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The *Malaxis* of the Southwest

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Malaxis is a world-wide genus of over 200 members, although most of these occur in Asia. In the United States, there are at least 11 species, all of which are terrestrial and are characterized by a pseudobulb type structure usually visible just above the ground. The petals on the very tiny flowers are usually filiform, translucent, and curved behind the sepals so to be almost invisible. Most of the species in the United States, and all in the Southwest, have only one leaf, although three taxa in the northern parts of the country have up to three leaves. Our *Malaxis* are 'belly orchids,' that is, to see or photograph them you must be prepared to plop down on your belly on the ground. You will also need a 10x hand lens because the flowers are minute, among the smallest of the North American orchids.

For the purposes of this article the 'Southwest' stretches from west Texas through New Mexico and Arizona to Southern California. Within that expanse we have six species of *Malaxis* and each of these has an interesting story. I have wanted to write this article for 10 years, but just now have adequate material, although perhaps not the final chapter.

Key to the *Malaxis* of the Southwest (see images on pages 9 and 10)

1	Flowers purple	2
1a	Flowers green	3
2	Sepals papillose, auricles at lip base point to side	*M. wendtii*
2a	Sepals not papillose, auricles at lip base point up	*M. porphyrea*
3	Flowers apparently sessile	*M. soulei*
3a	Flowers with well defined pedicel	4
4	Inflorescence corymbose	*M. corymbosa*
4a	Inflorescence spicate or columnar	5
5	Lip with fine green stripes	*M. abieticola*
5a	Lip without fine green stripes	*M. monophyllos* var. *brachypoda*

Five of our *Malaxis* fall into a group I call the monsoon orchids and we shall look at these first. These are: *M. abieticola*, *M. corymbosa*, *M. porphyrea*, *M. soulei*, and *M. wendtii*. All of these are much more common in Mexico and make it into the United States only because of the mid- to late summer monsoon driven rains that occur in Arizona, New Mexico, and west Texas. Usually about the first of July, although it varies from year to year and region to region, the prevailing winds shift and come up from the south introducing the monsoon season and bringing summer rains to our largely desert region. The summer rains create conditions just right for these typically Mexican orchids and the leaves emerge a week or two after the rains start to fall. Flowers appear by early August and can last into late September. Then the leaves fade and the plants go dormant until the summer rains come again.

Within the United States *M. abieticola* is known from only Arizona and New Mexico, with most of the plants occurring in southeastern Arizona. There are only three documented collections from New Mexico and those colonies have not been seen in many years. Even within Arizona *M. abieticola* is known from only two mountain ranges with many plants scattered widely in the Chiricahua Mountains of Cochise County and far fewer plants in a narrow region of the Santa Catalina Mountains of Pima County. It grows in pine and fir forests above 8,000 feet elevation.

Malaxis abieticola can be identified by its columnar flower spike and the narrow dark green stripes on the lip. It is the only one of our *Malaxis* with stripes on the lip so if you see stripes, you have found *M. abieticola.*

Disaster struck the habitat of *M. abieticola* in the Catalina Mountains in 2003 when the Aspen Fire burned through. There was no sign of any plants in 2004. However, in 2005 a few plants, but no flowers, appeared at one of the former sites, and dozens of non-blooming plants were seen at two locations where they had not been noticed previously. Plants at all these locations bloomed in 2006. It is possible the plants were always at these new locations found in 2005, but were obscured by surrounding growth and became visible when the fire reduced the competition. It may also be that the fire and now opened canopy encouraged germination and growth of dormant seeds. Another possibility is that the plants survived the fire but were severely weakened and were not strong enough to appear above ground in 2004, but lived off their fungal associates and in 2005 showed leaves and by 2006 were strong enough to start blooming again.

Malaxis corymbosa has a very restricted range in the United States, appearing only in Arizona. Within Arizona it grows only in Cochise and Santa Cruz Counties where it is widely scattered in the Huachuca, Santa Rita, and Chiricahua mountain ranges. In these mountain ranges populations range from a few scattered plants to many hundreds in some locations. It grows between 4,400

and 7,400 feet elevation, which is lowest for any of our *Malaxis*. Perhaps because of its lower elevation habitat it blooms earlier than the other monsoon orchids, and can be counted on the last few weeks of July. *Malaxis corymbosa* is unique among the monsoon orchids for two reasons: its habit, and, its habitat. The specific epithet implies its appearance; the inflorescence is a flat topped corymb. The pedicels extend, elongating from the top center of the corymb, as the flower matures, but the inflorescence maintains its corymb shape. Often *M. corymbosa* is found growing on dry slopes or under pines relatively deep in the forest. However, its favorite setting is in markedly damp locations such as among moss covered rocks or at the edges of permanent streams. In this environment it is a delightful photographic subject and one can easily spend hours trying for that elusive perfect photograph.

Malaxis porphyrea is one of two purple *Malaxis* in the Southwest and is fairly widespread in Arizona and New Mexico, though restricted to those two states within the United States. It is in five counties in the southeastern part of Arizona getting as far north as the center of the state. It gets even farther north in New Mexico, growing near the northern border with Colorado. It grows between 7,000 and 9,000 feet elevation in pine and fir forests and usually starts to bloom near the end of the first week of August.

Malaxis porphyrea can be identified by its long slender spike that holds nearly one hundred small purple flowers. Your magnifying glass will come in handy to make a positive identification. The arrowhead shaped lip will have a cream to yellowish center, but to be certain it is *M. porphyrea* look at the ears or auricles on opposite sides at the base portion of the lip. They should be relatively narrow and essentially parallel, pointing up towards the column. If your plant has all those characters, it is *M. porphyrea*. This species has an historical range in the Santa Catalina Mountains of southeast Arizona. However it has not been seen there for many decades. Personal searches of the area where it was collected in 1908 have not yielded any plants. The historic location is in the area burned by the Aspen Fire of 2003. With the recent experience of *M. abieticola* apparently appearing in greater numbers after the Aspen Fire there is hope that one day in the near future we may also find *M. porphyrea* occupying that portion of its historical range.

Malaxis soulei is the most widespread and numerous of the monsoon orchids. In Arizona and New Mexico it occurs over the same range as *M. porphyrea* but in a few more counties. It is also found in parts of west Texas and is the only one of our monsoon orchids in all three states. It grows in mixed conifer forest between 5,300 and 9,200 feet elevation. At the lower end of its range it will sometimes show up in alligator juniper forest, looking out of place in this very arid habitat. It has a very long blooming season. It usually starts blooming in July, and fresh flowers persist until well into September. This species can be identified on sight by its rat-tail spike. The sessile non-resupinate flowers are

so closely packed that the stem of the inflorescence cannot be seen. The flowers are either a monochrome green, or bi-tone green with darker green on the petals and dorsal sepal. An interesting combination of these colored flowers occurs on some plants. The top half of the spike will have the two-tone flowers and the bottom half will have the monochrome flowers. Both sets of flowers will start to open at the same time, so the first flowers open at both the bottom and middle of the spike.

Malaxis soulei is often locally common. In many places it is so common that I've stopped recording locations and simply say "Oh, more *soulei*," and don't even pause to look at them unless the plant is unusually large or appears to be one of the two colored plants. It seems a shame to pass any orchid without looking at it, especially one that is relatively rare in the United States. These have recovered quite well after the Aspen Fire and are there in even greater numbers. In this sense it takes the place of *Piperia unalascensis* in the Sierra Nevada Mountains of California or *Corallorhiza maculata* in much of its western range. They are all over the place, and while you acknowledge they are there you don't really look at them.

This brings us to the last of the monsoon orchids, and the most recently described: *Malaxis wendtii*. In the United States *M. wendtii* is known only from the Big Bend area of western Texas. It grows in mixed hardwood and coniferous forest above 5,000 feet elevation. It blooms in late August and into September. I keep hoping to find it in either Arizona or New Mexico so even in places where *M. porphyrea* is common I look at every plant, but so far without finding any other *M. wendtii.* The flowers of *M. wendtii* are also purple and superficially resemble *M. porphyrea*, but with use of your magnifying glass you can easily tell them apart. Those of us who have seen many of *M. porphyrea* know instantly even upon first seeing the plants from meters away that this is a different species. The inflorescence seems more robust and denser and the flowers seem to be held differently in an unquantifiable sort of way. But one look at the lip and it is easy to distinguish the two species. The lip does not have the cream to yellow center evident in *M. porphyrea* and the auricles at the base of the lip are proportionally broader and point to the side rather than up as in *M. porphyrea*.

Malaxis wendtii is the reason I could not write this article 8 years ago. In 1999 I met Cliff and Sandy Pelchat, Mark Larocque, and Eric and Christine Holenda in Big Bend National Park specifically to find and photograph *M. wendtii* and *Dichromanthus cinnabarinus*. It took a 13 mile hike, several thousand feet of elevation gain and several gallons of water, but we did find both plants in bloom. *Malaxis wendtii* was our last stop and since I routinely take much longer to photograph plants than most folks I graciously let the others take their pictures first. That turned out to have been an error! As I was starting to set up a massive storm broke with lots of thunder, lightning, and enormous rain drops. Mark and Cliff held umbrellas for me and I hurriedly took my photos,

packed up, and we headed back to the trail-head. When the slides came back I found much to my chagrin that none of my photos of *M. wendtii* were any good. I did not get back to retake the photographs until 2007 and thus could not write this article until now.

Our next *Malaxis* is an extreme disjunct. *Malaxis monophyllos* var. *brachypoda* is more common in northern climes than the Southwest. It occurs in this region only in two mountain ranges in Southern California. The next nearest plants are in Colorado. It grows at the base of corn lilies in damp meadows between 7,000 and 9,000 feet elevation. Other orchids in these meadows include *Platanthera dilatata* and *Listera convallarioides*. It blooms from early July to the end of August. *Malaxis monophyllos* var. *brachypoda* is the smallest of the *Malaxis* in the Southwest both in plant size and size of the flowers. The tiny spike holds as many as 20 resupinate, almost translucent, green flowers. The lip is broadly triangular and three lobed with the lateral lobes folded forward. The resupinate flowers distinguish *M. monophyllos* var. *brachypoda* from *M. monophyllos* var. *monophyllos.*

One of my most rewarding orchid hunts involved *M. monophyllos* var. *brachypoda*. It was known historically from two mountain ranges in Southern California, but had not been seen in many decades despite diligent searches by many professional botanists and amateurs and was believed extirpated from California. While doing field work in preparation for my book *The Wild Orchids of California* I decided I had to know if it was still growing in the state. In 1989 I dedicated six weekends to its search, camping nearby and hiking the meadows on Saturdays and Sundays. On Sunday of the sixth week I still had not found *M. monophyllos* var. *brachypoda*, and as I headed out I decided that all those other folks were right and that it no longer grew in California. Then I noticed a grassy slope across a small stream that I had not yet searched and figured I had to look there before giving up. As I crossed the stream I almost put my foot down on a blooming plant! I now understood the habitat and over the next several weeks found many more plants. It was then I realized fully for the first time that hobbyists and enthusiasts could contribute to research on native orchids.

With the exception of *M. monophyllos* var. *brachypoda* our Southwestern *Malaxis* are found only from Texas to California within the United States. An exciting part of their story is that we may not yet know their full ranges. I still hope to find *M. wendtii* in Arizona and New Mexico, and to find *M. corymbosa* in New Mexico and perhaps Texas. Since there are other Mexican *Malaxis* relatively near the border, there is always the hope to find a *Malaxis* new to the United States here in the Southwest. That is why we keep going back into the field when the monsoon rains arrive.

Rickett's and Craighead's Three Birds

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Ever since I read Luer's *The Native Orchids of Florida* (Luer, C.A. 1972. The Native Orchids of Florida. New York Botanical Garden, New York, NY. 293 pp.), I have been on the watch (20 years) for the three species of *Triphora* (three bird orchids) known only from Florida in the US. Back in 2003, Paul Martin Brown discovered a site for *Triphora rickettii* and *Triphora craigheadii* located near a little town called Wahoo, FL. The site is also a great site for *Triphora trianthrophora* (see images on pages 11 and 12).

Triphora rickettii blooms in late June through early October. *Triphora craigheadii* blooms from late May through June. I visited this site with Paul and Hal Horwitz in 2003 and was able to get photos (poor ones) of *Triphora rickettii*. Because of heavy rain and very dark conditions during that visit, I needed better photos. I have visited the Wahoo site every year around late August, but have not been able to relocate the plants.

In 2006, Wally Wilder, a local botanist discovered two new colonies of *T. rickettii* and *T. craigheadii* in Withlacoochie State Forest. I visited the sites in 2006 in October, but the plants were not blooming. Then in May 2007, Wally contacted me in mid June; *T. craigheadii* was in bud. I unfortunately could not get there in time to see the plants. The buds take only 2-3 days to develop, and once the buds rise upright, blooming follows very quickly. But far worse is that they open at 10-11 am then close up around 2 pm and do not open again. This species produces only one flower per plant. The known colonies have between 20 to 30 plants and only 3 bloomed the year I was there.

I was more hopeful about *Triphora rickettii*, however. Wally called me again in late July when *T. rickettii* had buds and was starting to flower. Unlike *T. craigheadii*, *T. rickettii* produces several flowers per plant and produces flowers consecutively, i.e., once one flower opens and sets seed then new buds on the plant begin the bloom cycle. So I traveled down to FL in mid August and was finally rewarded. I was able to photograph several flowers of *T. rickettii* around 11 am in the morning. I was also able to visit a nice site for *Pteroglossaspis ecristata* (page 12), *Pteroglossaspis potsii* (a newly reported species; page 12), and *Habenaria macroceratitis* nearby.

Triphora craigheadii will be on the watch list for next year for sure. Another species, *Triphora latifolia*, is still missing in action. Attempts by me and Stephan Ambs to find this species have failed so far. The potential location near Picnic, FL remains uncertain. There have been conflicting location data

from several sources including Dr. C.A. Luer on the exact area where they are found. This species blooms in July also, so it will be on next year's radar along with some leg-work and communication with Forest Service botanists.

The Orchids of a Rediscovered Savannah

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My first trip to the B.W. Wells Savannah was in early June of 2007. This was a scheduled fieldtrip by the North Carolina Coastal Land Trust which owns the preserve. We had a group of 15 folks including both experienced botanists, and enthusiastic neophytes. Overcast skies gave the appearance of eminent rain, but luckily we had a dry day.

While driving down the unpaved road to the preserve, I glimpsed a whitish flower in the dust-covered grass just off the roadside. I made a quick stop to check it out, and was excited to see not one, but two *Cleistes bifaria.* The plants were a few days past peak bloom yet I had a feeling this was going to be a good day for seeing orchids.

Once everyone arrived at the meeting place, our fieldtrip leader gave us a brief introduction about the preserve, which was named after a pioneer in botany and ecology. Professor Bertram Whittier Wells (1884-1978) was one of the first to discover the rich diversity of our native flora. He was inspired when he saw a large field of white orchids while on a train ride through Pender County in 1920. Sadly, the original Big Savannah Dr. Wells wrote about in his book, *The Natural Gardens of North Carolina* (Wells, B.W. 2002. The Natural Gardens of North Carolina. University of North Carolina Press. Chapel Hill, NC. 336 pp.), was lost to agriculture in the 1960s.

In the late 1990s, while conducting a survey of natural areas in Pender County, botanist Richard LeBlond noticed an attractive group of wildflowers underneath a powerline corridor. Upon returning to the site he realized that many of these unusual and rare plants were the same species Dr. Wells had documented in the Big Savannah some 60 years earlier. The two sites shared the same unique soil type, and mowing by the powerline owners had kept the habitat open, as fire had done in the Big Savannah. Through a coordinated effort by the N.C. Coastal Land Trust, N.C. State University, and others, funds were raised to purchase the 117-acre site. In April 2002, it was dedicated and named

the 'B.W. Wells Savannah.'

As I looked across the green expanse of *Ctenium aromaticus* (Toothache Grass), I saw many blooming wildflowers including dozens of *Calopogon pallidus* (see back cover). Two species of *Sarracenia* dotted the landscape so there was something for both the orchid and carnivorous plant enthusiasts.

I was so impressed with the floral diversity that I told fellow NOC member Jim Fowler about this “new place.” I didn’t have to ask him twice about visiting the site. So the next week Jim and I met at the savannah. It didn’t take long before we found a prize. I heard Jim call out, “here are some *Calopogon*!” Sure enough he had found several plants of *Calopogon tuberosus* (page 13). In the deep ditch that serves as the boundary line of the preserve we found a nice floating mat of *Utricularia purpurea* (purple bladderwort). As we made our way back toward the road, we saw along the edge of the woods a trio of *Cleistes divaricata* (see front cover). Considering the lack of rain, finding plants with such good blooms was the highlight of the trip.

As the prolonged drought and extreme heat of 2007 dragged on, I thought the late summer blooming season would not be very impressive. Another trip two months later proved me wrong. It was early August in the flatlands of North Carolina. Temperature reached in the low 100s with dew point in the 70s. This combination made the heat index reach between 105 and 115 F. Whew! The forecast for Sunday, August 12th was sunny and temperature in the low 90s, but noticeably less humid than the previous days.

As I drove down the nearly one mile of the dry, dusty, unpaved road, I noticed the vegetation looked green and healthy. Standing water in the ditches was evidence of recent rains. There were no dry, parched plants here. I arrived at the site about 9:20 a.m., and as I entered the savannah I immediately saw many colorful wildflowers amongst the tall toothache grass. Instead of stopping to take photos, I decided to walk down the trail to the property boundary to do a visual survey. It was hard to not stop and just start photographing.

On both sides of the trail were purple *Liatris*, blue *Lobelia*, white *Eriocaulon*, yellow *Hypericum*, and pink *Rhexia*. It didn’t take long before I found some orchids. Three different species were in bloom. *Platanthera ciliaris* were past prime and not very photogenic. After quite a bit of searching I spotted several *Platanthera cristata* and a scattering of *Platanthera blephariglottis*, of which only one lone plant was pretty enough to have its picture taken (page 13).

Although it was hot, it was an enjoyable day to be outside. A constant breeze, gusty at times, was a welcome relief from the warm temperatures. It did, however, make my attempt at shooting the wildflowers much more of a challenge. My preference would have been some overcast skies, but hey, at least the sky

Figures to accompany 'The *Malaxis* of the Southwest' by Ron Coleman (page 1). Photos by Ronald A. Coleman.

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Photos to accompany ‘Rickett’s and Craighead’s Three Birds’ by Mark Larocque (page 6).

Photos to accompany 'Rickett's and Craighead's Three Birds' by Mark Larocque (page 6).

Above: Photos to accompany ‘The Orchids of a Rediscovered Savannah’ by Kelvin Taylor (page 7).

Below: Photos to accompany ‘A Florida Orchid Safari’ by Mike Parsons (page 17).

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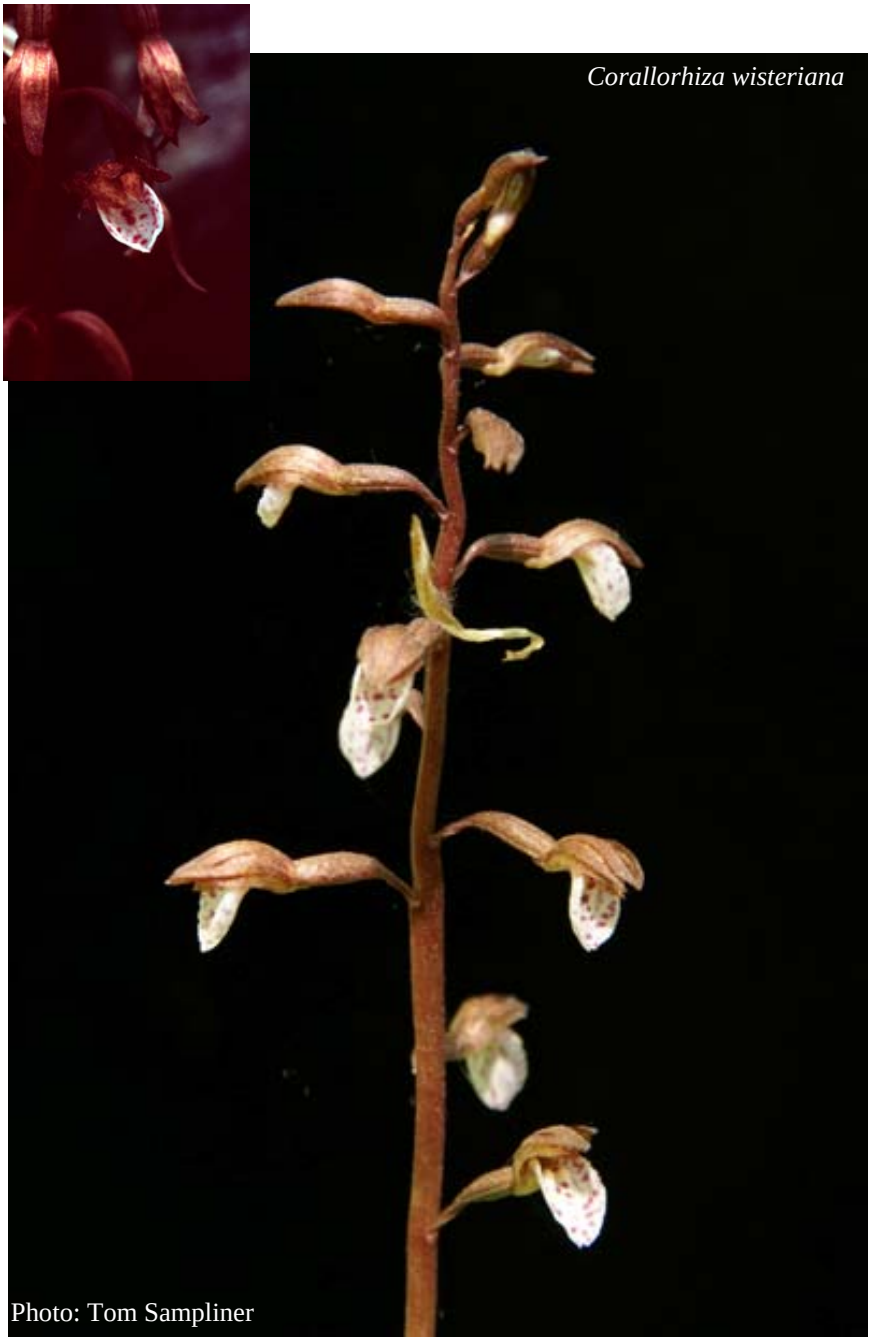

Photos to accompany ‘Wister’s Coral Root’ by Tom Sampliner (page 20).

wasn't the drab gray more typical of this time of year. The blue sky provided a nice background for a few shots.

After about five hours it was time to leave. Even with this amount of time I didn't cover the entire area. I probably missed a few things. It was nice to take my time to enjoy what I saw while waiting for a good photo opportunity. I counted about 21 different species of wildflowers in bloom. With such rich flora, the B.W. Wells Savannah is a place I'll return to again next year!

A Florida Orchid Safari: 10–25 April 2007

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Florida has over 120 species and varieties of orchids, which is half of the total for the whole of USA and Canada. In addition there are hybrids and various color forms, plus the interest of both epiphytic and terrestrial plants. Flowers can be found in almost any season and this makes any visit an exciting prospect.

My trip started with a flight from London-Gatwick to Raleigh-Durham in North Carolina. I stayed with relatives overnight before driving south to Florida to meet up with friends. It was a long way so I decided to try to visit some sites on the way before seeking accommodation for the first night. I made my way to a cemetery near Boone, Georgia for *Spiranthes eatonii*, which I had been told was in bloom. I had been there before but had only seen rosettes then. This time there were several plants in fine condition. I took some photos with difficulty as the plants were quite delicate in appearance and it was getting dark.

The next day I called into a site on the way near Fort McCoy to see if I could find *Spiranthes sylvatica*. I had been there before and had no luck. This time I managed to locate one plant in good condition. This *Spiranthes* was much larger than the ones I had seen earlier and looked more like a large *Spiranthes praecox*. En route I was also hoping to see *Spiranthes floridana* and *Calopogon multiflorus* so I rang my friends who, being ahead of me, would have already checked out the sites. They had discovered that either these orchids had not appeared this year, or they were already gone over. At least it saved me the

trouble of searching pointlessly, enabling me to catch up with them sooner in Florida.

When I reached Goethe Forest, there were Mark Larocque, Dennis Horn, Ron and Jan Coleman, Dietrich and Ursula Rueckbrodt, Hal Horwitz, Stefan Ambs, and Bob Sprague looking at orchids along the roadside. Here were *Spiranthes brevilabris*, a dainty orchid but just going over, some very nice specimens of *Spiranthes sylvatica* and *Spiranthes praecox* hiding amongst the grassy banks. Inside the woods and below the undergrowth there were a couple of diminutive *Spiranthes eatonii* also.

After we all had taken pictures, the main party went to head to Alexander Springs to find *Cyclopogon cranichoides* and *Platanthera flava*. I had been there several times in the past and had seen the orchids so I was pleased that I was offered the chance to go to Crystal River to see if we could locate *Hexalectris spicata*, which we were told, had flowered early this year. Bob Sprague and I set off south and arranged to meet the rest of the party later in the day. It did not take long before we located the plants on the roadside near a small lake. There were many more in bloom than we had anticipated and we were very pleased that there was a good choice of plants to photograph. I had only seen these in fruit before and was delighted to see the range of colors that these orchids display. Later on we set off to Orlando and met the rest of the group who had found *Cyclopogon cranichoides* still in flower. They did not find the *Platanthera* but had the wonderful experience of bumping into a Florida black bear!

The next day we all got on the Florida turnpike with a quick stop near the Orlando airport to see *Spiranthes vernalis* in a grassy field. There were some fine examples in bloom but I fear that this field has been set aside for housing in the near future. I cannot see the site being saved, because this is one of the most commonly found orchids in Florida. Continuing on our journey we were hoping to see some *Sacoila lanceolata*, which are quite well known to occur on the roadsides of the turnpike. We think that we may have been too early for them. The next destination was a cemetery near Jupiter to see *Tolumnia bahamensis*. This is a wonderful orchid also known as 'Florida's dancing ladies' and we found a few in one of the shrubbier parts. Their long stems seem to dance in the air showing off the pretty white, pink, and yellow colored flowers. After this wonderful afternoon experience we arrived in Miami for the evening reception and registration for the sixth annual North American Native Orchid Conference. The next two days were spent at the conference which was well attended and included presentations on a variety of subjects.

Before the organized field trips connected to the conference started, a few of us took time off to see if we could find *Cyrtopodium polyphyllum* - the yellow cow-horn orchid. This has been introduced to Florida and is a terrestrial plant

unlike Florida's native species, which is an epiphyte called *Cyrtopodium punctatum*. We managed to locate the area where they grew and although many had buds we could not find any flowers for some time. I think it was Jim Fowler who found the first one and then a few more were discovered. This is a wonderfully bright yellow orchid, which has long stems flowing up toward the sky.

The conference field trips kicked off in earnest the following day. For the first, we were split up in groups and pooled cars to drive to the Fakahatchee Strand. David McAdoo took one group with Mike Owen following up with another. I had been there several times before but never in April so I was keen to find new species that I had not seen before. It looked good when we discovered *Vanilla phaeantha*, but unfortunately the one plant that had flowered early now had a faded appearance. However we did find some nice plants of *Bletia purpurea* which rarely opens fully. The surprise was finding two white (*Bletia purpurea* forma *alba*) plants that Chuck McCartney said were extremely rare in the wild. Our group did see *Ionopsis utricularioides* in bloom, a delicate purple orchid that likes to sit high up on a tree. The other group however did see one with a flower spike at eye level. Some rosettes of *Pelexia adnata* were seen. It is an orchid that has only recently been rediscovered by Karen Relish, who also visited the strand. We also saw some *Epidendrum amphistomum* just above eye level in flower. This orchid is also known as the dingy flowered orchid but biologist Mike Owen assured us that the orchid is far from dingy! Other orchids seen that were either in bud or had gone over were *Campylocentrum pachyrrhizum* – the ribbon orchid, *Prosthechea cochleata* - the clamshell orchid, *Dendrophylax lindenii* - the ghost orchid, *Habenaria odontopetala* - toothed rein orchid, *Sacoila lanceolata* var. *paludicola* - the Fakahatchee beaked orchid, and *Liparis elata* - the tall twayblade. Later Stefan Ambs, Hal Horwitz, Dietrich and Ursula Rueckbrodt, and I decided to see if we could find the elusive *Calopogon multiflorus* at Bear Island. We had no luck but did find some very nice fresh *Calopogon tuberosus* in the outlying grasslands.

The following day we split up into groups again and set off to the Everglades National Park. First we stopped to see some *Calopogon tuberosus* var. *simpsonii*, which is noticeably different when compared to *Calopogon tuberosus*. It certainly blooms earlier and is much taller, with a more slender leaf. The variation of color was also quite distinctive. Further into the park we saw *Beloglottis costaricensis*, a small, white flowered orchid that was going over rapidly; *Eltroplectris calcarata* and *Platythelys sagreana*, which had already gone to seed; and the 1m tall stems of *Oncidium floridanum*. These would have been quite a sight had they been in bloom. At Rowdy Bend we had to cross over water using a small plank and climb through mangroves to get into the prairie. This operation was tricky for those carrying tripods and cameras. We had to watch out not to step on an alligator, snake, or touch the cactus, poison wood, or machineel, which is very poisonous too. At least we did not have the thou-

sands of mosquitoes descending on us as when I was last here, although I had come prepared with a netted face mask and loads of insect repellent. The swallow-tailed kites were still present but not as numerous as previously because their food supply had dried up for some reason not fully understood. Unlike my last visit to the Everglades there seemed to be lots of water running through the channels, whereas the Fakahatchee had dried out in places where I would normally expect to wade up to my waist. Last winter had been very dry here. Toward the end of the prairie we found several stunted trees bearing the rare *Trichocentrum undulatum* - the mule-eared orchid, and *Cyrtopodium punctatum* - the cow-horn orchid. These showy epiphytes defy description with their hundreds of large and colorful flowers. Everyone took lots of photos of this spectacular show. There were many other orchids not in bloom like *Encyclia tampensis* - the butterfly orchid, *Polystachya concreta* - the yellow helmet orchid, and *Prosthechea boothiana* - the Florida dollar orchid, whose interesting seed pods have been described as looking like the old silver dollar. Later in another area of the park known as Pahay-okee we were treated to more *Cyrtopodium punctatum* in a forest area where wading through deep water was necessary. Here one had to be careful of the local cottonmouth moccasin snakes that are very territorial.

For the next day, I was asked to lead a trip to the Corkscrew Swamp, an Audubon reserve south west of Florida near Naples, and hopefully show off some of the orchids of southern Florida. About ten members arrived and we searched the boardwalks until late afternoon. It did not seem the best time to visit as most of the orchids were either in seed or in bud, but we did find the last fading red flowers of *Sacoila lanceolata* var. *paludicola* and the numbers of this orchid seemed to have increased. We saw *Epidendrum nocturnum* - the night flowering *epidendrum*, with large seedpods, and the small root system of *Harrisella porrecta* on some trees overhanging the boardwalk. Unfortunately the rangers had cut off the best branches. On a few trees we saw the famous *Prosthechea cochleata* - the clamshell orchid. We learned from a ranger that the ones by the path had been stolen. There were some *Epidendrum amphistomum*, *Epidendrum rigidum* - the rigid epidendrum, *Polystachya concreta*, *Cyrtopodium punctatum*, and high in the canopy, *Encyclia tampensis*. The terrestrials *Habenaria odontopetala*, *Eulophia alta*, and *Malaxis spicata* were well over.

After this Graham Giles and I headed to the east side of Florida to Stuart. This enabled us to go to the Jonathan Dickinson State Park the following morning. We left early and our first stop was to see if we could find *Vanilla inodora* at a new site south of the town. The old, and once the only known site, was down Cove Road but that had been destroyed by a hurricane a few years ago. First we checked there, and although I thought it might eventually recover, the new site provided a better prospect. In a small park nearby we found a boardwalk and from there we were pleasantly surprised to see two plants climbing up

trees in full view. There were two flowers showing, one on each plant. To see this rare white and light green orchid was very satisfying. We then went into the Jonathan Dickinson State Park and managed to find the only other good site for *Tolumnia bahamensis*. These large white and yellow orchids were growing amongst rosemary and oak shrub. They made attractive final pictures. We checked several other areas of the park but everywhere was very dry and it looked as if the other orchids had had a hard time this year. However we did see some very friendly Sandhill Cranes, a Gopher Tortoise, and a raccoon!

Returning north alone I had a final stop near Gainesville where one plant of *Sacoila squamulosa* was in tight bud. Then I headed back to North Carolina for the flight back to Britain.

Wister's Coral Root

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Monday, May 7th 2007 started off quite cool for this time of year. Overnight temperature for the infamous cold spots had been threatened with possible light frost. I guess that also threw some uncertainty into the orchid hunt planned for today; after all, I did not know much about Wister's Coral Root (*Corallorhiza wisteriana* Conrad.; page 16), especially about how it would react to a light freeze if one came. Inadequate blankets on the bed along with my merry band of freely roaming cats drifting in and out of the bedroom all evening, waking me every hour or so did not bode well for the alertness of the main driver to be for the hunt. Nonetheless, my anticipation for the hunt revved my spirits into overdrive. I still gulped down my morning mandatory coffee anyway. Expectations must have also overcome my normal difficulties in arriving to pick up Phil, my hunting companion, who lives way over in another part of town by the agreed 6.00 a.m., our rendezvous time.

Gear stowed, we headed down a major interstate toward southern Ohio. The heavily traveled, always under construction route is particularly dull for sightseeing unless one is fond of orange barrels and state troopers. We were headed into the most southern reaches for the advance of glaciation in our state. We sought a state park known as A.W. Marion located in Pickaway County some

27 miles east of Circleville. Imagine going to Circleville aside from for their famous fall pumpkin festival.

In Ohio Wister's Coral Root is currently listed as potentially threatened. This status has been in place since 2000. It seems to limit its Ohio appearances to the ten southern counties; this is not surprising considering its range along the northern perimeter nationwide is said to be from the east in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, then swinging northward to South Dakota and Montana; southward it goes all the way to central Mexico then back eastward to Texas and Florida. The site we were visiting today was outside what our state's Department of Natural Resources lists for known county appearances, as Pickaway County is not among the listed. Perhaps a reason for species like this coral root fluctuating in reported appearances would be the color scheme and short stature that makes finding them difficult. It would not be a case of seeing the plant and confusing it with something else such as early coral root (*Corallorhiza trifida*). This latter species grows nowhere near the target for today and is limited to the extreme northeast Ohio; it also has a shorter stature and a different color scheme. Most literature states that *C. wisteriana* is a mixed woodland species while *C. trifida* in Ohio is restricted to bogs. According to Luer (Luer, C.A. 1975. Native Orchids of North America and Canada excluding Florida. New York Botanical Garden, New York, NY. 361 pp.), the type locality was woods bordering the historic Schuylkill River within what is now the city of Philadelphia. One interesting comment appears in Stan Bentley's *Native Orchids of the Southern Appalachian Mountains* (Bentley, S.L. 2002. Native Orchids of the Southern Appalachian Mountains. University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, NC. 256 pp.) wherein he states that Wister's Coral Root is a calciphile. However, Luer (1975; see citation above) comments that this species is quite local and sporadic. It can appear in abundance one year, and the next year they might be hard to come by. Such yearly uncertainty also makes finding the species difficult.

Our journey was of the spoon fed type, wherein fellow orchid hunters who had visited the park on Saturday had marked the spot. This sort of takes all the fun out of it, but really streamlines your day, too. We even came armed with a park map marked with exactly where we should park. This eases the pack mule aspect of orchid hunting considerably; I'm not getting any younger and the equipment is in need of a diet.

Any orchid hunt requires a good mental image of target species so that you can hone in on exactly what you are looking for. Since I had never seen this particular species before, except for textbook images, I was at a slight disadvantage today. Nevertheless, my instincts and stored textbook images served me well as I immediately spotted the plants upon reaching the marked site. I can't say much for the orchid's choice of home as it was growing on a steep hillside adjoining the drive into the park. Furthermore, the hill was heavily littered with

cans, bottles, and other debris. This speaks poorly for Ohioans but may be why the orchids were there, as no one else seemed to want to be.

The specimens we saw varied from being very lightly colored with pale white and a strange green to the darker more handsome specimens of madder to golden bronze and white lips with red spots. They ranged from only a couple inches high to about 10 inches for the most robust. Literature suggests that forest floor compaction is a danger faced by this species, probably not so much at this site though. Luer (1975; see citation above) describes the underground stem, which technically is a rhizome, as being fleshy, jointed, and multi-branched. This species is reported to lack true roots, despite the common name.

There was not much unusual about the growing companions among this small population of twenty-seven plants. I noticed spring beauty, phlox, Solomon's plume and also Solomon's seal, geranium, and one composite in very early stage. This was uncommon for us northern Ohioans. It was one of the leafy cups, *Polymnia canadensis*, and was showing only its deeply lobed hairy leaves and bud so tight you could not make out any features.

The task at hand was to photograph, so we did. Both digital and film were employed and hopefully, the film will look as good as the instant rewards of the digital. This population had both the bronzy-tan stems as well as specimens with the dark madder color. Most specimens I photographed favored the crystalline white lip with madder spots or blotches. The other five non-spreading floral parts were the yellowish to bronzy-tan. Some of the specimens were pale while others were vibrant in color.

Weather had warmed considerably by the time we were finished. Several layers of clothing were shed. It seems I need a keeper of some sort these days. I decided it would be a good idea to remove my hooded pullover and shake it out to remove some of the leaf litter. Unfortunately, I forgot to consider that the draw strings end in large hard knobs. If one shakes the garment with the drawstrings flailing around and you happen to knock yourself on the head, as I did, the blood will flow. The incident failed to knock any sense into me; it was quickly forgotten however, and we did a slight bit of further exploring before heading back home for our three-hour return drive. All in all, it was a most satisfying day: sure 'wister' you all were here with us!

END NOTES

Erratum

Our sincere apologies for mistakenly printing '*Cypripedium bulbosa*' when referring to the photograph on the back cover of NOCJ 4(3). The species pictured is *Calypso bulbosa.*

NOC, Inc. 2008 Annual Meeting!

Appalachian West Virginia & Pennsylvania
18-21 July, 2008

Our 7th annual conference is to be held at West Virginia University (WVU) in Morgantown, WV - the heart of Appalachia. WVU is located about one hour south of Pittsburgh, PA and is a fantastic, modern facility complete with all the amenities necessary for conference purposes. WVU is situated at the center of the upper portion of the Ohio River drainage basin which is home to 60 species, 4 varieties, and 3 hybrid native or naturalized orchids. Conference field trips should provide participants with the opportunity to see at least 20 orchid species including more than a dozen which will be in bloom at the time of the conference.

The conference schedule will include an initial day of meetings or presentations on Friday the 18th followed by an all-day field trip on Saturday the 19th into the low mountains of southern and central Pennsylvania. Orchids to be expected in bloom on this trip include: *Epipactis helleborine, Goodyera pubescens, Goodyera tesselata, Gymnandeniopsis clavellata (Platanthera clavellata), Listera smallii, Malaxis unifolia, Platanthera ciliaris, Platanthera peramoena,* and *Spiranthes lacera* var. *lacera*

We will rest-up from our orchid outing as we resume presentations on Sunday the 20th and will finish the conference with a final day afield on Monday the 21st. This trip will be into the Appalachian Mountains of east central West Virginia where we will visit the world famous Cranberry Glades Botanical Area. Participants will likely observe the following orchids in bloom: *Corallorhiza bentleyi, Corallorhiza maculata* var. *maculata, Goodyera pubescens, Goodyera repens* var. *ophioides, Gymnandeniopsis clavellata (Platanthera clavellata), Platanthera ciliaris, Platanthera grandiflora* (-a new, unnamed variety/species), and *Platanthera peramoena*

Other updates on the 2008 Conference will be announced shortly via the Journal and the NOC website (http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/NativeOrchidConference/).

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Web Site: http://groups.yahoo.com/group/nativeorchidconference/

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