



Cape orchids 2023 trip report

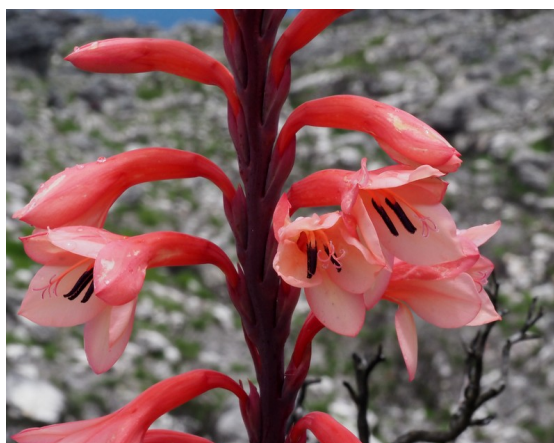
Frank Gaude and Yiannis Christofides

December 1st. With guests having arrived on earlier days it was decided to make use of the time available and start the tour early. The weather was dry and warm. Frank drove to the Silvermine Nature Reserve, which forms a part of the Table Mountain National Park, for a first introduction to the Flora of South Africa. Some species seen included *Athanasia crithmifolia*, *Senecio rigidus*, *Lobelia pinifolia*, *Chironia baccifera*, *Drosera cuneifolia*, *Erica multumbellifera* and *Ixia dubia*. Two orchids were also seen, *Eulophia (Acrolophia) bolusii* and *Disa cornuta* and several species of *Pelargonium*, *P. cucullatum*, *P. capitatum* and *P. myrrhifolium*.

December 2nd. It was decided to go up to Table Mountain earlier in the holiday as many species were already in flower and might go over if left until the end of the holiday. The weather soon cleared as we ascended to the top. The large scented bushes of *Hymenolepis crithmoides* were immediately very impressive as they dominated the landscape. *Erica plukenetii* with large red flowers was also common. Red-winged starlings were everywhere, waiting for scraps of food from the visitors. We initially walked on the flat area finding *Disa vaginata*, *Acrolophia bolusii*, *Disa bracteata*, *Disa obtusa*, and then descended to a burnt area to the east. *Watsonia tabularis* was common, flowering with *Aristea capitata* and *Moraea ramossisima*. We found some more of the above orchids and also one specimen of *Disa ophrydae*. We were also very taken with the plants of *Drosera cuneifolia*, some of which were beautifully in flower.



Aristea



Watsonia tabularis



Eviotella carnososa



Disa vaginata

December 3rd. We left Hout Bay early for our journey to our next destination of the town of Greyton. We drove through the first wine producing district of Costantia and through the outskirts of Cape Town to the Rondevlei reserve. This is a wetland area with walkways and many hides where one could observe birds. We saw Small Grebe, Cape Cormorant, Purple Gallinule and Spotted Pigeon. We were lucky to see the endemic Arum Lily Reed Frog and after much searching we found a Cape dwarf chameleon, *Bradypodion pumilum*, much appreciated by everybody.



Bradypodion pumilum



Orphium frutescens



Disa atricapilla



Satyrium hallackii

We then drove through the Cape Fold Mountains through Sir Lowry's pass and over to the other side where we picked up lunch. We then drove to Betty's Bay where we saw magnificent specimens of *Satyrium hallackii* in perfect flower. There was also *Monopsis lutea* growing in the verge. We also visited a nearby site where we found *Disa atricapilla* growing in a marshy area with many other interesting plants. We saw *Lobelia coronopifolia*, *Roella* sp. *Berzelia* sp. *Metalasia* sp. and *Leucospermum hypophyllocarpodendron*. Our final stop to see another orchid, *Disa tripetaloides*, which we found growing on the banks of a little stream. On the walk to the site we also saw *Thereianthus bracteolatus* and *Lanaria lanata*. Finally we drove through the wheat-producing areas of Overberg to get to our final destination of Greyton.

December 4th. We set off early as we had a number of new species on our list to see today. The weather was mostly sunny and warm. From Greyton we headed towards Napier though a wheat-producing area but also with remnants of fynbos habitat. We had distant views of antelope and Blue crane and then a better view of the crane. At Napier we took a dirt road through an area that was regenerating from fires in recent years. Prominent among the fynbos plants was *Phaenocoma prolifera* with its pink flowers. We explored the area, making a number of stops and finding the following plants during the day: *Disa bilvata*, *Disa cylindrica*, *Disa cornuta*, *Eulophia aculeata*, *Metalasia erubescens*, *Disa racemosa*, *Lobelia jasminoides*, *Moraea lurida*, *Bobartia indica* and two specimens of the beautiful *Satyrium rhynchanthum*. Travelling and stopping produced *Disa filicornis*, the small pink *Ixia stricta*, *Micranthus* sp. and *Eulophia capensis*, albeit with only one flower. Some magnificent King proteas, *Protea cynaroides* forced us to stop once more.

We continued to the private Sandberg reserve where we found our target species of *Disa venusta* but also seeing a number of other interesting flowers such as a *Brunia laevis*, *Spatalla sp.* and *Erica rhopalantha*. We stopped once more for another orchid, *Disa multifida*, finding a number of specimens in good flower. Other plants in flower included the bright red *Tritoniopsis antholyza*.



Chrysoritis pyroeis



Disa bivalvata



Disa filicornis



Disa multifida



Disa venusta



Cyrtanthus



Protea cynaroides



Micranthus

December 5th. Having packed our bugs to leave for our next destination of Herold near George we first visited the local Greyton Nature Reserve. We walked up a narrow path towards our orchid site, finding *Ornithogalum thyrsoides* and *Dianthus caespitosus* on the way. We found several plants of *Disa harveyana*. On our return journey we found *Drosera trinerva*, *Asclepias crispa*, *Ixia polystachya* and *Brunia intermedia*.

We passed through the town of Swellendam, the fourth oldest town in South Africa where we looked at the typical early Dutch architecture. We continued our long journey east towards George, making stops for refreshments. Near George we looked and found *Eulophia speciosa* and then continued through the Outeniqua pass to Herold. The banks through the pass were brightly coloured by hundreds of orange Watsonias. The pass was covered in cloud, which cleared once we were over the top and down the other side. We were now in drier habitat with some succulents on the road banks such as *Cotyledon orbicularis* in flower.



Disa harveyana



Eulophia speciosa

December 6th. We set off from our hotel to the Montague pass via a dirt road. The road was blocked higher up because of rains in the winter, so we stopped and walked. *Disa sagittalis* was in flower on the steep road banks. We also saw the strange *Berzelia lanuginosa* a member of the Bruniaceae family, endemic to South Africa. Species belonging to the Bruniaceae are heath-like shrubs. They have small, hard, scaly leaves that are alternate but regularly set and overlapping. A distinct character is the minute black tip of the leaves when these are young. A butterfly, *Acraea horta*, was much attracted by the flowers of a bramble.

We then returned to our vehicle and went to the Cradock pass where we searched a hillside for more orchids. Here we found *Disa hians*, *Satyrium acuminatum*, *Disa cylindrica*, *Brachycorythis macowaniana* and *Disa reticulata*. We left the site and returned to Herold where we visited a private nature reserve. Here we saw more *Disa hians*, *Eulophia cochlearis*, *Ornithogalum dubium*, *Protea aurea* and *Protea eximia*.



Acrolophia lunata



Disa hians

We returned to our hotel for lunch and then set off once more to the Outeniqua pass where we set off on the path that joins this and Montague pass. Here we found a few plants of *Bartholina etheliae* and *Acrolophia lunata*. We also saw *Protea cynaroides*, the King Protea, *Mimetes cucullatus* and *Erica densifolia*. We returned to our hotel in the early afternoon.

December 7th. A warm and sunny day 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*.

The area hosts some interesting birds and we particularly wanted to see the Knysna Turaco. As we on the way back on the trail we saw the bird briefly and the flash of red as it flew off. We also saw Chorister Robin-chat. We had our picnic in a different area of the reserve and we were very lucky to see two more Knysa Turaco at close quarters as they fed on a wild fig tree.

We then exited the park and drove to the town of Knysa where some members of the party looked at the town whilst the rest drove further on to another reserve where we saw *Disperis lindleyana*. We then returned to Knysa, picked up everybody and drove back to Herold. Plants for the day included Cape Chestnut, *Calodendrum capense*, *Plectranthus fruticosus*, *Streptocarpus* sp., and *Ornithogalum brachiatum*. A Bushbuck was also seen at close quarters.



Disperis lindleyana



Cyrtorchis arcuata

December 8th. Bright and warm as we left our accommodation and headed for the Swartberg mountains, part of the Cape Fold Mountains of Southern Africa. In the distance on the left we could see the Outeniqua range. We stopped to see a large bush that was common on the roadside with inflated seed pods, *Nymania capensis*. On the outskirts of Oudtshoorn we made a small detour to see an ostrich farm and the various articles that are produced from the birds. We then continued on our way, now climbing higher towards the Swartberg Pass.



Disa filicornis



Disa racemosa

We stopped to see *Protea eximia* and then continued until the top of the pass. We disembarked and began our search for orchids, eventually finding several specimens of *Satyrium eurycalcaratum* and *Disa bolusiana*. Later we saw another *Satyrium*, *S. acuminatum*. Frank then dropped Yiannis and Mary at the start of the walk and took the rest of the party back to the hotel. The walk proved quite fruitful with several orchids being seen, *Disa bolusiana*, *Satyrium eurycalcaratum*, *Disa filicornis* and *Disa neglecta*. Frank then return to fetch us back to the hotel. On the way down we saw the bright red *Cyrtanthus angustifolius*.



Erica cerinthoides



Satyrium eurycalcaratum

December 9th. Clody and rainy this morning, so we decided to spend some time looking at the Cango Caves, a World Heritage site. The Cango Caves are located in Precambrian limestones at the foothills of the Swartberg range. Cave paintings and artifacts indicate the caves were used throughout prehistory over a long period during the Middle and Later Stone Ages. We then set off for our next destination of Barrydale. We drove through Little Karoo habitat of dry scrub, stopping at the roadside to see plants. We took the scenic route using a dirt road and soon after saw two male Nyala antelopes and then half a dozen giraffes with some female Nyala. We also stopped for *Cotyledon orbicularis*, a common plant in this habitat, which was in flower. Later we also *Tylecodon paniculatus*, springbok and hyrax. We were soon going through the amazing Enon Geological Formation formed along the southern section of South Africa during the break up of Gondwana when there was widespread erosion of rocks comprising the Cape Fold Belt. It is considered to be Late Jurassic to Early Cretaceous in age. The sedimentary rock of the Enon comprises several different types of coarse, poorly sorted pebble to cobble thickly-bedded conglomerate deposits. We stopped to see the formations and also found *Portulacaria afra*, *Karoo violet (Aptosimum)* and the last flowers of *Polygala myrtifolia pinifolia*. Finally we saw two Oryx quite close to the road. We reached our hotel in Barrydale and after a rest went out for dinner.

December 10th. After checking out of our hotel 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. We then had a coffee stop and set off on the return journey back to Cape Town, passing through the rugged landscape of the Limietberg mountains



Disa uniflora



Day 11. Our destination today were parts of the Kogelberg Nature Reserve. We drove through Sir Lowry's mountain pass and over to the other side. We drove through the reserve stopping to check for orchids at a site which had proved fruitful last year, but none were found. We saw a male rock agama in bright breeding colours. We arrived the Harold Porter Botanical Reserve and walked through the gardens. *Erica mammosa*, *Watsonia angusta*, *Leucospermum conocarpodendron*, *Leucospermum cordifolium*, *Erica sessiliflora*, *Ophrium frutescens* and *Scabiosa incisa* were in flower in the beds. At the end of the walk we searched the surrounding cliffs for *Disa uniflora*. We found one plants in flower high up, the red colour helping to see them for quite a distance. Our task fulfilled we had our picnic and then set off for the beach where we saw the penguins, Egyptian geese and a pair of breeding African oystercatchers. We then drove to Kleinmond and walked through coastal habitat where we saw *Lachenalia peersii*, *Monopsis lutea*, *Micranthus sp*, and other coastal halophytic plants. We then drove back to our hotel in Cape town



Cape penguins



Chacma baboons

December 12th . A sunny but windy day as we set off to explore the Cape peninsula. Our first stop was at Muizenberg, False Bay where we walked near the sea and saw the colourful beach huts and then at Kalk Bay, where the Cape Fur Seals were 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 and then to Buffel's Bay for our lunch. We stopped to see troops of Baboons feeding by the roadside. Our journey had by now taken us to Cape Point and Frank then drove us to Olifantsbos bay, where we were lucky to see flocks of Ostrich, Bontebok, Sacred Ibis, White-breasted cormorants and gulls. There was *Cotyledon orbicularis* and *Euphorbia caput-medusa* growing in the scrub. We drove back, initially on the coastal road, with spectacular scenery.

December 13th. Departure day, with transfers to the airport for the flights back home.

Disa uniflora													X
Disperis lindleyana							X						
Eulophia aculeata				X									
Eulophia cochlearis						X							
Eulophia speciosa					X								
Evotella carnososa		X											
Holothrix sp		X											
Holothrix villosa ssp. conesta	X				X								
Mystacidium capense							X						
Satyrium acuminatum							X	X					
Satyrium eurycalcaratum								X					
Satyrium hallackii			X										
Satyrium rhynchanthum				X								X	
Tridactyle bicaudata							X						

	Greenwings Orchids of the Cape plant list	
	Dicotyledons	
2	Apiaceae	
	Notobubum galbanum	day 1
3	Apocynaceae	
	Asclepias crispa	day 5
4	Asteraceae	
	Athanasia crithmifolia	day 1
	Edmondia sesamoides	day 1
	Helichrysum sp	every day
	Hymenolepis crithmifolia	day 2
	Phaenocoma prolifera	day 4
	Senecio rigidus	day 1,2
	Syncarpha vestita	day 1
	Boraginaceae	
	Lobostemon argenteus	day 4
5	Bruniaceae	
	Berzelia lanuginosa	day 6
	Brunia laevis	day 4
6	Brassicaceae	
	Heliophila linearis	day 12
7	Campanulaceae	
	Lobelia jasinoides	day 4
	Lobelia pinifolia	day 1
	Monopsis lutea	day 3
	Roella ciliata	day 4
	Roella incurva	day 3
8	Caryophyllaceae	
	Dianthus caespitosus	day 5
9	Crassulaceae	
	Cotyledcaeson orbiculata	day 5,9
	Tylecodon paniculatus	day 9
10	Didiereaceae	
	Portulacaria afra	day 9
11	Droseraceae	
	Drosera cuneifolia	day 2

12	Ericaceae	
	<i>Erica cerinthoides</i>	day 8,12
	<i>Erica densifolia</i>	day 6
	<i>Erica multumbellifera</i>	day 1
	<i>Erica plukenetii</i>	day 2
	<i>Erica ropalantha</i>	day 4
13	Euphorbiaceae	
	<i>Euphorbia caput-medusa</i>	day 12
14	Fabaceae	
	<i>Acacia karoo</i>	day 10
	<i>Psoralea pinnata</i>	day 1
15	Gentianaceae	
	<i>Chironia baccifera</i>	day 1
	<i>Orphium frutescens</i>	day 3
16	Geraniaceae	
	<i>Pelargonium capitatum</i>	day 1
	<i>Pelargonium cucullatum</i>	day 1
	<i>Pelargonium myrrhifolium</i>	day 1
18	Lamiaceae	
	<i>Leonotis leonurus</i>	day 3
	<i>Plectranthus eclonus</i>	day 7
	<i>Salvia aurea</i>	day 2
19	Lanariaceae	
	<i>Lanaria lanata</i>	day 3
24	Orobanchaceae	
	<i>Harveya capensis</i>	day 6
27	Polygalaceae	
	<i>Polygala myrtifolia pinifolia</i>	day 9
28	Proteaceae	
	<i>Leucodendron carpodendrum</i>	day 1
	<i>Leucospermum cordiifolium</i>	day 3
	<i>Leucospermum hypophyllocarpodendron</i>	day 3
	<i>Mimetes fimbriifolius</i>	day 1
	<i>Protea aurea</i>	day 6
	<i>Protea cynaroides</i>	day 4,6
	<i>Protea eximia</i>	day 6,8

30	Rutaceae	
	Caledendron capense	day 7
31	Scrophulariaceae	
	Aptosimum sp.	day 9
	Pseudoselago spuria	day 2
32	Thymelaceae	
	Struthiola sp.	day 2
	Monocotyledons	
33	Amaryllidaceae	
	Cyrtanthus angustifolius	day 8
34	Asparagaceae	
	Albuca sp.	day 1
	Ornithogalum dubium	day 6
	Ornithogalum brachiatum	day 7
	Haemodoraceae	
	Wachendorfia paniculata	day 1
35	Iridaceae	
	Aristea capitata	dy 2
	Bobartia indica	day 2
	Gladiolus carneus	day 2
	Gladiolus pappei	day 2
	Ixia dubia	day 1
	Ixia stricta	day 4
	Micranthus alopecuroides/junceus	day 4
	Moraea lurida	day 4
	Moraea ramossisima	day 2
	Thereianthus bracteolatus	day 3
	Tritoniopsis antholyza	day 4
	Tritoniopsis unguicularis	day 2
	Watsonia borbonica	day 2
	Watsonia tabularis	day 2
36	Lanariaceae	
	Lanaria lanata	day 3
37	Liliaceae	
	Aloe ferrox	day 5