Peterskorner is now distributing a range of orchid products from Easy Orchids (Murray and Jean Shergold) and we are happy to take orders, and bring them to the Species Society monthly meeting.

Check out our catalogue at www.peterskorner.com, phone Peter or Shirley on the numbers shown, or e-mail peterskorner@iinet.net.au.

CULTURAL AWARD, February 2011
Bulbophyllum echinolabium
Maxine

NEXT MEETING - TUESDAY 8 MARCH

Contents
2 General Meeting Minutes
3 Notes from your Committee
4 Noticeboard
5 Monthly plant
6 Plants displayed February 2011
8 Rhizanthella gardneri
10 About us
MINUTES OF THE GENERAL MEETING

8 February 2011, 7.50 pm

Present: 36
Apologies: Lee, Jack, Neville, Jeanine
Visitors: Nil
New members: Brian, Jeanine
Minutes: Minutes as circulated accepted
(Mavis, Trevor)

Business Arising: Nil


Correspondence:

Inwards:
- New members (Brian & Jeanine)
- Mandurah Orchid Club - advising of Office Bearers for 2011
- Garden Clubs of Australia - Autumn Magazine
- Various Club Newsletters

Outwards:
- Nil

Business Arising: Nil

General Business:
- Orchids Australia featured Tony Watkinson's 'Elythranthera emarginata "Choice"' on the front cover. Tony received an HCC/AOC for this plant in September 2010.
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- Thanks also to Tony for the donation to the library of a book on Pleione, purchased from the sale of Northern Districts Orchid Society's library. He also offered a book of Paphiopedilum Genus, Albino Forms which he purchased overseas. The Society agreed to refund him the purchase price and accept the book for the library. Thanks also to Chris & Ken for the donation of past copies of orchid magazines (Orchid Digest & others)
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Cultural Award: A striking Bulbophyllum echinolabium exhibited by Maxine

Raffle: Bruce (twice), Anne, Vic & Judith

Name Badge: Courtney

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Plant Sales
The Society provides an opportunity table for members to sell surplus plants and equipment, and for the Society to sell product from time to time. A commission of 10% is charged on all sales.

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The Society endeavours to obtain a different species seedling for sale at each meeting, usually costing between $6.00 and $12.00. The Society makes a small profit on these sales which is invested in benefits to members. As it is always difficult to get new or different species, should members have 20 or more plants of one species which they feel might be suitable as a monthly plant, please contact a Committee member.

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Professor Brundrett has been working with the Department of Environment and Conservation and volunteers from the West Australian Native Orchid Study and Conservation Group to locate these unique orchids.

"We needed all the help we could get since it often took hours of searching under shrubs on hands and knees to find just one underground orchid!"

But *Rhizanthella gardneri* thought for many years to be monotypic is not the only underground orchid. *Rhizanthella slateri*, the Eastern Underground orchid is found in New South Wales at Bulahdelah, the Watagan Mountains, the Blue Mountains, Wiseman's Ferry area, Agnes Banks and near Nowra. It is also listed as a critically endangered species due to habitat loss and destruction.

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The University of Western Australia

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Now, with less than 50 individuals left in the wild, scientists have made a timely and remarkable discovery about its genome.

Despite the fact that this fully subterranean orchid cannot photosynthesise and has no green parts at all, it still retains chloroplasts - the site of photosynthesis in plants.

"We found that compared with normal plants, 70 per cent of the genes in the chloroplast have been lost," said Dr Etienne Delannoy, of the ARC Centre for Excellence in Plant Energy Biology, the lead researcher of a study published in Molecular Biology and Evolution. "With only 37 genes, this makes it the smallest of all known plant chloroplast genomes."

"The chloroplast genome was known to code for functions other than photosynthesis, but in normal plants, these functions are hard to study," said ARC Centre Director Professor Ian Small.

"In Rhizanthella, everything that isn't essential for its parasitic lifestyle has gone. We discovered that it has retained a chloroplast genome to make only four crucial proteins.

Our results are relevant to understanding gene loss in other parasites, for example, the Plasmodium parasite that causes malaria."

Associate Professor Mark Brundrett from the Wheatbelt Orchid Rescue Project describes Rhizanthella as one of the most beautiful, strange and iconic orchids in the world.

"Combining on-the-ground conservation efforts with cutting edge laboratory technologies has led to a great discovery with impacts for both science and conservation. The genome sequence is a very valuable resource, as it makes it possible to estimate the genetic diversity of this Declared Rare plant."
**Rhizanthella gardneri**

Last week, Tony sent me an interesting short article on *Rhizanthella gardneri*, WA’s rare and endangered underground orchid. The following article was written by a former member, the late Ron Heberle and is published on our website with several photos. Take the time to visit this at the address on the front page of this newsletter.

In 1928, Farmer John Trott of Corrigin, unearthed the first specimens of *Rhizanthella gardneri* when ploughing new land that had been previously rolled and burnt. He took the specimen to Charles Gardner, the Government Botanist, who, in turn, forwarded them onto Dr. Sanders Rodgers who named the species in Gardner’s honour.

As the common name implies, the species spends most of its life cycle underground, growing in association with, and close to *Melaleuca uncinata*, that sheds its leaves to produce thick layers of leaf mould.

The developing capitulum of tiny, crowded orchids, are exposed when the floral bracts expand and, occasionally push through the leaf mould, allowing light, and presumably pollinators to enter. Since the first finds, just six confirmed sightings were made in Corrigin - Babakin areas.

A breakthrough occurred in 1979 when farmer John McGuiness of Munglinup, East of Ravensthorpe, turned over a mallee root and found an orchid under it. Research then and again in 1980 produced a total of 26 specimens.

Further collections were made at the Oldfield locations, with another 9 plants sighted. Finance was made available from the World Wildlife Fund, for research from the resulting in a well organised research program led by Kings Park research scientists and assisted by the members of the Western Australian Native Orchid Study Group. Around 150 sightings were made and as a result of this and ongoing research, the knowledge of the biology of *Rhizanthella gardneri* has been greatly advanced.

*Rhizanthella gardneri* are unusual in other ways amongst the orchid family. The flowers are produced in a capitulum, which appears to be one large flower but on closer examination, proves to be a whole group of small flowers grouped together within a series of bracts which gives the appearance of being a single flower.

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**MONTHLY PLANT**

**Mystacidium braybonae**

*Country of origin:* northern South Africa

*Description:* Miniature twig epiphyte

*Difficulty:* Not easy to grow without high summer humidity and winter heat.

*Cost:* $12

*Mystacidium braybonae* is one of 10 species in the genus, found in Southern and Eastern Africa. These plants come from flask and were donated by Michael Zink some years back. They were deflasked by Neville who grew them on for a time. Then Maxine and Adrian have grown them on further, but both report that they can be difficult to grow, and for no reason at all suddenly seem to become less vigorous and can quickly die.

However, this desirable species is not generally available, and the majority of these plants are flowering size, several having already flowered. As the in situ photo shows, it really is a miniature species and when in flower, it is difficult to see the plant that is covered in small white flowers.

In the wild, this species is epiphytic on *Ficus* species in shaded forests. La Croix recommends cultivation in intermediate conditions, moderate shade and high humidity while in active growth with less water while in resting. It flowers in summer which is when you will need to be able to maintain humidity. These plants are mounted on paperbark, but will need transplanting as the mounts have deteriorated. Cork is recommended as mounts should be long lasting (it resents disturbance). The robust roots spread along the mounts securely anchoring this species.

Being a diminutive species, *Mystacidium braybonae* is very susceptible to scale, mealy bug and other sap-sucking pests and will quickly succumb if not treated. Therefore, it is recommended that they are grown in an environment of good air movement, moderate shade, and high humidity in summer.

16 plants are available for purchase.
PLANTS DISPLAYED FEBRUARY 2011

Bill & Sandra
Taeniophyllum obtusum

Maxine
Aerangis citrata
Bulbophyllum dearei
Bulbophyllum echinolabium
Cleisostoma crochetti
Dendrochilum cobbianum
Dendrobium montanum
Laelia fidelensis
Promenea stapelioides
Vanda tessellata 'Blue'

Ken and Chris
Epidendrum elongatum
Epidendrum xanthina
Lycaste tricolor

Adrian and Deanne
Angraecum X longiscott
Cleisostoma rostratum
Sobenikoffia robusta

Peter & Shirley
Cattleya harrisoniana
Phalaenopsis cornu-cervi flava
Phalaenopsis fasciata
Phalaenopsis leuddemanniana
Phalaenopsis leuddemanniana v. delicata
Phalaenopsis pulchra
Renanthera matutina

Vic
Aeranthes grandiflorus

Noel & Eva
Encyclia alata

Peter & Shirley
Phalaenopsis bellina

Prosthechea radiata

Tony & Mavis
Encyclia alata
Epidendrum peperomia
Kingidium delicosum
Paphiopedilum concolor
Phalaenopsis bellina
Taeniophyllum obtusum
Vanda tessellata

Photography by Tony
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March - Adrian & Deanne, Safety Bay
April - Margaret, Erskine

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Apologies: Lee, Jack, Neville, Jeanine
Visitors: Nil
New members: Brian, Jeanine
Minutes: Minutes as circulated accepted (Mavis, Trevor)
Business Arising: Nil

Financial Report: The Financial Report was tabled by Sandra, and the current balance is $3,126.15 #2 A/c $1,811.09. (Anne, Graham)

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