



Solihull & District Orchid Society

Spring Show Saturday 20th April

The spring show on Easter Saturday is rushing towards us and preparations are well underway.

There are still a few spaces on the various rotas so if you are coming to the next meeting and feel able to add your name to any of the rotas or provide any of the refreshments we would be pleased if you added your name.

If you are not coming to the meeting but wish to help please let Malcolm know.

We are also in need of more Tombola prizes so if you can bring anything to the March meeting it will be much appreciated.

Coach Trip to Burnham Nurseries

18 members have now signed up for the trip to Burnham's on Sunday 11th August so if you haven't yet booked your space look out for the sheet which will-- be circulating at the next meeting but if you can't make the next meeting and would like to join us for the Trip please let Malcolm know. I have now offered places to the Central Orchid Society so seats may soon be limited

Next Meeting



On Saturday March 2nd we welcome Celia Wright who will be giving a talk titled "Orchids in Lesotho - the Land of the Blue Mountains".

Celia is an active member of the Cheshire & North Wales OS, the Hardy Orchid Society and is responsible for the BOC Speakers List.

A much travelled and knowledgeable orchid enthusiast so this is not to be missed.

BOC Photo Competition

If you haven't voted for your favourite photographs time is running out. Go to www.british-orchid-council.info and go to the pull down menu "Photo Competition" and run the current Gallery Slide Show. Once you have selected your favourites you can go to "View Current Photo Gallery" and take a more detailed look at those pictures you have selected.



All you have to do is select your favourite 10 and send them to Malcolm (laeliaM@aol.com). The date for sending your votes to Malcolm is Friday 23rd February so please send them as soon as possible.



You can follow Solihull & District Orchid Society on Facebook and Twitter



Chairman: Malcolm Moodie
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If you have any pictures or information you would like to put on our website please email: LaeliaM@aol.com or copy and pictures for newsletter: ballm1@mac.com
Society email address: www.solihullorchidsociety.co.uk

Flowers of Spain including Orchids

Dr. John Page

John started by extolling the virtue of the one year delay of his talk as in between he has been to Vercors in south east France and has included his findings in this talk.

John started by showing us the northern side of Spanish mountains with a focus on alpine plants. In the East Pyrenees it is very dry but on the western side very wet. He also mentioned a few times that many plants growing there are very suitable garden plants for growing in the UK. However, many Spanish people regularly dig up plants for their own gardens which appears not to be punishable, in any way.

Some of the plants were growing on rocky surfaces embedded between the cracks with water running down the cliffs in the ridges and growing in abundance, such as *Lilium pyrenaicum* and *Ranonda myconi*. He also showed a very interesting *Gentiana pyrenaica* which is parasitic on grass and has a glossy finish. Other plants of note were *Saxifraga longifolia* - growing on limestone cliffs that are an indicator of some orchid colonies and *Primula latifolia* (subsp. *pyrenaica*).

In the damp meadows of Central Pyrenees he showed *Crocus nudiflorus*, which has no leaves and flowers in the autumn.

In the north the Picos de Europa is a very mountainous landscape with *Gentiana verna* (very common in the UK), *Geranium cinereum*, *Linaria alpina*, *Lithodora* and *Erythronium dens-canis*. In addition, *Merendera montana* was covering hillsides growing in their millions, but growing very wet and found next to Marsh orchids. Other plants shown such as *Carlina acaulis*, *Lilium martagon*, *Dianthus* and *Helianthemum* are limestone indicator plants which means orchids may be growing nearby.

At 6-8 thousand feet he saw *Rosa pendulina*, *Androsace lanuginosa* (blushes red when pollinated but otherwise yellow), *Asperula pyrenaica* growing in cracks, *Sedum album* producing tapestries of flower, *Iris latifolia* - a Christmas Iris sold in the UK and 2 *Narcissus* species cyclamineus and *bulbocodium* which produce beautiful hybrids. Just like tulips from Middle East and Asia, all *Narcissus* have spread worldwide from Spain.



In the Toledo Mountains in woodland growing conditions he found *Narcissus cantabricus* and

bulbocodium growing in deep leaf mold, in tens of thousands. While in La Mancha which is in the middle of Spain, a landscape with wonderful windmills you can find enormous size *Crocus serotinus*, *Crocus nevadensis* in vast numbers and *Digitalis obscura*.

The Serrania de Ronda is a place for orchids growing in very dry conditions such as *Orchis italica* - the naked man orchid growing between *Narcissus assonus* and *Iris planifolia*.

Around the Southern Mediterranean *Narcissus hedraeanthus* is seen growing in both wet and dry conditions, *Clematis cirrhosa* and *Fritillaria lusitanica* was found to be extremely variable in petal marbling.

In Andalusia there were stream beds, coming down the mountains in this very plain and rugged landscape but in the stream beds *Ranunculus aquatilis* was regularly found.

In the Sierra Nevada which is 11,000ft above sea level we find unusual thyme - *Halimium atriplicifolium* along with *Scilla peruviana* growing in sand dunes and the poisonous *Nerium oleander*.

In Cape St Vincent he found a lovely *Anemone palmata*.

During John's visits to France and Spain he has seen many unstable and variable forms of orchids which is due to them being only 15 million years old - not like conifers that are 300 million years old and very stable.



The orchids he mentioned were:

Ophrys apifera and (var. *chlorantha*) is the most commonly found orchid in Spain, especially where limestone and poor soils are present.

Anacamptis coriophora - the bug orchid which smells of squashed bed bugs.

Orchis collina - the hill orchid grows in poor grassland and woodland edges with its seeds known to move from Portugal to Iran.

Orchis fuciflora - a rare find.

Platanthera bifolia - the lesser butterfly orchid.

Red Helleborine is very common and mostly found in central and eastern Spain.

Limodorum abortivum is very tall, grows on dead matter and is very rare - also known as the violet birds orchid.

Ophrys insectifera - The fly orchid, found in open woodland and likes limestone soils.

Serapias parviflora - The tongue orchid which has, of late, been spotted in North Devon as winds are known to blow seed from as far as the Loire Valley in France.

For orchids like *Ophrys mammosa*, *O. umbilicata*, *O. phryganae*, *O. fusca*, *O.*

italica and *O. vernixia* - John has a theory that their showy leaves are designed by nature as a "love handles" for the pollinator.

Orchis mascula - is known to have been used in earlier times to determine a baby's sex and smells of cat's urine.

Gymnadenia conopsea - was found growing in full sun but damp soils and growing in large masses and was the first type of orchid John has seen in vast numbers during his visits to Spain.

Ophrys tenthredinifera - was found in lots of colour forms due to natural hybridising.

John also stated that many orchids seen are also regularly found in UK: Such as, *Anacamptis pyramidalis*, *Orchis morio*, *Anacamptis laxiflora* and *Anacamptis papilionese*.

In Vercors in South East France - John found in total 64 different species of orchids in a small area (not much bigger than Rotherham) and many natural hybrids. This area is well known for dramatic landscapes and notoriously bad winds and bad weather, covered in shallow turf on bed rock and limestone. Some images shown were:

Orchis mascula, *O. militaris*, *O. purpurea*, *Dactylorhiza fuchsia* in various forms, *D. sambucina* in two different forms, Narrow Leaved Helleborine, *Orchis pallens*, *pallens*, *Orchis morio*, *Ophrys gresivaudanica*, *Ophrys drumana* - endemic only to this area, *Neotinia tridentata*, *N. ustulata* and *Platanthera bifolia* - visible on the bedrock from the roadside and in large numbers.



Cypripedium calceolus - was the last orchid John showed mentioning its vast distribution from Kamchatka to Spain.

John specified that the best times to go look for orchids around the Mediterranean is: Cyprus - January, Spain - April, May. However he advised to start in Crete which is the best place to look for orchids with 7 different species found in one spot.

A conversation with John's wife revealed that they travel mostly by car from the UK and to my surprise, because they have been doing this 'since she can remember', they both rely only on the knowledge gathered over the long years of traveling, to find these beautiful hot spots for orchids and other native flora.

Lina Smalinske

- 1 - Phrag Fritz Schomberg - 28pts - Malcolm Moodie
- 2 - Coelogyne granulosa Stanwell - 25pts - Monica Johnson
- 3 - Dend. Nobile - 29pts - Graham Jones
- 4 - Clowesia rosea - 26pts - Lina Smalinske
- 5 - Paph fairrieanum - 27pts - Malcolm Moodie
- 6 - Paph. fairrieanum Matrix x Ice Galaxy "Over the Top" - 28pts - Malcolm Moodie
- 7 - Dend Nobile Irene Smile - 30pts - Graham Jones



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February table show