

I'll settle for something different.

Sometimes I feel so privileged to be able to have a wander in a section of bushland where I previously have not bothered to visit or perhaps unable as it might be privately owned. The cause for my effusion on this occasion is to see yet another of the thousands of individuals of *Cryptostylis subulata* within my region. I can understand some already saying I have lost the plot by considering something so common to be cause for celebration, however, (there is always a however) it always gives me great pleasure to see a species which is new to me. Even though *C. subulata* is not rare in the region or new to my list of local orchid species, the fact that the two individuals I saw were a different colour than the usual red form which normally would not get more than a casual glance (to check if a pollinator was present), these two caused me to stop as they were the first variations on colour I had noted among thousands of plants seen over 20 years. (photo back cover)

Both plants had one open flower, three buds and were 70 cm tall but the flowers were yellow in colour with the projecting hooked callus on the underside of the labellum, being a soft watercolour pink rather than the strong red and black of the normal form.

The area of bush in which I was walking is relatively untouched and the only real damage to the site were the bush fires of 2002/2003 but the area has regenerated quite well and the overstorey is about 50% with a good understorey, dense in some parts with occasional open spaces. The reason I was there was to a favour for a friend who was required to undertake an Environmental Assessment for the purposes of a small two lot subdivision measuring 200 m x 400 m. I was asked to do this because a similar section of bush divided only by a road has already produced one plant of *C. hunteriana* and the thinking was that this lot might also be home to a plant or two. The site is 2 km from a site with 300 individuals of *Prasophyllum affine*, 20 individuals of *C. hunteriana* and seven individuals of *Calochilus pulchellus*. It is also 2.5 km from the site of *Rhizanthella slateri* which was found by me and the friend for whom I was doing the current favour, so I jumped at the chance to have a look at this site. The soil is typical grey sandy loam and less than 300 m down the slope is a great colony of *Pterostylis baptistii*, *Corybas*

aconitiflorus, *Petalochilus pictus*, *P. carneus*, several *Thelymitra* spp., *Microtis parviflora*, *Eriochilus petrosus* the ever present *Cymbidium suave* and a few other *Pterostylis* spp. and a range of other mixed genera, including *Cryptostylis erecta* and *Dipodium variegatum*.

Along with the privilege of the ability and desire to walk in the bush comes the responsibility of taking home more than myself and this time I was glad to have someone at home to remove the tick from the back of my neck. It's a recreational hazard and my wife has become quite skilled at tick removal but if a tick is the worst thing I collect in a day I have no cause for complaint.

After photographing the *C. subulata* I sent the photos to John Varigos in Victoria as a matter of interest. John and I have exchanged notes and experiences with the Genus *Cryptostylis* and he also had not seen this form, so he forwarded the photos to a higher authority. Gary Backhouse made the identification of the colour form with the note it was a Xanthic form, which as we know means yellow. Gary also said he had seen this form in NSW but not in Victoria and I am pleased he was able to provide a positive answer.

Unfortunately I did not mark the location for the reason the plants will disappear during the clearing required on these small

lots for homes in a bush setting which are required to clear so much of the lots for bushfire protection, construction of water tanks and a large 40 sqm area to filter all sewage effluent produced by the residents. These requirements will reduce the area to little more than a suburban block and I wonder how this development gained development approval but then again this is the Shoalhaven and things like that seem to happen here on a regular basis.

Different colour forms come not only with *flora* but *fauna* also and something I note on 23-12-09 also fell into that category. While driving along a favourite track I noticed a Goanna, or to be correct a Lace Monitor. However this animal was quite different from any of its type I had seen before as it has distinctive bone coloured lateral bands and a tail almost 50% longer than its body. It was also not as bulky or robust as most of the monitors available in the local area. A quick emailed photo to

an associate for whom I had just done a favour and it was named, *Varanus varius*, Bell's Form, a type which is accredited to dryer inland areas such as the Pilliga Scrub or along the Murray River, not moist coastal habitats such as occur here. My associate is occasionally my boss and the one for whom I undertake the occasional orchid survey and he is a reptile, frog and bat specialist. He also indicated he had never seen that form in this area and insisted I log the find on the NSW Wildlife Atlas, which has been done.

As I said at the beginning, it's a privilege.

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