

British Cactus & Succulent Society

Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

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Editorial

Not much to say except our summer seems to be punctuated by sun and rain! A few lithops have started to form buds, and the Haworthias and Gasterias continue to flower.

Announcements

There are 2 sheets on the front table for people to register their interest for going to the *National Show* on 20th August, and the *Mesemb Study Group* event in September. Please record your name on the appropriate sheet.

Thanks are due to Alice Jankovec for hosting an Open Day and Summer Garden Party last month - over 20 people attended this. The branch also had a display at the New Forest Show, and this went quite well, with good weather attracting good crowds. Ivor mentioned that our display won a Silver Medal.

Ben Turner mentioned there is a new nursery in Bournemouth - Kings Park Nursery (BH7 6LR) which is run by the council. He noticed they have unusual cacti and succulents, and some of the Opuntias might be hardy. There were also agaves, the cultivar *Agave gentryii* "Jaws" is not easy to get hold of. It is just off the Wessex Way, near the football ground. Between May and September, the nursery is open 10am - 4pm from Wednesday - Saturday and also on bank holidays.

Last Month's Meeting

Colorado

Our speaker David Minion had travelled from Harrow Branch. He mentioned that the advertised talk on Southern California was not yet ready, so

instead he would talk about Colorado. He apologised for the mix-up in the titles. David Neville wondered whether we should lock the doors to stop anyone from leaving!

David mentioned that he first made a trip to Colorado in 1974 after having attended a IOS (International Organisation for Succulent Plant Study) conference in Santa Barbara. He went with Gordon Rowley and they spent 2 weeks in USA and 2 weeks in Mexico, including Baja California and this was quite an eye opener for him. The people Gordon introduced him to in Denver took him out to various locations in Colorado and it was a chance to see a number of plants in habitat in the Rocky Mountains. In 1977 he went to a CSSA conference and he's been to many more since, although he's stopped going recently because they are held at inconvenient times e.g. August in Arizona is not a fun place to attend - he would prefer to go there in the spring or early summer, when the cacti will be in flower and there will also be wild flowers to see.

The talk spanned 1974 to 2014 and he was still using slides. We started with a "Welcome to Colorful Colorado" road sign - these are posted on the major roads leading into the state. He showed a map of the major desert areas in the US (Mojave, Sonoran, Chihuahuan) and mentioned that the western part of Colorado is regarded as a true desert. Pictures taken in 1979 in Denver featured the Daniels and Fisher Tower - that was easy to see then, but today it is largely obscured by high rise buildings. Another picture showed Denver in 1989. There are a few 19th century structures still present in the town, and Larimer Square does feature some historic buildings.

Fifteen miles south-west of Denver and near Morrison is the Red Rocks Park. In 1974, he was taken out to this area in September, and this really isn't the best time to look for plants since everything is dried up. Even the grass was quite dry. He did find *Yucca glauca* in fruit - this occurs extensively along the Rockies. Other plants they were shown included *Escobaria missouriensis* which is hard to see growing right down in the grass - and also *Echinocereus viridiflorus*. A transformation takes place if you go to this area much earlier in the year,

and we saw pictures taken in June or July of another year, and the wild flowers were coming along and everything looked green and healthy. We saw the blue mist penstemon (*Penstemon virens*) and the Yuccas were in bloom at this time. Another penstemon had pink flowers. *Opuntia polyacantha* occurs in the park and he came across plants of *Echinocereus viridiflorus* which were the biggest plants of this species he's seen anywhere in the US – some of these were in flower. The other succulent found here is *Sedum stenopetalum (lanceolatum)*. If you're looking for *Escobaria missouriensis*, you'll only see them if they are in flower since the grass hides them well. He did find some sizeable clumps. Another group of plants which grows here is the Castilleja (indian paintbrush). The flower bract colours vary from almost white to pale pink, including shades of orange, red, yellow and salmon – they are nice to see. The *Sedum stenopetalum* has yellow flowers rather like the *Sedum acre* found in this country, but the rest of the plant is quite different, with dark brown leaves.

Going back into Denver, they went to Green Mountain Park, which is just west of Denver, in Lakewood. They found *Yucca glauca* on the hillsides and we saw a view of downtown Denver from the hills. Today the park has trails for hiking and mountain biking and lots of notices saying "keep to the trails". Apart from *Echinocereus viridiflorus* and the Yuccas here, they also found *Pediocactus simpsonii*, and we saw a shot of this in flower, with pink blooms. It took many years of visits before he arrived in the park at a time when these were flowering. *P. simpsonii* is quite variable and the flower colours range from creamy white to pale pink and deep pink, and even darker in one location which he found later. This park also had some specimens with pure white spines – you only seem to see these on the east side of the Rocky Mountains.

Now we saw pictures of Boulder and Central City – the latter wasn't a city at all in those days - although it has built up since then. On the I70 out of Denver, you see a sign saying buffalo overlook and you can pull off the road and see some of these animals from a safe distance. He also saw them in Yellowstone Park – they seem to be docile animals but people have been known to get injured by them. In Yellowstone you see them on the roads and they'll walk by your car. Central City was quiet in the 1970s – but sadly gambling has come to this town and there are now loads of casinos – he hasn't felt like visiting the place since that happened.

Once you get up in the surrounding hills, you can see a few things. Due to mines, the railways got there in the 1870s. In either 1977 or 1979 he was taken by the son of the people they had met in 1974 along some of the dirt roads around Central City and they saw something out of the car window growing alongside the road and this turned out to be pasque flowers - *Anemone patens*. Just from this one area he realised he'd enjoy Colorado's wild flowers and this has indeed been the case. We saw a view overlooking Boulder, taken from Flagstaff Mountain. On top of this mountain were a number of plants to interest them. *Opuntia humifusa* is a very widespread plant, he first saw it in Long Island in New York! *Escobaria missouriensis* had fruits on it, and they also found a small circular stemmed (almost globular) *Opuntia* which might have been *O. fragilis*.

They now dropped down to Colorado Springs, which is 70 miles south of Denver. The trail they followed was along US24 which runs north and then west from Colorado Springs. One of his best friends who is a railroad enthusiast lives near here. At Manitou springs you can get onto the trail and it also helps one acclimatise to the altitude, which is around 7000 feet here. He enjoyed hiking on this trail, but 5-6 years ago there was an enormous fire which swept through this area (the Waldo Canyon fire) and the trail was closed due to the damage caused by erosion every time it rains heavily. He saw *Yucca glauca* in flower – it should be hardy in this country, but he's never been able to collect any seed from it. It's said that *Yucca* flowers are good to eat in a salad – and he asked if anyone in the audience tried had tried that? An insect that got his attention was a Columbia silkmoth – it must have emerged from its chrysalis recently and it was still pumping up its wings. It is a large insect with a 4 inch wingspan.

Up on the trail, they found *Echinocereus* and *Pediocactus simpsonii* growing right along the trail – the latter had typical pink flowers. There were also plants of *Opuntia polyacantha* here and the plants were similar to what they had seen at Red Rocks. *Sedum stenopetalum* was also encountered again. There were some attractive wild flowers – the cut leaf auriculum *Auriculum compositus* is a little low growing plant which would make a good rock plant in this country. The mariposa lily grows from bulbs.

In Colorado Springs itself, the most famous attraction is the "Garden of the Gods" which is a red rock sandstone formation. There are plenty of footpaths here, and these days they are paved, to cope with the number of visitors. The summit of

Pikes Peak stands at 14115 feet – this is the most visited mountain in the USA, and it is a great place to visit for the scenery. There are a few cacti here, if you know where to look. This includes *Escobaria vivipara*, *Opuntia polyacantha* this time with pink flowers, and also another *Opuntia* which he failed to identify. He found some seedlings and these were probably *Echinocereus viridiflorus* seedlings but it was hard to tell them apart from young plants of *Escobaria vivipara*. A clump of cacti was growing in a circle and you felt there must have been a plant in the centre some time ago. We saw *Echinocereus viridiflorus* in flower – the plant was unusual in that there was none of the red pigment which you often see in the spines of this species, so the spines were just straw coloured. Close by is another city park (Ute Valley) and this was only a mile from his friend's house. He had seen *Echinocereus viridiflorus* growing here and *Opuntias* too - but had completely missed seeing *Escobaria vivipara* until one time when the small plants were in flower.

At a location near a radio mast a few miles east of Colorado Springs, along Hoppo Road and near Peyton they had received some information from Bob Reeves that they would see plants of *Pediocactus simpsonii* with deep pink flowers – and we saw the plants photographed with Pikes Peak in the background. He hadn't been able to visit the site this year, but the last time he went to the location, all the plants had disappeared and he didn't know if that was due to the plants being dug up or whether they had died out.

The summit of Pikes Peak is accessible by three different ways – there's a railroad to the top, it can be accessed by road, or you can hike it. Once you get to the top – there are some fantastic views as long as it's a clear day. An old picture showed when the road to the top had not been fully paved. There are some interesting plants to see and some are semi succulent. A *Castilleja* had yellow/chocolate flowers. A *Mertensia* with blue flowers is called "bluebells" over there. A moss campion with pink flowers is actually *Silene acaulis* and it also occurs in the UK, in the north country and Scotland. There are some succulents here – "roseroot" is *Sedum roseum* ssp *integrifolium*. We have it as a wild native in this country too, but our variety has yellow flowers. We saw a roadside view partway down the mountain. The way the weather patterns are, you tend to get a nice sunny morning and then in the afternoon clouds roll in and you can get thunderstorms - so it's best to go up to the peak early in the day and then work your way down in case the weather does deteriorate. A little alpine primrose was *Primula angustifolia*. *Claytonia megarhizha* has pink/white flowers and

just borders on being succulent – it is a big rooted spring beauty, as the name suggests. Another interesting bulb is the Alp Lily, *Lloydia serotina*. We have a rare alpine plant called Snowdon Lily in Snowdon in this country, and it's the same plant. A saxifrage called *Telesonix jamesii* has pink flowers, and another plant which occurs here in Teesdale is *Dryas octopetala* – the white flowered plant is called "mountain avens" in this country. Going further South down I25 from Colorado Springs, you get scenery which is more desert looking. They saw *Opuntia imbricata* on either side of the road. If you pull off onto frontage roads which run parallel to the main roads, you can have a look around. They also found a bushy morning glory - *Ipomea leptophylla*. The latter is a succulent plant, but it is impractical in this country – he was told the tubers go very deep and can be as big as a man - this put him off wanting to grow it, despite the attractive flowers. We saw a close up of the flowers.

Immediately south of Pueblo on Burnt Mill Road – this was a location he was taken to on one of the early trips – he found *Opuntia polyacantha* here with both yellow and red flowered variants. However, the main reason for coming down here was to find *Echinocereus reichenbachii* v. *perbellus*, which is known as *Echinocereus caespitosus* as well. They saw a few of these plants. Sadly the flowers were not in great shape. Using the I25 to Pueblo, if you turn west, the next town is Canon City. This was a railroad town, but the railroad is closed at present. Royal Gorge which is a nearby tourist destination does use short stretches of the railway track. What you can find here is *Echinocereus triglochidatus* v. *melanocanthus*, with some varieties having varied supination. *Opuntia polyacantha* is also found here as well. One photo showed both varieties of the *Echinocereus* – one plant with a lot of spines and another with a lot less - the latter is called *Echinocereus triglochidatus* var *gonacanthus*. The claret cup form of the flowers is beautiful, the blooms are nice and tidy. Another shot provided a closer look at the spination. He found one plant with flowers which seemed a bit more open – this was just natural variation. He also found a few plants of *Echinocereus fendleri*, and a few ferns - some do grow in these harsh conditions!

At Royal Gorge, we saw a view taken from a suspension bridge which runs across it. The interesting feature was a railway bridge which due to the canyon being so narrow had to be supported by beams which held up this "hanging bridge". A little west of Royal Gorge, he took a picture of a train when the railway was still operating. He again came across *Opuntia imbricata*. Continuing after the

mid-meeting break, he was back in Phantom Canyon, and we saw signs of the now defunct Florence and Cripple Creek railroad. We also saw *Opuntia phaeantha*, with a close up of the nice flower form. Going back up US24 outside Colorado Springs, if you visit Trout Creek Pass early enough in the year, you can see cacti covered in snow. We saw *Opuntia schweriniana* (a synonym of *O. fragilis*) and also *Pediocactus simpsonii*. The plants looked in terrible shape, half covered in snow, but they survive. It's not too long before the weather improves and they plump up and come into the peak of growth. A little white flowered plant was probably a phlox. We saw *Echinocereus viridiflorus* again. The Opuntias flower later than the *Pediocactus* and the *Echinocereus* so you need to be there at different times of the year to see all the flowers. He noticed some variability in the flower shapes and colours.

A couple of miles before Leadville, he had stopped for a rest at a recreation park and found that growing there were dozens of plants of *Pediocactus simpsonii*, growing right near the edge of the car park! They now headed West through Independence Pass, towards Aspen. At the top of the pass, it's a wild flower wonderland, and the pictures were taken in July. *Hymenoxys grandiflora* has yellow flowers and is called "old man of the mountain". The Prairie Primrose has pink flowers and is supposed to have a terrible smell but he didn't sense anything nasty. Growing with it is *Caltha leptosepala* which is a white flowering marsh marigold. We saw close ups of the primula and then the marigold. Some people in the audience commented they had seen the marsh marigold on sale in local plant nurseries. Also growing here was *Trollius laxus* – the flowers on this open wide, unlike the European ones. Something which is nearly succulent is *Lewisia pygmaea* – this is a tiny little-growing high altitude plant, with striped pink flowers.

On a dirt road - which is not always open (snow can block it in the winters), he found loads of *Pediocactus simpsonii*. Down in the valley is the Denver and Salt Lake Railway. He was looking for more *Pediocactus* plants and found a nice cristate, and then another one and a third - and a fourth and a fifth. After finding six and seven, the latter was the nicest one of the lot, although part of the plant was eaten by something the next year. The name of the nearby town is called Radium and there has been radioactivity detected in the area. He had never seen as many cristates in such a small area anywhere else during his travels. Also on the map is McCoy which is another railroad town. He found more examples of *Pediocactus simpsonii* and some of the plants

here were yellow/white flowered. A picture of a juvenile plant showed that it does not have the central spines. The plants don't have it all their own way – we saw examples where the flowers and plants were eaten by deer or rodents. A picture of a freight train showed it was very long, as the freight trains in the US often are.

Now they were right in the North of Colorado, heading for Dinosaur National Park. We saw a pronghorn antelope. This park is in the North West of Colorado and the road which goes into the park zigzags into the next state (Utah). The scenery is amazing, and some of the surviving dinosaurs are on the small side – we saw a south ranch lizard. The *Opuntia* growing here is *Opuntia rhodantha* which also goes under the name *Opuntia erinacea v. utahensis*. The flower colour might be a yellow flower going orange as it ages. They continued south from the Dinosaur City area, to Canyon Pintado. Here can be found pictographs created by the native Indians, and painted onto the rocks and reckoned to date from 1000-1200 AD. Another *Opuntia* was probably *O. erinacea*. Dropping down from the canyon, you get to Grand Junction and the scenic wonder here is the Colorado National Monument. The scenery with the red sandstone is stunning, and you can see natural arches and all types of rock formations created by erosion. Growing under a tree, they found *Echinocereus coccineus*. Another picture featured a collared lizard - their skin is coloured in amazing shades of blue and green. *Yucca angustifolia* is smaller than *Yucca glauca* and it has attractive fibres growing on the sides of the leaves. He again found *Pediocactus simpsonii*. Some forms of *Echinocereus coccineus* here are almost spineless and this is called *v. inermis*. These grow side by side with the long spined forms. Some of the spines are also curved.

He mentioned that the next picture was the first time during the evening that he had shown a *Sclerocactus*, and this was *S. parviflorus* at the Colorado National Monument. We saw *Echinocereus coccineus v. inermis* with flowers – the plant had hardly any spines now, but it looked like it must have had some in the past. He found lots more plants of *Sclerocactus parviflorus*. Last year he was unable to locate the correct spot but this year he did visit the same area and most of the *Sclerocactus* plants had gone. He mentioned that these plants seem to have an interesting life cycle – once the plants reach a certain size, they seem to be vulnerable to attack by an insect which lays its egg inside the plant. The larvae eats out the insides of the plant and the plant perishes. Eventually once all the cacti had died, the insect dies out too and then

the population of *Sclerocactus* re-establishes itself from seeds. So sometimes you will visit a spot where you know these plants grow, but won't find any. When there are a lot of plants, quite often all of them go. David Neville said it was some sort of beetle that lays the eggs and Paul Klaassen said it was a 7-9 year life cycle and Ralph Peters has written some interesting articles on the topic. *S. parviflorus* is a nice looking plant in flower and he noticed some variability in the flower colours.

The other place to visit was Debeque, to see *Sclerocactus glaucus*. He went to a location given to him by Trevor Wray - and the first time he went, there weren't any plants there - Trevor had seen the plants three years previously. He has been there in other years and has seen the plants, including one year when they encountered people from Denver Botanical Gardens who were actually surveying the *Sclerocactus* plants. He had struggled to find anything really big, and the young plants look very different from the mature plants. They found a few other plants too, including *Opuntia rhodantha* again. Some of the *Sclerocactus* were in flower. There was some variability here and we also saw plants eaten by something and some younger plants growing nearby, and also a fairly adult plant growing near some young ones. There were also nice flowering plants of *Echinocereus* again.

The Black Canyon of the Gunnison is another place for amazing scenery. You can take the rim drive and there are also footpaths to certain viewpoints. Some of the trails feature a bit more information about the local plants, including the cacti, in fact there was everything except for the species name! One of the signs said "only a few species are found in the Black Canyon area". There was a rather attractive pink flowered form of *Opuntia rhodocantha*. Next was his favourite individual *Pediocactus* plant and he tries to visit this whenever he's in the Black Canyon area. We saw pictures of the plant taken on 8 May 2006, 6 May 2007 in full bloom and 11 May 2011 as well. On another occasion there was snow in the canyon, and the next picture was taken on 26 May 2014. There were some little plantlets growing there at the edge of the main plant and he thought they were seedlings rather than offsets, but this year some of the little plants had died. He has known the plant since 2006 and the overall clump was 12-15 inches across. Some of the plants here have pure white flowers.

Unaweep Canyon is a canyon that runs from Grand Junction south and this was another place he visited in the early trips, and we saw a 1974 picture which included Gordon Rowley on his knees looking at a

Yucca plant. An *Opuntia* might be a variety of *O. polyacantha* or *O. rhodantha* or *O. hystricina*. Here were a couple of plants of *E. coccineus*, one with curly spines and another with straight spines, and the spineless form too. This area may not be accessible to cactus enthusiasts anymore since some of the land has been developed and there are now private homes here. Down closer to the Grand Junction end, there were lot of red and yellow flowered *Opuntia rhodantha* growing together here, along with another species, possibly *O. phaecantha*, or possibly a hybrid due to the non-yellow flower colour. For real train enthusiasts, here was a real train, with a *steam engine*. He got to this spot and realised he could combine his two interests by taking a picture of the train with a *Yucca baccata* also in the picture, and managed to go one better, by also managing to get an *Opuntia* on the other side of the track into the picture.

The last location was at the junction highway 160 and highway 666. The later has been renamed because everyone kept stealing the road signs! This location is the Colorado location of *Sclerocactus mesae-verdae*, which was originally described as "Colorado mesa-verde" and attributed to be related to *Gymnocalycium* when first described in the book "Colorado Cacti" published in 1893. "Chimney Rock" is the inhospitable location of *Sclerocactus mesae-verdae*. This habitat seemed to him to have the potential of getting very muddy whenever it's wet. The fence was the boundary of the Ute Mountain Indian reservation and it seems they take an extremely dim view of people trespassing on their property. He walked along the fence and was able to see plants of *S. mesae-verdae* for the first time. These plants must get saturated when it rains and he also saw the depressions made by the plants in the soft ground as they grow and then shrink back. Sometimes they even sink below the level of the ground, and it was the same with the *Pediocactus*. Bob said he didn't think the plant looked particularly happy, and on the next occasion we visited the spot, the plant looked even unhappier, but another plant had survived. Some of the plants were covered in seed, but *Sclerocactus* is virtually impossible to grow in this country. He shot a picture of a clump of four plants through the fencing. In the following visit, at a better time of the year, the plants were plumped up and in full bloom. On the other side of the road they found more plants, including some which were in very good condition - there was no chance of missing these when in full bloom. These pictures were taken in 1989 and 1993, and he's visited more recently, and found absolutely nothing. The talk ended on this sad note!

Vinay Shah

Table Show Results

There were 9 entries in the July table show, and 8 entries for "Plants in Flower".

	Cacti – Echinopsis	Succulents – Stapelia
Open	(1) I Biddlecombe Echinopsis intricatissima	(1) B Beckerleg Edithcolea grandis
	(2) A Mant Echinopsis eyriesii	(2) T Smith Stapelia hirsuta
	(3) B Beckerleg Echinopsis klingleriana	(3) -
Intermediate	(1) I Biddlecombe Echinopsis deserticola	(1) B Beckerleg Pseudolithos migiurtinus
	(2) A Mant Echinopsis sp.	(2) -
	(3) B Beckerleg Lobivia famatimensis	(3) -

Cacti/Succulent in Flower

(1) I Biddlecombe Adenium obesum
(2) A Mant Mammillaria sp.
(3) T Smith Graptopetalum bellis

Ivor Biddlecombe

Next Month's Meeting

Our next meeting will be on the 6th of September and will feature Trevor Wray from Northampton Branch, talking about Baja California, which is actually a part of Mexico lying just below the US State of California.

The September Table Show will consist of the **Gymnocalycium** group (cacti) and the **Mesembryanthemum** group (excl. Lithops)

Gymnocalycium includes *Brachycalycium*, *Gymnocalycium* and *Neowerdermannia*.

Mesembryanthemum is a large grouping covers dozens of genera from Argyroderma Subgroup, Cheiridopsis Subgroup, Conophytum Subgroup, Faucaria Subgroup, Nananthus Subgroup and Othonna Group. Note that that the Lithops subgroup is excluded in September since it will features in October - hence Dinteranthus, Lapidaria and Lithops are excluded.

Forthcoming Events

Sat 13 th Aug	Isle of Wight	Open Evening at Geraldine & Stephen Woods (Members only)
Sat 13 th Aug	Portsmouth	Display / Plant Sales @ Denmead Horticultural Show
Sat 20 th Aug	Portsmouth	BCSS National Show , WG Animal Centre, PE29 2NH
Sat 20 th Aug	Portsmouth	no meeting
Sat 3 rd Sep	Portsmouth	Display / Plant Sales @ Hayling Island Horticultural Show
Tue 6 th Sep	Southampton	A Cactus Tourist in Baja (Trevor Wray)
Sat 10 th Sep	Southampton	Display / Plant Sales @ Romsey Show, Broadlands
Sat 10 th Sep	Isle of Wight	Dahlias (Ron Tomlin)
Sat 17 th Sep	Portsmouth	Photographing plants (Tom Radford)
Sat 24 th Sep	Southampton	Branch visit to Mesemb Study Group Event, Banstead Community Centre, Surrey
Sat 1 st Oct	Portsmouth	Portsmouth Autumn Show @ Christ Church Hall, Widley, Waterlooville
Tue 4 th Oct	Southampton	Mesembryanthemums (Terry Smale)
Sat 8 th Oct	Isle of Wight	Alpine Plants (Robin Alabaster)
Sat 15 th Oct	Portsmouth	Grafting Part 2 / Growing on cactus seedlings (Cliff Thompson)

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