

Walking in the Wimmera by John Richards

A monthly journal of the orchids seen in the Wimmera Region.

October 2011

Searching for *Caladenia arenaria* the Sandhill Spider Orchid.

It is early October 2011 and I was offered the opportunity to tag along with Dr Noushka Reiter from the local Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) and the Conservation group from Australian Native Orchid Society Vic. Group (ANOS Vic.) looking for the rare and threatened *Caladenia Arenaria*. This orchid is known to exist in only one other Victorian site and not in the Little Desert.

11th October 2011 was a cool, grey and windy morning as 24 eager orchid lovers gathered at Whimpey's Little Desert Lodge near Nhill and made the 4WD trek to the selected area. Once there, forming a line with each person positioned about three metres from the next. Two-way radios and GPS turned on we set off planning to walk and search for a little over an hour then return. After a picnic lunch it was into the 4WD's and off to a different area that might have some Floodplain Rustyhood (*Pterostylis cheraphila*) orchids if not *Caladenia arenaria*. The search was disappointing.

Wednesday October 12th, once again we met at Whimpey's and this time proceeded toward the South Australian Border entering a very remote part of the Little Desert National Park which is definitely 4WD territory. An added bonus on this trip was that we were joined by Laura Poole from the ABC . An artist with a massive paint brush must have been here before us as all the rolling sand dunes were covered in a mixture of pinks, whites and yellow of various ground covering shrubs that blended perfectly with each other. Many of us would have been happy to have just stayed there for the day but we had a job to do and were all eager to get started. At the location there was still colour but not as spectacular.

Once again we set off in formation detouring around scrubby trees and fallen branches while trying to maintain some semblance of order and a strait line. After 20 minutes or so I asked the question "it's a white spider we are looking for isn't it?" "Yes" was Gail Pollards response. "Well there are two here."

Soon the luminaries confirmed that what I had found was indeed *Caladenia arenaria*. Had I been by myself I would have photographed a beautiful orchid, but not have recognised the significance of the find. Soon, another three were found in the immediate area. Later in the day several more were found.



Finally the searching was over, the sun was setting and again we met at Whimpey's, this time for a BBQ. As the sun set and the BBQ finished a bright orange/red full moon rose and silhouetted the trees and grazing kangaroos, a fitting end of a perfect day.

Laura Poole's report can be found by searching the web for [ABC Rural Rare find in Desert.](#)

Several reports can be found by doing an search for *Caladenia arenaria* and then you will understand the significance of the find.

www.walkinginthewimmera.com