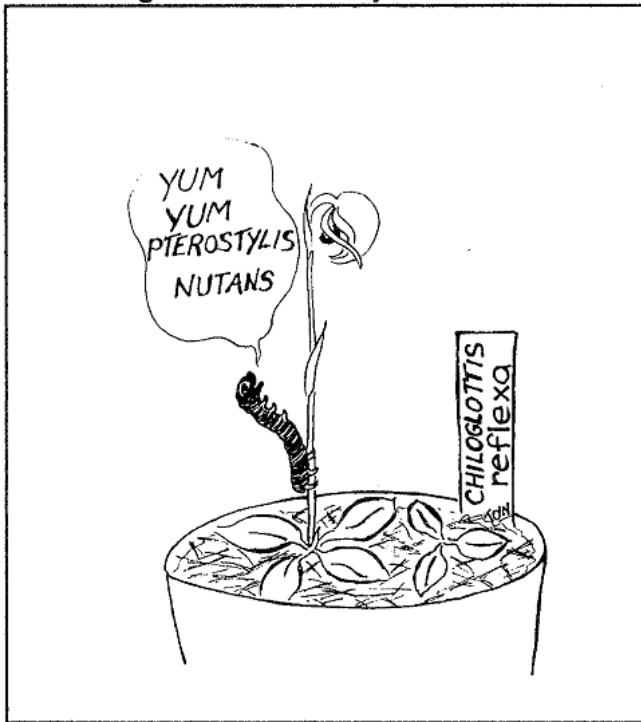
1st Steve & Betty Meszaros

2nd G & B Hawkins

THANKYOU To all the energetic helpers for their time and effort on the trading table at the spring show. Thelma & Sylvie.

TERRESTRIALS AT THE NOSSA SHOW

We staged the best display of terrestrials for more than ten years at this year's NOSSA show. It set me thinking back to the early NOSSA shows when large specimen pots of all kinds of terrestrials held their own with the epiphytes. Since those days the epiphytes have grown bigger and more numerous and the numbers of terrestrials and terrestrial growers have diminished.



by LES NESBITT

The terrestrial resurgence may be partly due to the relationship with rescue digs which were frequent in the mid 80's with farmers rushing to beat the land clearance laws of 1985/86. Later, there were very few rescues until the past year or so when we were able to collect from building sites and pine forests before planting/harvesting. Another reason for the improvement is undoubtedly the new wave of terrestrial growers who are producing some excellent flowering plants. For them, the basic cultural techniques worked out painstakingly over the past 25 years are readily available as are a stock of plants from tuber banks, nurseries and private collections.

There is also a questioning attitude and experimentation with new techniques which all give hope for the future. Cultivation is an important link in the survival chain for our native orchids.

What happened to all those plants from the rescues of the 70's and 80's? Most have gone to that big orchid house in the sky. I have a few survivors from the Mallee after some 10 years. Fewer still have grown and multiplied prolifically and these are now classed as "common" orchids because everyone is growing them. Fifteen years ago they were rare in cultivation and each plant was highly treasured. Some examples are *Diuris corymbosa*, *Leptoceras menziesii*, *Pterostylis curta*, *nana*, *nutans*, *pedunculata*, *robusta*, *Thelymitra antennifera*, *luteocilium*, *macmillanii*.

Now we want to grow the difficult species such as the spider caladenias, *Glossodia major*, *Calochilus* (beardies) and *Caleana* (Flying Ducks). When you can make the effort to grow the fungii in pots, then growing these orchids will be easier. But back to the show where the entire bench of tall white spiders just inside the door were a credit to Les and Winsome McHugh. Registrants at next year's Adelaide Conference will love to see these in all their glory. The next

benches held the composite collection from various growers. There was a wide range of terrestrials here including the champion species and the champion hybrid.

Next along was the commercial display by Nesbitts Orchids which featured a wide range of sun orchids including several first flowering hybrid seedlings. Unfortunately it was too cold for them to open so we missed a colourful sight. There will be at least one heated display cabinet next year come hell or high water.

On the opposite side of the hall George Nieuwenhoven staged a varied display including several *prasophyllums*. Some of George's orchids were in sphagnum moss and other new and strange media. In the centre of the hall Wally Walloschek's stand featured some well grown *Diuris* and other terrestrials. More terrestrials were scattered throughout the table top and floor displays and were featured in the fledgling floral art exhibits. Overall a magnificent display which was worthy of a bigger crowd.

REPORT ON CONSERVATION GROUP'S SURVEY AT POTTERS SCRUB SEPTEMBER 2nd & 3rd by KAREN POSSINGHAM

On the Saturday six members of the Conservation Group met at Tintinara for a day trip to Messent Conservation Park. Fortunately David and Rosemary had a Toyota Landcruiser as the tracks were mostly 4-wheel drive only. We saw many flowers out but the park was fairly sparse for orchids, due, we think, mainly to rabbits. We saw *Caladenia patersonii*, *C. latifolia*, *Glossodia major*, *Pterostylis plumosa*, *P. nana* and *Acianthus caudatus* in flower.

We then drove on to Noonameena Lodge to meet up with Birgitte Sorensen of Black Hill Flora Centre and a group of Australian Trust for Conservation volunteers. Birgitte gave a very interesting talk with slides on *Pterostylis arenicola* and described her survey methods. On Sunday we divided into two groups to begin the survey work, Potter's Scrub was burnt about three years ago so is very dense with *Eucalyptus diversifolia* scrub, at times almost impenetrable. We were lucky to find *Pterostylis arenicola* in flower as well as colonies of possibly *Caladenia stellata* and *C. valida* or hybrids of the two. After working very hard, David had a lucky find and discovered three flowering spikes of *Thelymitra epipactoides*. There were about ten open flowers on each spike, so it was a photographer's dream. The flowers have a delicate perfume and are a very unusual colour, almost iridescent green in parts. It was a great end to a good weekend and thanks to Birgitte for giving us the chance to see rare orchids and help with their conservation at the same time.

THANKYOU

BIRGITTE SORENSEN

I would like to thank the members of the NOSSA Conservation Group for their assistance in surveying Potter's scrub (Coorong National Park) for the sandhill greenhood orchid, *Pterostylis arenicola*. We are trying to ascertain the extent of *P. arenicola* in Potter's scrub in order to establish appropriate management plans for the orchid. The scrub is very dense, so people spent half their time "bush bashing" just to get through the scrub. Not only did people see *P. arenicola* but they were lucky enough to see other rare orchids. If anyone is interested in knowing what they saw, perhaps they would like to join a survey trip next year!

FIELD TRIP REPORT: KYEEMA & LOFTIA PARK

by GARY GUIDE

At the request of several members a special excursion was arranged to visit the burnt areas of these two parks on September 30th, Fires in both parks had been started by firebugs last summer and covered large areas.

We began on the northern side of Loftia Park and walked along the boundary track, Hundreds of tall *Prasophyllum elatum* were just coming into flower, some being worked by wasps had pollinia glued to their thorax and the photographers were lucky to capture these. In contrast to the metre tall *Prasophyllum* there were dozens of tiny *Caladenia minor* just 3-5cms tall.

The most spectacular displays were of the wallflower diuris, *Diuris corymbosa*, with all shades of yellow, orange, purple and brown suffused. There were also a few *D. pardina* and of course their natural hybrid was present too.

We drove to the south side of the park and soon found a colony of *Leptoceras menziesii*. Like all the previously mentioned species it is facilitated to flower by fire! On a patch of clay was another tiny *Caladenia* which at first we thought was *C. minor* but these had rounder sepals, green outside and a different labellum. When someone found 'true' *C. minor* in a sandy patch nearby with its narrow sepals, red striped outside, slenderer stems red ovary and red blotched labellum we knew they were different taxa and it was decided the round sepal species was *Caladenia pusilla*. Material of both was collected for David Jones but as the holiday Monday would delay arrival of the post we wondered if the short lived flowers of these species would still be open when he received them, in fact it was obvious that some flowers were going straight from bud to seed capsule without opening, the ends of the sepals were stuck firmly together!

After lunch at the Echunga Hotel we drove to Kyeema. Conditions were much drier here, but in damp gullies were numerous *Leptoceras menziesii* all with short stems reflecting the poor conditions. They were often mixed with huge numbers of *Microtis* still in bud.

At a dry patch of sand and gravel we found a colony of 200 *Lyperanthus (Burnettia) nigricans*, the undertaker orchid and mixed with them a few leek orchids *Prasophyllum odoratum* and sun orchids *Thelymitra luteocilium*, almost finished and *T. rubra* (just starting) as well as a clump of yellow *T. antennifera*. Quite a colourful sight.

At the edge of a burnt swamp thicket was the tiniest white flowered *Caladenia*, again related to *C. minor*. It seems that there are at least four members of this complex of miniature self pollinated orchids in the Adelaide Hills ie *C. minor* 'slender pink', *C. pusilla*, *C. prolata* and this little pale flowered swamp 'critter'. It will be interesting to hear what David Jones thinks of all these! Before we finished at 2pm we had even found the larger pink *Caladenia carnea* on a dry ridge growing with *Caladenia reticulata* and more *Prasophyllum elatum*. We were more than happy with the results of this trip!

Orchids seen: L = Loftia K = Kyeema

In Flower: *Caladenia carnea* K; *C. minor* L C; *pusilla* K,L; *C. aff minor* K; *C. reticulata* K; *Calochilus robertsonii* K; *Cyanicula deformis* L; *Cyrtostylis reniformis* K,L; *Diuris corymbosa* K,L; *D. pardina* K,L; *D. corymbosa* x *pardina* L; *Glossodia major* K,L; *Leptoceras menziesii* K, L; *Lyperanthus nigricans* K; *Prasophyllum elatum* K,L; *P. odoratum* K; *Pterostylis nana* K; *P. pedunculata* L; *P. nutans* K; *Thelymitra antennifera* K; *T. luteocilium* K,L; *T. rubra* K; *T. pauciflora* K.

In Bud: *Caladenia* various, *Microtis* various, *Thelymitra grandiflora* L; *T. species*.

In Leaf or Seed: *Acianthus caudatus* L,K; *A. pusillus* K,L; *Eriochilus* K,L; *Genoplesium* K,L; *Pterostylis* sp.

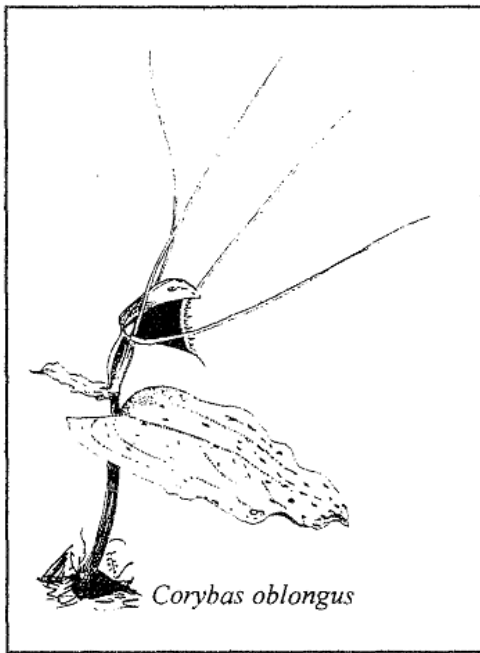
XMAS RAFFLE

Tickets available at the October meeting.

Prizes: Hand crafted wicker pram & Teddy bear.

Hand crafted by 2 NOSSA members.

Cost: \$1.00 per ticket.



NEW ZEALAND HELMET ORCHIDS

Third in a series adapted from the article- *Corybas* in New Zealand by Dan Hatch (The NZ Native Orchid Group Journal, 1994).

Corybas oblongus (J.D.Hook) H.G.Reichb. (1871) = - leaf shape
Syn. *Nematoceras oblonga* J.D.Hook (1853)

This species is easily distinguished by the pale fimbriate edge to the reddish labellum, and the oblong apiculate leaf which in mature plants has reddish veins on the underside. The juvenile is usually 2-leaved and this character is often carried over to mature plants. The petals are slightly shorter than the lateral sepals.

Distribution: North, South, Stewart, Chatham, Auckland and Campbell Islands.

Flowers. October - January.

BOOK REVIEW

by MICHAEL HARRISON

Dendrobium Kingianum: A Unique Australian orchid

By Peter B. Adams & Sheryl D. Lawson, Published in 1995 by Central Queensland University, QLD Press.

Extracted from ANOS Victorian Group Bulletin, July 1995.

Dendrobium kingianum is unquestionably the most popular and widely grown Australian orchid, and here is a book to complement our continuing love affair with this wonderful species. Indeed, it is a testament to the variability and horticultural qualities of *D. kingianum* that an entire volume can be successfully devoted to it.

Peter Adams and Sheryl Lawson have compiled a remarkable amount of information, the results of 15 years of study, research and observation, both in cultivation and in the field. All you ever wanted to know about *Dendrobium kingianum* is here: the history, distribution and habitat, biology, taxonomy, colour categories and the R.H.S. colour coding system, cultivation techniques, breeding programmes, use in hybridising, exhibiting and judging, and, making up a large portion of the book, the register of named plants.

Over the years many select plants of *Dendrobium kingianum* have been given clonal, or cultivar names, and the register lists each of these plants (or, at least, those with which the authors are familiar), giving details on origin, plant habit, flower form, culture, breeding history, etc. The register arranges these plants broadly by colour categories, and then alphabetically, commencing with purple and working through splash-purple, mauve, white, "silcockii", striped and unusual colours. Many of the over 200 colour plates in the book are devoted to illustrating these plants, and it is interesting to see such a broad collection of pictures of *D. kingianum* assembled in this way. It's only a small point, but one thing I really like is that the authors refer to purple and mauve, rather than red and pink, when discussing colour in *D. kingianum*.

Adams and Lawson leave us in no doubt that they see their register as a conservation initiative, designed to preserve the information in their own living collection of *Dendrobium kingianum*, and of others who have contributed. It should be noted that in compiling the extensive amount of information in the register, they have had to rely upon many sources in regard to the origin and breeding history of these plants.

Inevitably, some errors may have crept in but, as they state in the Authors' Preface, they welcome correspondence to correct these mistakes and omissions. The chapter on taxonomy is particularly interesting as it includes the publication of a new subspecies for *Dendrobium kingianum*, ssp. *carnavonense*, from Carnarvon Gorge and nearby areas in central

Queensland. Long recognised as a fairly distinct and geographically isolated form of *D. kingianum*, it may well be appropriate to see it classified in this way. Although not specifically stated, taxonomic convention would dictate that in light of this new determination, other forms of *D. kingianum* would also be recognised at the subspecific rank.

The authors examine each named botanical variety of *Dendrobium kingianum* in turn, concluding that none of them are taxonomically justified, and they represent either simple colour forms or typical examples of the species as a whole. Accordingly, they are all subsumed onto the autonym *Dendrobium kingianum* spp. *kingianum*. It is noted that while such names as "var. *silcockii*" and "var. *album*" are useful horticultural terms, they have no taxonomic validity.

Also of special interest is the section describing the various regional forms of *Dendrobium kingianum*, from the taller-growing populations around the Queensland/New South Wales Border Ranges, through to the squat, relatively small plants which occur at the southern limit of the species, in central eastern New South Wales.

A single topic book may prove to be too limited in scope for some readers, but for any serious Australian native orchid enthusiast, whether your interest is scientific, cultural or general, this publication is a must. It is a comprehensive treatment of all aspects of *Dendrobium kingianum*, logically arranged and attractively presented, with plenty of good quality colour pictures. It is so pleasing to see a product such as this practically free of typographical errors, and with all colour plates correctly positioned and labelled. It really is a credit to the authors and the publishers that such care has been taken.

HEROIC MEMORIAL TO THE ORCHID EXPERT

by GRAHAM PIZZEY

Extracted from Newspaper article given me Roy Hargreaves. Published in the 1960's to introduce the complete Nicholls Orchids of Australia.

One of this Christmas season's record crop of natural history books this one is so outstanding, and its subject so fascinating, that it must stand out in any company of books from any year. "Orchids of Australia", by the late W.H. Nicholls is the posthumous outcome of the sparetime endeavors of a remarkable man whose sole qualifications when he began in 1923 were a total commitment to the work in hand, sufficient self-discipline to teach himself the exacting art of botanical painting, and the tenacity to keep at the job, at times through financial stringency, until his death in 1951.

Nicholls's guiding motive in this lifetime commitment was a resolve that "...my hobby should prepare the way for an authoritative monograph on Australian orchids". His degree of success in achieving that goal is reflected in the foreword by Nicholls's friend, the present assistant Victorian Government botanist, Mr J.H. Willis, which states quite simply "...it will take its place among the greatest regional floristic monographs of all time".

In keeping with such heroic credentials, the book is large - the page size is 10 by 13 inches. More than 500 pages are devoted to the 476 watercolour plates. Some, dealing especially with the larger epiphytic orchids in life size, span two pages and are magnificent. There are 129 pages of supplementary information dealing with each illustrated species. This was written by Nicholls, and brought up to date by D.L. Jones, a horticultural research officer with the Department of Agriculture, and Mr T.B. Muir, a taxonomic botanist at the National Herbarium of Victoria. Where no text for a plate existed the editors have supplied it.

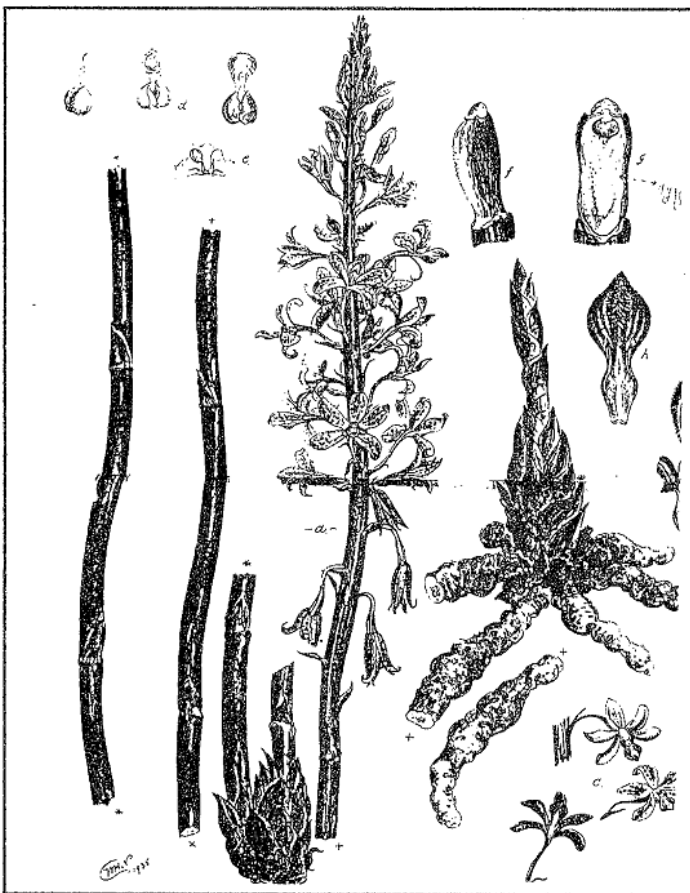
The text is arranged in regular order for each species. Beginning with a citation of the species, it includes a select list of published references; an abbreviated synonymy, or reference to other names by which the orchid has been known; then a description of the plant; general comments by Nicholls; reference to the flowering period; the common name (if any); and finally a brief distribution reference. The unavoidable technical nature of the text is leavened by much informative comment. Thus of the tall, pink and darker-spotted hyacinth orchid which appears every off season under messmates outside my gate, the entry reads:

"A widespread and well-known species, which is a common sight in most scrubs of coastal and inland areas. It tolerates a wide range of soils but is invariably found in close association with large trees, chiefly eucalypts, on which it was once thought to be parasitic. The orchid, however, is not a parasite but a saprophyte living on dead organic material in symbiosis ("living together") with a fungus in its root system. The fungus supplies certain food materials to the orchid, thus dispensing with the need for leaves, and in return is able to use some compounds from the orchid ..."

A work like this can open a new world of fascination, especially as Nicholls's workmanlike but immensely appealing colour plates cover most of the common orchids one is ever likely to meet. There is something about this thrill of recognition which has never been quite explained. Absorbing Nicholls's illustrations with all the selective pleasure of hindsight, I have been reliving days spent in near and distant parts of Australia.

I remember a hidden small swamp on the sandplain south of Perth where Alex George showed me a wonderful stand of slipper orchids: the vast trees in rainforest of Lamington National Park, in south eastern Queensland, where cream - blossoming rock orchids grew from the trunks 100 feet above the ground; the rocks of the Family group of islands surrounding Dunk Island on the North Queensland coast, there in the salt air and hot sun deep

masses of a plant known locally as the golden orchid (*Dendrobium discolor*) contrasted magnificently with the blue sea and the white sands.



At this admittedly superficial level of appreciation, one could travel for longer than a lifetime through this country and still find orchids whose delicacy and form and colour can make you gasp. Of somewhat deeper moment is the thought that of all flowers which exist only for the functional purpose of attracting pollinating agents and achieving fertilisation - the blossoms of orchids as a family have made the most extraordinary adaptations and accommodations to attract and secure fertilisation.

This is a subject which has attracted botanists since Darwin published his classic "The Fertilisation of Orchids" in 1862. Outstanding work was done in the field by Mrs Edith Coleman in Victoria in the 1920s and 30s but the subject is still little-known.

In providing the first comprehensive book on Australian orchids since Fitzgerald's "Australian Orchids" was published nearly a century ago, W.H. Nicholls and his editors have done all that dedication may do to encourage an expanded study of the secrets of these superlative plants.

One should perhaps not conclude without a word of appreciation for the publisher, Thomas Nelson, whose initiative resulted in this most ambitious Australian natural history publishing venture in years. Nicholls' work was originally accepted for publication in some 20 parts by another well-known and highly-respected local publisher. When the project became uneconomic after some four parts had been issued in the 1950s the project was reluctantly allowed to lapse, to the great disappointment of many naturalists.

In recently deciding to publish all the plates in a single useful volume, even though having the colour printing done in Hong Kong, Nelson's were probably incurring a not inconsiderable financial risk. One hopes for the future of such splendid productions that their instincts prove sound.