

## WANDERINGS AROUND BRISBANE

Gerry Walsh

7 Leslie Court, Werrington, NSW 2760.

During the last week of September 1987, I was lucky enough to spend four days seeing native orchids in the mountains west of Brisbane. The area I explored was centred in the Brisbane Forest Park, a region reserved as Brisbane water supply catchment. Access to most of it is restricted. My host was Ralph Crane who knows the area probably better than anyone around Brisbane. Ralph has permits to collect living plants and herbarium specimens for the Brisbane and Canberra Botanic Gardens. He has made many interesting recordings, notable of which is the discovery of several new species of *Pterostylis*, and the southern extension to the range of *Plectorrhiza brevilabris*, as well as new locations for *Peristeranthus hillii* and *Sarcochilus weinthalii*. It was with much cockiness that we were able to drive unchallenged through all the restricted areas because Ralph has his own master key to the locks on the numerous steel gates that guard all the access roads to the park.

On the first day we drove to a most unlikely little dry gully that drained into a small reservoir. I felt somewhat apprehensive as we bashed our way through lantana, and up into the dry creek bed. The first few hundred metres revealed nothing in the way of native orchids but, as is often the case in this type of terrain, epiphytes suddenly appeared everywhere.

The most common species was *S. ceciliae*. I was staggered by both the quantity and quality of them. I was used to seeing the little tufty plants of NSW, and nothing could have prepared me for the shock of these Brisbane giants. Nearly all had leaves around 8 cm long with some up to 12 cm long. In most instances, the old flower spikes were about 12 cm long, the longest being 28 cm. The gully was perhaps 500 m in length, and there would have been between 400 to 500 plants growing on everything from shale to big boulders, and even tree trunks. I was surprised to see only single plants, but a 100 mm pot would be needed to accommodate most of them.

Higher up the gully we found numerous plants of *S. dilatatus*, mostly on twigs that had fallen from the trees above. Some had continued growing on rocks and low shrubs, but most were lying on the ground.

At the head of the gully on a large single Red

Cedar, the only rainforest tree in the gully, grew six or seven clumps of *Oberonia complanata* and *Dendrobium bowmanii*, both growing in full sun. I was surprised at just how large several clumps of *O. complanata* were, and especially how hard they were growing, no moss or shade. We also saw superb specimens of *D. linguiforme* along with *D. teretifolium* var. *aureum*, *D. tetragonum*, *S. hillii*, *Plectorrhiza tridentata* and *Cymbidium suave*. Quite a successful day by any standards.

The second day began at 4.30 am with a long hike down what is known as "the gorge". Four of us in two 4WDs headed out. One of the vehicles was left at the exit point many kilometres down the gorge, and the four of us in the other truck drove back to the headwaters, once again behind locked gates. After an hour of slithering around waterfalls and log jams, we reached the gorge bottom and found ourselves amid palm groves of tropical proportions. On the descent we saw infrequent examples of *S. falcatus*, *S. ceciliae*, *S. hillii*, *Rhinerrhiza divitiflora* and *Plrhz. tridentata*. Most of the high buttressed trees at the bottom were festooned with giant staghorns and elkhorn ferns, and the obligatory giant specimens of *D. speciosum* and *D. teretifolium* var. *aureum*. As we penetrated deeper into the gorge, we found *D. schoeninum*, *D. gracilicaule*, *C. suave*, *Papillilabium beckleri* and *Bulbophyllum exiguum*. As well there were uncountable thousands of plants of *Calanthe triplicata*, many with fat seed pods.

Four hours of walking found us reaching a point where the gorge narrowed in with the massive walls closing to a gap of about 4 m. This made it necessary to half swim through long pools of very chilly water to make forward progress. From water level, the cliffs rose steeply for several hundred metres on both sides. *D. kingianum* was extensive, the long thin cane form of mostly 30 cm in length. Unfortunately the local form was perhaps the very worst example of *D. kingianum* I have ever seen, tiny washed out pink flowers with deeper pink labella. None opened up widely, and all hung their heads in shame. After a welcome lunch, we commenced our climb out the eastern side of the gorge to the second vehicle. The slopes at this exit point were composed of crumbling conglomerate-type rock outcrops between which were very steep and loose shale



'slippery dips'. Each step had to be chosen with care to avoid spilling backwards and sending a landslide crashing to the bottom. Each member of the party paid particular attention to the position of the others, especially if the other was higher up the slope.

Much more *D. kingianum* was seen during our 45 minute scamper towards the ridge top. We began to see some spectacular clumps of *D. monophyllum* higher up. All were in fine condition despite what appeared to be very hostile growing conditions. The *D. kingianum* had almost ceased to grow where the *D. monophyllum* appeared. The heat reflecting from the bluffs was remarkable, and I could only speculate what conditions must be like at the height of summer. This was only the second time I had seen *D. monophyllum* in the wild, but the first occasion near Kyogle, NSW, was negligible compared to the vast clumps I gazed on this day. Many were in spike but only a few had flowers open. A sight I will never forget! On the shadier sides of the same rock outcrops were some very extensive sheets of *Bulbophyllum minutissimum*, a comparatively uncommon species, or rather a comparatively unseen species. Most people just don't see it.

Day three was to be the day of days. In anticipation of my visit, Ralph had contacted a Forestry Office hoping to gain some knowledge of where logging was being planned. This was two months before my visit. He was advised to contact a farmer who intended logging some of his property 'sometime in the future'. As luck would have it, he was cutting for a short time only, and this was while I was in Brisbane! We were told we could help ourselves to whatever plants we wanted. So we rose from bed at 3.30 am and drove three hours to the vicinity of Killarney on the NSW/Qld border. We took a rough track high into some private property to a log dump where the screaming of a chain saw greeted us from across a large gully. We were warned to watch for falling trees, then set loose to our hearts content.

Good finds of smallish *S. falcatus* and *D. teretifolium* var. *aureum*, and some excellent specimens of *Psarco. spathulatus* were interspersed with more mundane species like *D. speciosum* var. *hillii*, *D. gracilicaule* and *Plrhz. tridentata*. After half an hour some more interesting specimens began appearing, including *Liparis coelogynoides* and *B. elisae*, both in very good condition.

We had been combing the heads of trees cut a few days earlier, pausing every ten minutes or

so to listen to the thunder of a big tree crashing to earth only a hundred metres up the bank. The orchid flora changed dramatically in that distance. In Tulip Oaks that had only been down mere minutes, we found large quantities of the uncommon *D. schneiderae* and some very good pieces of *B. bracteatum*. We spent around six hours snaking about the twisted debris, and concentrated our efforts on *D. schneiderae* and other small *Bulbophyllum* and *Sarcochilus* species. We each had a bucket full of *D. schneiderae* by day's end. This does not sound a lot, but this species does not form much more than small clumps that would sit neatly on a match box. The biggest clump I found was about 10 cm x 14 cm, and, as is the habit of the species, green bulbs were restricted to the perimeter and only totalled about 18 or perhaps 70 leafless bulbs. These old bulbs often produce new growth if back cut and will grow into a substantial 'green clump' in a few years.

Late in the afternoon we saw around a hundred plants of *Psarco. spathulatus* in full flower. They were mostly growing in very young Hoop Pines about 2 - 3 m high. What a beautiful native orchid this is. It has large flowers in relation to plant size, and they are longer lasting than nearly all other *Sarcanthinae* blooms. In a paddock beside the creek grew hundreds of plants of *Caladenia carnea* and a sprinkling of *Diuris sulphurea*. The pink and yellow blooms contrasted vividly to the deep green grass.

The highlight of the day came right at the end - a singular plant of *S. weinthalii* in flower, the first and only one I have ever seen in the wild. We rechecked all the juvenile *S. falcatus* in the surrounding bush, but remained convinced none was *S. weinthalii*. It is highly probable that there were some around but separating them from the *S. falcatus* would take a lifetime.

My last day was just as interesting as the first three. We drove a short distance, again through locked gates, to an area set aside for scientific purposes. We soon found some good clumps of a species I had longed to find for many years, *Oberonia palmicola*, I had created an image in my mind of this species growing in very moist and shady rainforest. This is not the case however. Instead it grew to perfection on a papery bark species in quite high light levels.

I also observed it on the bases of large Brush Box trees growing with *D. aemulum*. There was also a few plants on very low rocks. I was surprised to find that *O. palmicola* dies back, and



appears insect infested in the wild, just as it does under my cultivation. I had often thought that my plants were going to die periodically, but even though some do, my plants mostly recover. It is good to know that this happens in the natural state as well. This is the advantage of seeing plants in the wild. One really gains an understanding of the conditions they prefer to grow in.

In this creek we also found *D. bowmanii*, *D. schoeninum*, *B. schillerianum* (very large clumps) and another first for me - *Peristeranthus hillii*. I had not recorded this species in this region, and

it became a second distinct location within Brisbane Forest Park. Another five or six more common species were seen here as well. All in all, a very interesting little valley. My bus left Brisbane at 7 pm that night, and as the city faded behind, I contemplated the events of the past four days. I had seen seven species in the wild that I had not before seen *in situ*, and four others in quantities I had only dreamt about. The only thing I did not see that I had hoped to was *Plectorrhiza brevilabris*. Now that gives me a good excuse to return again some day.

---

## STUDIES ON THE BIOLOGY AND CONTROL OF THE ORCHID BEETLE *STETHOPACHUS FORMOSA* F.M. BAIL.

Neil Gough and Brian Montgomery

Entomology Branch, Department of Primary Industries, Meiers Road, Indooroopilly, Qld 4068.

### INTRODUCTION

*Stethopachus formosa*, the orchid or dendrobium beetle, is a native of eastern Australia, occurring from as far south as Sydney, and north to at least Coen on Cape York Peninsula. Although recognised since Fitzgerald's classic work in the 1890's as a "pest" of orchids, much still needs to be learnt about its biology. Very few scientific papers have been published on *S. formosa* or its New Guinea relative *S. papuana*. Because the orchid beetle is a sporadic but serious pest of orchids grown outdoors, and so little is known about it, the Australian Orchid Foundation (AOF) financially supported a project aimed at studying the biology of the beetle, recording its distribution and host range, and improving control measures. The study commenced in 1990 with the AOF funds being matched by money from the Horticultural Research and Development Corporation (HRDC) in 1991.

### DISTRIBUTION

Locality data on labels of museum specimens show that *S. formosa* occurs from Sydney to Cairns, and west to Condamine and Eidsvold. However, there are few *S. formosa* in museum collections, and we are seeking observations from orchid growers at the extremities of the range, from southern NSW, and far north and west Queensland. This approach has already proved

fruitful with records from Coen (H. Young, pers. comm.), Goondiwindi (I. Blanch, pers. comm.), Millmerran (R. Kanowski, pers. comm.), and Mitchell (R. Crane, pers. comm.). In addition to distribution data, we need accurate information on what species of orchids are attacked (most of the above observations were made on *Cymbidium canaliculatum*), and when the beetles are active. To assist in obtaining distribution data from orchid growers, we have included a questionnaire with this paper [Ed. - The questionnaire is enclosed in this issue of *The Orchadian*. If you have information on the orchid beetle, please take the time to remove the questionnaire, fill it in, and return it to the listed address.].

The beetles are present all year in Queensland, but limited records show that they were collected only from October through summer in NSW. To date, the beetles have been recorded on orchids only, and records of feeding on other plants (which we would need to test in the laboratory) would be most welcome.

### BIOLOGY

#### Population Studies

For ease of study, we chose to use orange crucifix orchids (*Epidendrum* sp.) as a host plant. Our main study site is a large patch of *Epidendrum* in St Lucia, Brisbane, which is regularly watered. Orchid beetles and their larvae feed voraciously on the flowers and buds. Both adults





Walsh, Gerry. 1905. "Wanderings around Brisbane." *The Orchadian* 10(6), 186–188.

**View This Item Online:** <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/294975>

**Permalink:** <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/362332>

**Holding Institution**

Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria

**Sponsored by**

Atlas of Living Australia

**Copyright & Reuse**

Copyright Status: In copyright. Digitized with the permission of the rights holder.

Rights Holder: Australasian Native Orchid Society

License: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>

Rights: <http://biodiversitylibrary.org/permissions>

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.