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NEXT MEETING - TUESDAY 9 January

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As you all know, due to an inadvertent double booking by the City of Canning, we were unable to hold our Christmas meeting as scheduled on 5 December. When members arrived to set out the hall, they found that another group had also booked the venue and had been contacted by Mrs Barnard earlier that day to come early to collect the keys as she was going to be away from her home that evening.

Thanks to all those members who came along with their plant for the free raffle and their Christmas supper.

Members on our e-mail list have been advised that given other orchid society commitments for many of us, the committee has decided to make the next meeting on Tuesday 9 January our festive season celebration.

We will have Christmas free raffle and supper at this meeting, so there won’t be the usual raffle or monthly plant sale. We will keep the business brief so that we can spend time catching up with one-another.
NOTES FROM YOUR COMMITTEE

- As advised in the last newsletter, Ray sold several bags of Orchiata bark for the Paphiopedilum Study Group at a recent Species Society meeting. Unfortunately, it seems that one bag was taken without payment to Ray. If you have a bag, but forgot to pay for it, could you please pay Ray or Ken at the next meeting.
- The January home visit at Ezi Gro will be held on Saturday, 27 January, not Sunday as usual.

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Noel & Eva
Tony & Mavis
Barry (dec’d)

Quiet Achievers
2013 Ian
2014 Chris
2015 Margaret
2016 Tom & Pat
2017 Charly & Gerda
FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Home visits:
At 10 am on the Sunday after the fourth Thursday of each month. Please bring chairs and food to share.
* 27 January - Ezi Gro Orchids, Evandale St, Lansdale (Saturday)
* 25 February - TBA
* 25 March - Bruce & Kaye, Dianella
* 29 April - Peter, Armadale
* 27th May - John, Bicton

FOR SALE/WANTED

- The Species Society has a spare copy of Dr Henry Oakeley’s book, Lycaste, Ida and Anguloa that is for sale. Dr Oakeley is presently selling the remaining copies of this excellent publication for £60 including postage to Australia (approximately $100). If you are interested in acquiring this book, please see Mich or one of the committee members. All reasonable offers will be considered.
Orchids in Their Natural Habitat and in Cultivation – Ecuagenera’s five-day pre-WOC tour

In November 2017, four of us from WA participated in a five day, four night tour in Southern Ecuador arranged by Ecuagenera Tours, a subsidiary of Ecuagenera Cie Ltda. Our tour commenced in Guayaquil in the morning of Thursday 2nd November when we were picked up from our hotel. We progressively picked up another 8 orchid enthusiasts before leaving Guayaquil to travel to Gualaceo to the southeast.

Our tour group of 12 included Karen and Paul from Napa, California; Jenna and Patrick from Gold Coast; John and Mary Ann from Guatemala; Raymond and Louise from Quebec and Tony and Mavis and Chris and me from Perth. Edison who was to be our guide for the next five days was the manager of Ecuagenera’s extensive laboratory facility that we would visit later during the tour. While he only spoke a little English, it was serendipitous that both John and Mary Ann spoke Spanish. Mary Ann became our interpreter for the next five days.

On departing Guayaquil to travel to Gualaceo (our first night stop) we passed through lowland farming areas growing a variety of crops including plantains/bananas and a number of small towns before starting the climb through the Andes mountains. There were many fruit stalls along the road with pineapples, bananas, mangoes, watermelons and citrus for sale.
Unfortunately, this Thursday was a festival day, Dia de los Difuntos (Day of the Deceased) and the traffic was very heavy, particularly in an area of roadworks leading into Puerto Inca where two lanes became one. As there were at least three lanes up to that point (one unofficial) and sometimes as many as four lanes, progress was slow.

After stopping for lunch along the way, we passed through Cajas National Park where the altitude was 4,167m above sea level. The continental divide is the site of the Tres Cruces pass and the habitat of rocky high tundra with sparse vegetation. While there may have been a few terrestrial orchids, the effect of high altitude meant that most of us were reluctant to venture too far away from the carpark.

The mountains provided a number of opportunities to stop and look at orchids along the roadside. November is not the season where the majority of orchids are in flower, so we only saw a small number on day one. However, this photo shows the steep terrain and other features of the high altitude habitat.
At higher altitude, we passed through cloud forest which became a feature of the next 5 days.

We saw a few *Cyrtochilum* species with their typical long flower racemes hanging downwards in addition to *Epidendrum*, *Oncidium*, *Pleurothallis*, and other unidentified species not in flower.

*Cyrtochilum macranthum*

*Cyrtochilum macranthum* showing the typical pendant flower raceme, often up to 2 m in length

At the end of a fairly long day on the road, and following dinner at Ecuagenera’s main production facility in Gualaceo (near Cuenca), we dined with orchid enthusiasts taking part in some of the other Ecuagenera tours taking place at the same time. We then checked into our comfortable hotel for the evening.

Next morning, after breakfast, we departed for El Panguí further to the southeast towards the Amazon region of northern Peru, and at much lower altitude.
However, the mountainous landscape on day two was generally challenging, including the steeply sloping roads in small towns that we passed through on our journey.

The greatest challenge was for our driver who had to cope with many kilometres of mountain road under construction. We were told that the reconstruction has already taken more than 12 months, and will take perhaps another year until completion.

We made several stops along this narrow, uneven
and often one lane only road that wove its way through the mountains, sharing it with large trucks carrying road making material, intercity buses, cars and road making machinery. As the photos shows, there was a fair amount of cloud around. Unfortunately, our orchid viewing was less than might have been as the reconstruction often included substantial clearing of the road verges (often steeply sloped both up and down).

The slow progress through the mountains meant that it was another long day. However we did manage to sight several species in flower, including *Pleurothallidinae* growing lithophytically in moss beds along the steep roadsides as well as *Cyrtochilum*, *Epidendrum* and *Oncidium*.

Typical Cloud Forest habitat (day 2)
Epidendrum spp showing growth habit and terrain. The orchid genera were observed to be growing epiphytically, lithophytically and terrestrially, demonstrating a high degree of adaptability amongst these high altitude species. Along the road we saw many moss covered trees, often festooned with orchids. Stopping to take a closer look often revealed many different orchids, mosses, bromeliads, and ferns. If we were lucky, some of the orchids were in flower.

Mid-afternoon, we stopped in a small village for lunch. Unfortunately, our planned lunch place was closed as we were somewhat later than planned, having made several stops along the way to look at orchid habitat and being slowed considerably by the road reconstruction. Edison, our ever resourceful tour guide found us another lunch place and the 14 of us descended on a small local restaurant. They were able to cater for our group and lunch was duly ordered. However, two of us ordered pork chops.
The barbeque outside on which they cooked the chicken and pork was fuelled by charcoal, and coals appeared to have died down after their normal lunch period. Being resourceful, they used a hair dryer as a blower to get the charcoal up to temperature to cook our pork chops.

The result!

As we made our way to El Pangui, we again saw several species of orchids in flower along the way including *Cyrtochilum, Epidendrum, Sobralia* and *Phragmipedium besseae*.

*Cyrtochilum pastazae* showing pendulous raceme
Edison (and later Pepe) advised that the verge clearing for the road works has been particularly damaging to the orchid population, especially to *Phragmipedium* species that tended to grow on wet rock faces and moss beds alongside the road. We did not get to see *Phragmipedium boissierianum* in flower as the location at which they had previously been sighted had been cleared for roadworks, however did see *Phragmipedium besseae* growing in a rocky area about 30m away from the road edge.
The habitat photo shows that this species (as do most of the *Phragmipedium* genus) grows where it is constantly wet, and cool. However, it is worth noting that this mass of plants was in full sun, with water flowing nearby. The rock on which the plants were growing was covered in a thin layer of humus and moss.

Later in the afternoon, we reached Ecuagenera’s production nursery in El Pangui (altitude 860m). A large growing house full of interesting species (many in flower) awaited our visit. At this facility, they are able to grow species that need more warmth than the main nursery at Gualaceo at 2,450m.

Also, on this large tract of land, they have an arboretum with many orchids on trees. After spending considerable time in the shadehouse taking photos, we were treated to a walk through the arboretum where Edison pointed out the flowering species.

In total, Ecuagenera cultivates in excess of 4,000 species. While it is not possible to accurately estimate the number of species grown at this location, I suspect that it would be more than 500.

*Phragmipedium hirtzii*
Pleurothallis lanceana

Lepanthes neissieniae

Lepanthes tsubotae
Photos Chris and Tony

Benzingia thienii
Cont next month
ABOUT US

Monthly Meetings
Monthly meetings held on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at Wilson Community Hall, Braibrise St, Wilson commencing 7.45 pm. Usually, the short formal meeting is followed by plant descriptions given by members. Supper follows to allow member’s time to socialise and discuss orchids. All visitors are very welcome

Membership Fees
Family  $30 PA + 2 badges (1st year only) [Badges come in two versions. Pin fastening ($11.50) or Magnet fastening ($13.50) Please indicate your preference.]
Single  $20.00 PA + 1 badge (1st year only) [Pin fastening ($11.50) or Magnet fastening ($13.50)]
New members who don’t live in Perth will not require name badges, therefore membership will be at the renewal fee only

Monthly Home Visit
On the weekend following the fourth Thursday of each month (generally on the Sunday morning), a home visit is held at a member’s home. This gives members an opportunity to enjoy the fellowship that our mutual interest provides, and to see how others go about growing their orchids.

Monthly Plant Display
Given that the prime objective of the Society is to promote the cultivation of species orchids, only species or natural hybrids are acceptable for display. Since we all may be uncertain about the identification of a plant from time to time, we encourage members to bring plants along about which they are unsure since someone may be able to identify them. There is no competition nor restriction on flower count, quality or length of ownership. We want members to be able to see species plants in flower. So even if your flowers are a bit past their best, bring them in as others may not have seen that species in flower.

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.

Plant Purchases
The Society endeavours to obtain a different species seedling for sale at each meeting, usually costing between $6.00 and $15.00. 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.

Raffle
The Society conducts a raffle each meeting and at home visits as a means of generating funds.

Management
In accordance with the Constitution, the Annual General meeting is held in May each year at which time the office-bearers and committee are elected. The majority of Committee members serve two year terms.
Next meeting Tuesday 9 January