

# British Cactus & Succulent Society

## Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

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### Editorial

My cacti and succulent plants seem to have hardly moved on during the last month, I assume this is due to the general lack of sunshine. Of course we've had plenty of rain outdoors so the garden looks nice and lush, although there hasn't really been a dry moment in the past 2 weeks to go out and try to cut the grass. In the conservatory, there are the same flowers I mentioned last month on Mammillarias and Echeverias, but not a single Rebutia has flowered yet. Perhaps it's time to think about trying out that advice about using acidic water on tired plants.

### Announcements

Tickets for the 16<sup>th</sup> **Haverling Cactus Mart** are available from Eddy Harris. This event will be held at Romford, on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> May. At least 12 leading nurseries will be present, so there should be a good selection of plants for sale. Admission is only £1. Another event with plant sales is the **South West Cactus Mart**, which will be held at Portishead Youth Centre, 1 Harbour Road, Portishead, Bristol, BS20 7DD on Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> June.

Keith & Kathy Flanagan have invited our branch to an **Open Day** to view their collection of cacti and agaves. This will be on Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> May, from 2pm to 4:30pm. They live in Overton, a few miles from Basingstoke. Leaflets and directions are available on the front table.

For those people interested in **Conophytums**, there are copies on the front table of an updated classification list from Derek Tribble – he handed this out at the recent Zone 9 convention.

Anna-Liisa Sheader was presented with the **Ladies Cup** (for being the female entrant winning the most points in last year's table show).

The **BCSS National Show** takes place every 4 years. Was the idea borrowed from the Olympics? Anyway it will be held in August, at the same venue as 2008, i.e. the Wood Green Animal Shelter, Godmanchester in Cambridgeshire. If you are intending to go to the show - or would like to go but don't have any transport, then get in touch with David Neville. Portsmouth Branch will also be organising a coach and will be willing to transport our members if they have spaces left over.

### Last Month's Meeting

Following his talk at our members evening in January, Paul Madison had brought along some examples of "knitted" cacti as *Plants of Interest*. These had been made using the instructions printed in our yearbook from many years ago.

### Desert Flowers in Chile

Ian mentioned that his talk covered a visit to Chile and Argentina in October 2010. That had been an El Niño year, meaning extra rainfall in the desert areas, leading to a particularly good show of wild flowers. Apparently, 2011 was even better. However, the Atacama desert is known for its dryness - on a previous visit in 2003, people told him it was the first time it had rained in 50 years!

Ian's trip was made with a number of people we recognised - David Neville, Paul Klaassen, Angie Money, Cliff Thompson and also Chileans Florencia Senoret and Juan Acosta, who you might remember gave a talk at our branch in 2009. Their trip would start in Santiago, the capital of Chile and they would explore the northern part of Chile, and also cross over into Argentina.

We started with a picture which featured the Pacific Ocean in the background. Chile is a thin sliver of a country along the west of the continent, and so the Pacific is never far away. We saw pink wild flowers growing on a sand substrate. There were also plants of Oxalis, Calendrina and *Euphorbia lactiflua*.

Different areas had patches of white, yellow or purple colour, depending on which type or variety of plant had colonised the area, and we saw a close up of *Calandrina longiscapa*. The plants develop quickly when the rains come, they flower for a week or two and then they disappear, so you have to be lucky and be there at the right time to catch these mass flowerings.

Ananuca is a general name for Rhodophialas which are flowering bulbs and members of the Amaryllidaceae. Different species have different coloured flowers and they encountered *R. bagnoldii* (yellow), *R. laeta* (pink), and *R. phycelloides* (red). A yellow flowered *Cruckshankia* was also seen. *Terciopelo* (*Argyria radiata*) had orange flowers with occasional red and yellow variants. *Balbisia peduncularis* has yellow flowers which resemble poppies. *Senna cumingii* is from the pea family and forms mounds of yellow flowers.

*Leontochir ovallei* (Garra de leon or Lion's Paw) is a member of the Alstroemeria family and it forms red flowers with dark central patches. *Cleome chilensis* grows in Paposo and has spidery white flowers. *Loasa arnottiana* has interesting flowers but the stems have nasty stinging bristles. *Loasa acerifolia* has yellow flowers but also features the dangerous bristles. South of Paposo, Ian showed a location near the coast and showed us a view of the same site on an earlier trip, and the view in 2010 was much greener. *Tropaeolum tricolor* is a climbing vine with red orange flowers - but when it's dry and not in flower, the plant consists just of thin stems and you wouldn't be able to see it at all.

Next we saw *Copiapoa cinerea* - one of the iconic members of the genus, followed by *Alstroemeria paupercula* which has purple flowers and blue pollen. These plants were growing in very barren conditions, in grit, and in between boulders and rocks. *Nolana rupicola*, *Nolana stenophylla* and *Nolana elegans* are all bell flowers which tend to flower at the same time, producing a carpet of flowers. The lower areas of the terrain were bare but there were plants dotted along the hillsides. *Eriogyne weisseri* would have been hard to spot without its flower - the plants are just an inch or two across and blend into the surroundings. Once you get your eye in, then you start seeing a few more. *Eriogyne napina* was found at Huasco and it is also a small plant. *Eriogyne* form large tap roots to survive the harsh conditions. *Miqueliopuntia miquelii* also forms tap roots. It has pink flowers which eventually form fruits which look like tennis balls (with spines on!) It is not easy to flower this in cultivation.

*Copiapoa desertorum* had a red flower, and we also saw *Copiapoa cinerea* in flower. A *Trichocereus* had a white flower and we even saw aphids on the flowers. *Eriogyne chilensis* v. *albidiflora* is another small plant which can have flowers in shades of cream to light pink. An *Oxalis gigantea* shrub had yellow flowers - these can grow over 2m tall. *Euphorbia lactiflua* also grows here, and a close up of the pale flower bracts showed the typical Euphorbia flower structure. A yellow annual was either a daisy or a ragwort. An oxalis had yellow flowers and another had fleshier leaves. A plant with blue flowers might have been some sort of salvia. *Mesembryanthemum crystallinum* is from South Africa but it has naturalised here and is now a bit of weed. We also saw *Scilla* bulbs and another plant from South Africa, a Portulacaceae. *Tigridia paposensis* has white flowers and is quite rare in cultivation, with seeds costing \$1 each.

*Neoporteria paucicostata* was pictured growing next to a lily. *Copiapoa montana* had a yellow flower. *Mirabilis elegans* forms trumpet-style purple flowers with yellow pollen. *Copiapoa eremophila* is considered to be a high-altitude form of *Copiapoa haseltonia*. *Chaetanthera glabrata* had daisy-like yellow flowers. *Nolana aplocaryoides* has white flowers with a hint of purple. We also saw some of these plants as dried-out husks, after they had finished flowering.

At Botija Valley they found *Copiapoa ahremephiana* which is named after Roger Ferryman (r-m-f-iana). It was freezing cold in this area. While exploring along the coast, the main party got separated from David Neville and they wondered whether he had hurt himself. After some hours of frantic searching they found him all well and good, but the search delayed their drive back, which was now in darkness.

*Eriogyne challensis* is another small growing plant which was easier to see when in flower. An opuntia species was quite tatty but had reasonably nice yellow flowers. It was most probably *Cumulopuntia boliviana*, which is very widespread. *Maihueiopsis ovata* has stubby stem segments. *Eriogyne curvispina* had orange brown flowers. *Copiapoa cinerea* had the typical silver bodies and they came across 20 headed plants. They also found the spectacular clumps of *Copiapoa dealbata* (carrizalensis), pictures of which have appeared in publications and on book covers. The plants were very variable, with almost every one being slightly different. Comparing pictures taken in 2007 and 2010, the plants looked much better and greener in 2010.

Further north and inland, they found more populations of *Copiapoa cinerea*. There were also lots of butterflies here, but trying to take a picture of them with their wings open proved difficult. One of the more impressive plants they found near Hurtado was the golden spined *Eriosyce aurata*. The spines curve over and cover almost the entire body of the plant, giving rise to the name "golden balls". The plants have deep red flowers, and in a close up shot, we also saw black seeds nestling between the areoles. *Eriosyce eriosyzoides* plants had either red or yellow flowers.

Now for some fauna. We saw a large caterpillar. At the beach he was finally able to photograph a butterfly. There were also snail shells and live snails around here – somewhat strange for a “desert”! A slide featured several of the insects they came across – these were mainly beetles and flies of different types. "Vaquita del desierto" is a website which names and identifies many of these. We also saw a cicada and a cricket, and a hoverfly. A Eulychnia was in flower. A nicely patterned lizard which was apparently a Chilean iguana was around a foot long. Around this area, they also went off to see the burrowing parrot (*Cyanoliseus patagonus*). We also saw a llama and a vicuna, and some flamingos and ducks. Apparently, there are three different types of flamingo to be found in Chile, and these can be distinguished by the colours of their upper and lower legs. Ian ended the first half of the talk with pictures of impressive "forests" of *Trichocereus chilensis*.

After the mid-meeting break, the second half of Ian's talk covered a trip across the border into Northern Argentina. They started from San Pedro de Atacama, a small village, east of Antofagasta. There are several border crossings between Chile and Argentina, but the arrangements were a little strange, with a checkpoint 60 miles from the official border, and a 45 minute drive to the customs checkpoint. The soldiers manning this on the Argentinean side were somewhat officious, especially when they realised they were dealing with Britons.

Purmamarca is a town on the Argentinian side, where they stayed and we saw a shot of the party dining and enjoying a drink. Ian mentioned that the locals did not like having their pictures taken. The drive into Argentina was very scenic with volcano peaks all around, but the land was quite barren. Because of the altitude, the air was very thin. Some early sightings of wildlife included Chilean flamingos and the Andean goose and later they saw a red-backed hawk. Plants of *Eriosyce umadeave* were like balls of spines. The altitude was 2800m

and it was cold and freezing at night. You also needed UV protection, since there were no clouds in the sky. A view from the mountainside showed the zig-zag roads they were using to traverse this mountainous terrain. In the valley floor they found *Trichocereus pasacana*, *Gymnocalycium*s and there were *Tillandsias* growing on the *Trichocereus*. The scenery was lovely. They found *Lobivia ferox* with variable spination, and also *Oreocereus trollii*, with its silky covering of "hair". They also found *Cumulopuntia boliviana* and *Puna subterranea* - the latter was hardly visible, with the plants pulled down into the ground.

They found the Argentine equivalent of a cactus forest, and this consisted of tens of thousands of plants of *Oreocereus celsianus*. These plants were found growing in one main locality, with no examples to be found either before or after. There were lots of plants in flower, and also a good number of young plants regenerating their numbers. Growing in between the *Oreocereus* were *Lobivias* and *Parodias*. They also found *Neowerdermannia vorwerkii*, including plants in flower. In the dry conditions, plants of *Lobivia* had pulled themselves into the soil. There were also *Rebutias* around - however, despite their ease in cultivation, in habitat you are lucky to ever see 2-3 headed plants. One plant which appeared to be a natural hybrid of *Lobivia ferox* and an *Oreocereus* was a nice looking plant, with the best characteristics of the parents. Normally the ribs are vertical, but one of the plants was growing its body with a spiral twist. One shot showed a bird's nest, which had been built atop a columnar cactus.

"Yareta" is a species of *Azorella*, which is a very slow growing mound-forming plant. At one time the locals used to burn these plants as wood. Some of the clumps are believed to be 3000-4000 years old. Around this area, one of their vehicles suffered a puncture. Some of the party saw this as an impromptu opportunity to go off looking for plants, so they ran off, leaving three people to change the tyre. The thin air made this a very difficult task, and it took the three of them over half an hour, and left everyone exhausted.

At Jujuy, they took the Route 40 to see *Yavia cryptocarpa*. They came across *Parodia maassii* and then found the *Yavias*, which were growing dotted in a vertical cliff face. The little buttons were hard to see initially, but once you saw one and knew what to look for, you could eventually see that there were hundreds of plants there. At an altitude of 3800m, they found the yellow flowered form of *Weingartia neumanniana*. At the town of La Quiaca, we saw some views of the local market, selling produce

such as black corn cobs and many different types of potatoes. Also in Jujuy province is the area known as the Devil's Backbone, which features some interesting and colourful geology formations.

They found Blossfeldias growing at head height, and these had heads the size of a 5p coin. They also found nice plants of *Gymnocalycium saglionis*. Proceeding to Salta, in high forest regions, they found Tillandsias and other bromeliads, Rhipsalis and Orchids. A bird they saw here was the rufous collared sparrow.

Near Campo Quijano, they found *Echinopsis albispinosa*. The goats kept by local farmers tend to devour everything at ground level, so you have to hope there are plants growing in inaccessible areas. At Quebrada del Toro, there was some spectacular scenery, and we saw a scene of the valley. Ian pointed out that being in the valleys can be dangerous – the area does have volcanic activity, and there was one instance when a lorry driver was buried alive by falling rubble during an earthquake. Other plants they found included *Rebutia minuscula*, *Trichocereus tereschekii* (crystate) and *Cleistocactus hyalacanthus*. Plants of *Gymnocalycium spegazzini* were grapefruit sized. They came across several species of *Cleistocactus*, *Trichocereus*, and *Gymnocalycium*. *Parodia nivosa* (*Parodia faustiana*) had been growing well and had fruits forming on each head. At the bottom of valley, they found *Gymnocalycium spegazzini* plants which were now the size of dinner plates. We show a picture of an armadillo and also a green snake which surprised them as it appeared from nowhere, in amongst the branches of a tree which they were standing under. They found more populations of the beautiful *Eriocyce umadeave*, including a 4-headed example, but this was surpassed by one with 20 heads. They also came across *Denmoza rhodacantha* and *Soehrensia formosa*.

Back in Chile, we saw views of salt lakes, followed by examples of *Copiapoa tenuissima* and *Copiapoa solaris* with 50+ heads. *Eriocyce taltalensis* was going crystate with a “smile” forming at its growing point. For his “sunset” slide, Ian showed us some of the mesembs in full flower, some pelargoniums and a final reminder of the purple carpets of flowers.

Vinay Shah

## Table Show Results

There were 6 entries in the April table show.

	Cacti – Rebutia	Succulents – Echeveria
Open	(1) B Beckerleg Weingartia correana	(1) B Beckerleg Echeveria lilacina
	(2) -	(2) -
	(3) -	(3) -
Intermediate	(1) A Jankovec Rebutia heliosa	(1) B Beckerleg Dudleya pachyphytum
	(2) B Beckerleg Sulcorebutia canigueralii	(2) A Jankovec Echeveria agavoides
	(3) -	(3) -

Ivor Biddlecombe

## Next Month's Meeting

Our next meeting will be held on June 5<sup>th</sup> and will feature Paul Klaassen telling us about his cactus trip from last winter. I'm not sure whether it will feature North or South America since he visits both areas fairly regularly these days.

The June table Show will consist of the **Parodia** group (cacti) and the **Crassula** group (succulents). Please note that members can submit more than one entry in any of the classes, and that points will be earned for each placed entry.

The Parodia group contains *Parodia*, *Brasilicactus*, *Brasiliparodia*, *Eriocactus*, *Malacocarpus*, *Notocactus*, and *Wigginsia*.

The Crassula group is large and contains several subgroups (*Adromischus*, *Aeonium*, *Echeveria*, *Sedum* and *Semperivium*). Hence it includes many genera, such as *Adromischus*, *Bryophyllum*, *Cotyledon*, *Crassula*, *Kalanchoe*, *Rochea*, *Tylecodon*, *Aeonium*, *Greenovia* and *Monanthes*, *Echeveria*, *Dudleya*, *Graptopetalum*, *Pachyphytum*, *Tacitus*, *Sedum*, *Sempervivum* and *Jovibarba*.

A committee meeting would normally be held in May – however since there are no imminent events, it was agreed to move the date of the next committee meeting to June 18<sup>th</sup>.

## Forthcoming Events

Sun	6 <sup>th</sup>	May	Portsmouth	Display / Plant Sales @ Bishops Waltham Garden Fair
Sat	12 <sup>th</sup>	May	Isle of Wight	"Brazil" - Cliff Thompson
Sat	19 <sup>th</sup>	May	Southampton	Display / Plant Sales @ Sparsholt College Countryside Day
Sat	19 <sup>th</sup>	May	Portsmouth	"Brazil Part1 : Rio Grande do Sul" - Cliff Thompson
Sun	27 <sup>th</sup>	May	Southampton	Open Day @ Keith & Kathy Flanagan's, Overton
Tue	5 <sup>th</sup>	Jun	Southampton	"What I Saw Last Winter - Bolivia & Mexico - Paul Klaassen
Sat	9 <sup>th</sup>	Jun	Portsmouth	Portsmouth Summer Show @ St Colman's Church Hall, Cosham
Sat	9 <sup>th</sup>	Jun	Isle of Wight	"Peru" - John Hughes
Sat	16 <sup>th</sup>	Jun	Portsmouth	"Collections of the World" - Ian Woolnough
Mon	18 <sup>th</sup>	Jun	Southampton	Branch Committee Meeting
Tue	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Jul	Southampton	"Colonise & Populate" - Cultivation discussion - John Watmough
Sat	14 <sup>th</sup>	Jul	Isle of Wight	"What I Did Last Winter" - Paul Klaassen
Sat	21 <sup>st</sup>	Jul	Portsmouth	"My World of Mammillarias" - Tony Roberts
Tue	24 <sup>th</sup>	Jul-	Southampton	Display / Plant Sales @ New Forest Show, Brockenhurst
Thu	26 <sup>th</sup>			

Branch website: <http://www.southampton.bcsc.org.uk>