

Walking in the Wimmera

A monthly journal of the orchids seen in the Wimmera Region

April 2010 by John Richards

The new season has begun for terrestrial orchids in the Wimmera region of Western Victoria. Many readers will note that I am visiting areas and subjects previously mentioned however I hope new readers will appreciate the value of preserving some of the habitat of these orchids. Another reason for revisiting is that a member of the Horsham Photographic Group, Cindy McDonald, has become very interested in photographic challenge of native orchids so I needed to be certain we would find orchids when we went out.

April 14th. At the moment the season is looking better than it has for several years due to some rain. There is a definite increase in the numbers *Corunastylis nigricans* (*Genoplesium nigricans*) in the Mallee Scrub block near the Secondary College in Dimboola. They are a small orchid that blend in well in the environment so much so that Cindy thought the locust had eaten them when she could not find any in the area I told her to go. Later when standing on the exact spot she had been I was able to point out 8 within two metres. Then when she tried to get a good photograph of them, I heard some new non complimentary adjectives to describe them. *Photo bottom left.*

April 23rd. On my way to Halls Gap I had to make a detour to the Asses Ears area which was burnt in February 2006 and due to the continued drought the area has been slower to recover than normally. The area is now returning to what it was with orchids and native shrubs. The *Correa reflexa* plants are looking particularly bright at the moment and where they are there is often orchids. On an almost bare patch of track the *Pterostylis* sp. aff. *parviflora* (Red-tip Greenhoods) were very plentiful.

April 25th. A perfect day for the planned photography trip to a location near Stawell. The first stop on the way was the roadside near Orchid Lane on the Western Highway and the area lived up to its name with *Leporella fimbriata* (Fringed Hare Orchid) flowering.



Next was near the turn off to Lake Lonsdale. This area has sparse stunted shrubs growing in a clay loam that is baked hard with the summer sun and yet it is worth a visit at almost any time of the year. I was looking for *Eriochilus cucullatus* (Parsons Bands) and from previous visits, I knew where I wanted to look. By sitting in the passenger seat I had a better opportunity to look as we drove down one of the tracks. A flash or should I say a dot of white and it was stop please. Not one but many *Eriochilus cucullatus* with most being pollinated and the seed pod already swelling. The nearby area I thought would be good was a disappointment.

The Stawell location provided many photographic opportunities of the Red-tipped greenhood but only rosettes of the orchid Cindy had been told about.



Pterostylis sp. aff. *parviflora* at Stawell.

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Next it was to a location near Halls Gap on the Flat Rock road for the orchid I and my camera have a love/hate relationship with, *Acianthus pusillus* (Small Mosquito Orchid). Many were found. (No photo included)

Further along the road towards Horsham the Fringed Hare Orchid was in abundance with a large percentage flowering even though there has not been a fire in this area for many years. The ones flowering near the Copper Mine Track intersection seemed to be 10 to 20% smaller than any of the others and had a definite green hue rather than a red hue.

We drove on to Mt Zero and were soon becoming contortionists attempting to get the right angle among the trees and shrubs for a *Diplodium revolutum* (*Pterostylis revolutum* the Autumn Greenhood). Photos taken and then you guessed it, just a few metres along the walking track was a group of about 20 with easy access.

The sun was getting low so it was drain the last of the coffee from the thermos a piece of cake to finish what was a most enjoyable day.



Leporella fimbriata



(Photos not to scale)

April 27th. All morning I kept thinking would the Parsons Bands be flowering along the Salt Lake Track in the Little Desert near Kiata. The curiosity got the better of me after lunch. The area had a fire a couple of years ago and this was the first time back at this time of year.

A historian has commented that the reason why the area is not farmed is because attempts were made but the soil was too poor and the climatic conditions were too adverse for European style farming.

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Diplodium revolutum

Three shades of *Eriochilus cucullatus*

