

Greenwings Orchids of South Africa
December 1st to 13th
Frank Gaude and Yiannis Christofides



From top left. *P. myrtifolium*, *P. cuculatum*, *P. psammophilum*, *P. triste*, *P. pinnatum*

December 1st. Frank and Yiannis met the group arriving from Britain at Cape Town airport. We then drove through Cape Town to our hotel, where Rick and Gary were waiting. As rooms were not ready we had coffee and then lunch. We then drove to Silvermine Nature Reserve for our first introduction to the Cape Flora. The area is dominated by typical fynbos vegetation, dominated by members of the Asteraceae, Fabaceae and Ericaceae families. Notable species seen included *Athanasia crithmifolia*, *Senecio rigidus*, *Syncarpha vestita*, *Heliophila linearis*, *Psoralea pinnata*, *Bolusafrax bituminosa*, *Lobelia pinifolia*, *Roella ciliata*, *Erica multumbellifera*, *Leucodendron carpodendrum*, *Cyanella hyacinthoides*, *Ixia dubia* and *Watsonia tabularis*. We reached our target area and found the first two species of orchid, *Acrolophia capensis* and *Acrolophia lamellata*.

We saw an attractive emerald green beetle, the Green Protea Chafer.

Birds for the day included Cape pigeon, Black-winged stilts, Red-winged starlings and Orange-breasted sunbird, Egyptian geese. Reptiles seen were Rock agama and Orange-sided skink

December 2nd. A cooler day today as we set out to explore the Cape peninsula. Our first stop was at Muizenberg Bay and then at Kalk Bay, where we saw the Cape Fur Seals basking on the quay, waiting for fish that might be thrown away when the fishermen came in with their boats. Our next destination was Boulders Bay where we walked through the reserve to see the African Penguins. We then drove through spectacular scenery along the coast and then headed inland through fynbos to the Cape of Good Hope Nature Reserve. We stopped for Angulate Tortoise a couple of times, explored the fynbos for orchids and other plants and then headed to Buffel's Bay for our lunch. There were Sacred ibis, gulls and ostrich here. Another stop to see a tortoise also produced *Cullumia squarosa*, an oil beetle and a *Pelargonium*. A little further on we stopped again to photograph a magnificent plant of *Mimetes fimbriifolius* also produced *Diastella divaricata* and *Pelargonium psammophilum*. Walking along the road we also saw *Erica cerinthoides*, with large red flowers, an *Aristea* sp. *Micranthus junceus* and *Chironia baccifera*.

Our journey had by now taken us to Cape Point, and a little later to Dias beach from where we could observe the Cape of Good Hope. Frank then drove us to Olifantsbos bay, where we were lucky to see flocks of Ostrich, Bontebok, Sacred Ibis, White-breasted cormorants and gulls. We also found a good colony of *Cotyledon orbicularis* growing by the roadside. Our last stop was to look for *Bonatea speciosa* and we successfully found a flowering specimen. We drove back to our hotel via the spectacular scenery of Chapman's Peak Drive, stopping to take photographs.

Birds for the day. Kelp gull, Sacred ibis, Hadada ibis, White-breasted cormorant, Cape cormorant, Ostrich, Cape sugar-bird, Pied crow, Grey heron, African penguin, Wagtail, Cape spur-fowl, Helmeted guinea-fowl

Insects were Oil beetle, Red milkweed locust. Others included

Rock Hyrax, Grey Mongoose, Angulate Tortoise, Bontebok, Cape fur-seal, Chacma Baboon

Photos by Elisabeth. Fledging Fiscal Shrikes, Oil Beetle, Garden Acraea





Erica cerinthoides, Chasma baboons, Frank, our intrepid leader, Phaenocoma prolifera, African penguins, Bonatea speciosa

December 3rd. We left Cape Town this morning, our final destination being Greyton. We were to make several stops to explore, with a number of orchids as target species. However many other interesting plant species were also found. We drove through the townships surrounding Cape Town and eventually reached the sea again, where we made a roadside stop to see *Leucospermum bolusii*, but also finding *Helichrysum retortum*.

We continued on our way stopping to see *Satyrium hallackii* and also finding *Monopsis lutea*. Some members of the party spotted a Hyrax. We then entered the Brodie Links Nature Reserve at Pringle Bay and started our search for *Disa venusta*. Many other plants were found on the way, such as 3 species of *Aspalathus*, *Merciera leptoloba*, *Erica corifolia*, *Diastella thymelaeoides*, *Leucospermum hypophyllocarpodendron* and the beautiful little fern *Schizaea pectinata*. When we had gained some height we started to find the spikes of the blue *Disa venusta* in perfect condition.

We then descended back to our vehicle and continued towards Greyton, stopping at a recently burned area to see what was flowering (Highlands road). The fire had stimulated hundreds of two species of *Watsonia* to flower, as well as other bulbous plants. We found *Micranthus junceus*, *Pelargonium incarnatum*, *Moraea ramossisima*, *Bobartia indica*, *Gladiolus carneus*, *Thereianthus bracteolatus*, *Lanaria lanata* and the two orchid target species, *Disa cornuta* and *Disa tripetaloides*. Going to our final destination of Greyton we passed through fields cultivated with pulses, seeing many Helmeted Guinea-fowl and also several Blue Cranes. Other birds for the day included Rock kestrel, Spur-winged goose and Malachite Sunbird. Overnight in Greyton



Disa tripetaloides, *Pelargonium incarnatum*, *Watsonia*, *Disa venusta*, *Adenandra uniflora*,
Thereianthus bracteolata



Disa atricapilla, *Disa venusta*, *Acrolophia ustulata*, *Satyrrium rhynchanthum*, *Pachites bodkinii*, *Disa filicornis*

December 4th. We set off early and drove for about an hour to the town of Napier where we had breakfast and then set off to explore the Mount Napier Reserve. We drove to the highest point and started looking. Two beautiful orchids were seen straight away, in perfect condition, *Disa atricapilla* and *Disa bivalvata*. We continued our exploration finding *Disa cornuta*, *Disa cylindrica*, *Satyrrium rhynchanthum*, *Evotella carnos*a and finally the unusual *Pachites bodkinii*.

Many other interesting plants were also seen, including the many colour forms of *Moraea lurida*, *Lobelia jasinoides*, *Merciera azurea* and *Aulax umbellata*. Finally we found the diminutive black coloured *Acrolophia ustulata*. We then moved to another location where we had our lunch, also finding *Agapanthus africanus*, *Gladiolus carneus* and the rare *Codonorhiza micrantha*.

We then moved on to another location and stopped when we located a *Disa venusta*. We explored the area finding more, all in perfect condition. . Other plants seen included *Ixia stricta*, *Erica pulchella*, *Orphium frutescens*, *Leucadendron platyspermum*, *Paranomus abrotanifolius*, and *Ornithogalum dubium*. We then drove the long distance back to Greyton. Overnight in Greyton.

December 5th. Bright and clear as we started the day with an early morning walk to a nearby nature reserve with the aim of finding *Disa harveyana*.

We walked for about a km, gaining 120 meters until we reached the plateau and found our target species *Disa harveyana*. We returned to the town for our breakfast and set off on a good dirt road, stopping to watch Blue Cranes in the fields. two Yellow-billed kites flew overhead. The craggy peaks of the Riviersonderend mountains followed us until they petered out in the plain. The countryside we passed through was a mixture of cultivation, cereal fields, vineyards and grazing land. We stopped at a petrol station for refuelling, picked up our lunch and drove to the base of the Sleeping Beauty mountain, where we had our picnic. We then walked up, passing a specimen of *Disa racemosa* with one closed flower until we found *Bartholina etheliae*, the diminutive but very beautiful orchid. Coming down we found a patch of *Utricularia bisquamata*.

We continued our way towards the town of George, veering off to go through the mountains via the Outeniqua pass and to reach our destination in the village of Herold, where we were going to spend the next 3 nights.



Disa harveyana, Utricularia bisquamata, Erica vestita, Bartholina etheliae, Erica versicolor

December 6th. A bright and clear day as we headed to explore the nearby passes. Our first location was about 30 minutes away, and we parked and then picked up a trail. The slopes were full of the light orange-coloured *Watsonia fourcadei*, which was particularly attractive to sugar-birds. Soon after the start of the walk we found the beautiful parasitic plant, *Harveya capensis*. Two species of *Erica* were present, the very conspicuous *Erica densiflora*, with large tubular red flowers, and *Erica lanata*, a smaller plant with small lanate flowers. A new *Pelargonium* was also present, *P. cordifolium* with large flowers. King Proteas were also here, in perfect flower. We started finding our first orchids, *Bartholina etheliae*, *Ceratandra globosa*, *Ceratandra grandiflora*, *Acrolophia lunata*, *Pterygodium acutifolium* and *Disa cylindrica*. A beautiful *Erica*, *Erica densifolia* was common on the site, as well as the less evident *Erica lanata*. Also present in perfect flower were plants of King Protea, dotted over the hillside. A single plant of a pink *Romulea* was spotted by Elisabeth.

Having explored the hillside we returned to our accommodation for lunch and then drove to another location and started exploring. We found *Disa hians*, and *Brachycorythis macowaniana* straight away and then *Disa cylindrica*, *Satyrium stenopetalum*, *Disa reticulata*, *Evotella carnosa*, *Bartholina etheliae* and much higher up *Disa sagittalis*. We returned to our vehicle and drove a short distance looking for more *Disa sagittalis*, until we found a good population growing on the rock face.

New plants seen today included *Phylica curvifolia*, *Helichrysum felinum*, *Helichrysum teretifolium*, *Helichrysum petiolare*, *Osteospermum corymbosum*, *Chironia melampyrifolia*, and *Pelargonium cordifolium*



Acrolophia lunata, Satyrium stenopetalum, ibid, Ceratandra globosa, Ceratandra grandiflora, Disa reticulata, Pterygodium acutifolium, Disa hians



Holothrix schlechteriana, Eulophia speciosa

December 7th. A change of scenery today as we headed for the town of Wilderness to visit the Garden Route National Park. We reached the town and continued beyond, to the coast. The vegetation here was quite different from the fynbos we had encountered so far and consisted of tall trees and bushes. This was due to the much higher rainfall through the year that the area receives.

We entered the park, where a number of mature Southern Pines, *Podocarpus* species were growing. We then picked up a trail following the river and begun to explore. We were looking for subtropical orchids that grew on trees. We succeed in finding 3 flowering species, *Cyrtorchis arcuata*, *Mystacidium capense* and *Tridactyle bicaudata*.

It was a good day for birds too. We saw Chorister Robin-chat, Southern boubou, Southern grey-headed sparrow, Fork-tailed Drongo and Knysna Turaco.

We then exited the park and drove a short distance to Goukamma Reserve on the coast. The road ended at a beach with huge waves breaking on to the shore. We then started on the return journey, scanning the roadside for *Eulophia speciosa* and succeeding in finding several specimens scattered on the verge. We also found a couple of specimens of *Holothrix schlechteriana*, all in good condition.

Plants for the day included Cape Chestnut, *Calodendron capense*, *Plectranthus fruticosus*, *Carissa bispinosa*, *Aloe arborescens*, *Grewia occidentalis*, *Dietes* sp., *Chironia baccifera*, *Delosperma litorale* and *Ornithogalum brachiatum*. A Bushbuck was also seen at close quarters.



Mystacidium capense by Iain

December 8th. A bright and warm day as we left our accommodation and headed for the Swartberg mountains, part of the Cape Fold Mountains of Southern Africa. We had now entered the Little Karoo, an area of semi-desert caused by the rain shadow of the mountain. The dry scrub was dominated by succulents and sclerophyllous shrubs. We made our first roadside stop to see the extraordinary *Tylecodon cacalioides* and *T. paniculatus* as well as other succulents such as *Euphorbia mauritanica* and *Cotyledon orbiculata*.

We continued on our way, now climbing higher towards the Swartberg Pass. We stopped to take photos of the landscape and found a small beautiful *Pelargonium* species. When we reached the pass we disembarked and began our search for orchids, eventually finding several specimens of *Disa multifida*, which was going to be the highlight of the day. We also found two other orchids, *Acrolophia capensis* and *Satyrium eurycalcaratum*.

From the top of the pass we continued down the other side, to descend to the bottom of an immense

gorge with amazing geological formations. The habitat was again dominated by dry scrub and *Aloe ferox* was prominent on the slopes. We stopped by a small stream and explored, finding *Crassula rupestris*. We started on the return journey, stopping to see *Syncarpha milleflora* and *Protea eximia*.

Frank spotted a small Berg Adder and we stopped to take photographs. A family of klipspringer was seen on the road down and stayed long enough for us to photograph. We also saw the bright red *Cyrtanthus angustifolius*.

Other mammals for the day were Baboon and Springbok. Birds for the day included White stock, African hoopoe, Lesser double-collared sunbird, Laughing doves, Red-winged starling, Cape sparrow and Cape wagtail. Steve photographed a Protea emperor butterfly. We also saw Rock agama and Cape girdled lizard.



Disa multifia*, *Cyrtanthus angustifolius

December 9th. Windy and partly cloudy but very hot today as we set off for our next destination of Barrydale. We drove through Little Karoo habitat of dry scrub, stopping at the roadside to see plants. Our first stops were to see Leopard and Angulate tortoises that were crossing the road. Around us were the amazing Enon geological formations of red sandstone. We found *Portulacaria afra* in flower and a new *Tylecodon*, *T. wallichii*. *Tylecodon paniculatus* was also very common, particularly on slopes near Barrydale. Clumps of *Euphorbia heptagona* were also common, but had finished flowering. A few flowers were left on *Polygala myrtifolia pinifolia*. We reached our destination of Barrydale in time for lunch, and then later in the afternoon we visited a horticulturalist specialising in South African orchids, Hildegard Crous, who showed us her collection of *Disa* and explained the techniques she uses to grow the orchids.

Mammals for the day: Cape mountain Zebra, Springbok, Black wildebeest
Birds for the day: Paradise flycatcher, Cape Sparrow, Cape Wagtail, Laughing dove
Others: Rain spider on its cocoon



Klipspringer by Iain

December 10th. Before starting on the return journey to Cape Town we set off to explore part of the Langeberg mountains. We had now returned to fynbos habitat rather than karoo. We climbed higher up on a dirt road and stopped to explore a burned area. A very pretty *Watsonia* was growing in profusion, as was a pink *Tritonia* species and a yellow *Bobartia*. *Micranthus junceus* was forming patches of blue. We then continued on our way until we saw the tall spikes of *Disa racemosa*. There were many plants in excellent condition. *Wachendorfia thyrsiflora* was growing there. Another stop a little further produced *Disa bivalvata* and *Agapanthus africanus*. We then returned to Barrydale, had lunch, picked up our luggage and started the journey back to Cape Town, passing through the rugged landscape of the Limietberg mountains

December 11th. The wind that was raging yesterday abated so it was decided to go Table Mountain.

We took the cable car to the top and then started exploring. A number of yellow members of the Asteraceae were in flower, *Hymenolepis crithmoides* forming large mounds everywhere. Other Asteraceae included *Senecio rigidus*, *Osmitopsis asteriscoides* and *Helichrysum grandiflorum*. A large-flowered red *Erica*, *E. plukenetii* was quite common. *Erica coccinea* (green-flowered) was also present.

Eventually the group split in two, Frank taking a number of people down a rather difficult track, whilst Yiannis and a number of other people stayed on the flat part of the mountain. *Disa cornuta*, *Disa harveyana*, *Disa vaginata*, *Evotella carnosus* and *Holothrix villosa* were seen by everybody, whilst *Disa longicornu* and *Disa bracteata* were seen by the people who went on the trek. An interesting plant of the Menyanthaceae, *Villarsia manningiana* was seen by Elisabeth. Other plants seen during the day included *Struthiola ciliaris*, *Moraea tripetala*, *Gladiolus monticola*, *Watsonia tabularis* and *Tritoniopsis unguiculata*. Other wildlife seen included two lizards, Black Girdled Lizard and Western Crag lizard. Yiannis and Graham photographed a Table Mountain Beauty butterfly.



Satyrium eurycalcaratum, Disa racemosa and Table Mountain Beauty by Graham



Erica plukenetii, Disa harveyana, Disa vaginata, Orthochilus aculeatus, Moraea tripetala, Watsonia tabularis, Evtotella carnosia



Pseudocordylus microlepidotus, Cordylus niger

December 12th. Our destination today were parts of the Kogelberg Nature Reserve, starting with the Harold Porter Botanical Gardens. We stopped at Sir Lowry's mountain pass to take photographs. A bright pink plant on the hillside proved to be *Erica taxifolia*. At another stop we found *Gladiolus carneus*, *Monopsis lutea*, *Disa cornuta* and many *Micranthus junceus*.

We arrived and walked through the gardens. *Watsonia angusta* was flowering in the beds, as was *Orphium frutescens*. At the end of the walk we searched the surrounding cliffs for *Disa uniflora*. We found two plants in flower high up, the red colour helping to see them for quite a distance. Our task fulfilled we continued to the Kogelberg Nature Reserve where we had our picnic and then set off to look for more orchids. However the rain that was visible far away caught up with us and we were forced to retreat. It was clear that there would be no quick end to the rain, so set off on the return journey. At some point we had to retrace our steps, and as the rain had brought down many boulders on to the road we had return via a different route. As it was now dinner time we went straight to an interesting restaurant and then to our hotel

December 13th. It was a late flight departure so we visited the park near our hotel for some birdwatching and then went to Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden to see the collections there.