

PROCEEDINGS

WOSA 4 Conference

DRAKENSBERG GARDENS KZN

25-27 January 2019

WILD ORCHIDS
SOUTHERN AFRICA



Registered as a public benefit (PBO 930050871) and non-profit (141-119 NPO) organisation

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Note: Detailed location data of indigenous orchid and endangered species sightings presented at the Conference have been removed from the papers in these Proceedings as a precautionary measure. Should you require access to this information please contact the respective speakers.

Opening Address WOSA 4 Conference – Gooderson’s Hotel

Karsten Wodrich, Bill Mincher

For those that are attending the Conference for the first time our vision at Wild Orchids Southern Africa (WOSA) is “to engender a real interest in indigenous orchids which will render them valuable and worthy of protection.” This approach to conservation is significantly different from the fear-based approach which predominated ten years ago which suggested the best way to protect indigenous orchids is to not talk about them at all. Such thinking will not stop developers from bulldozing natural orchid habitats without the necessary Environmental Impact Assessments and permits. Conservation and education are key to the survival of orchids, as is the establishment of Wild Orchid Chapters across the country.

WOSA’s approach to orchid conservation is based on the proven track record of the same model employed in the conservation of yellowfish. Bill Mincher was involved in setting up the Yellowfish Working Group for the Federation of Southern African Flyfishers or FOSAF. The Yellowfish Working Group is undisputedly the most successful public private partnership ever achieved in the angling industry of South Africa. Eighteen consecutive annual conferences were instrumental to doubling the fly-fishing opportunities in South Africa.

Although the Yellowfish Working Group was successful for many years, the annual conferences have stopped in more recent years because of a dispute with Government but the annual conferences created a forum for the healthy functioning of the Yellowfish Working Group. Without the conference, there is no coordinated development of the working group.

For this reason, an annual conference such as WOSA4 is considered to be a vital part of the healthy functioning of Wild Orchids Southern Africa. WOSA is now 4 years and 4 months old, officially launched in September 2014 at 21st World Orchid Conference. WOSA’s first annual conference was held in January 2016.

Prior to the launch of WOSA we developed WOSA’s website (www.wildorchids.co.za). What has proven to be a winner with the website design is the ‘Gallery’ of pictures where we have, thus far, captured images of half the 500-species recorded in South Africa. This mammoth task scanning, preparing and loading of the images has been performed by Duncan McFarlane and is a magnificent achievement.

The Conference proceedings are also available on the website and the WOSA Facebook-page is an excellent means of communication and currently boasts 1069 followers.

We are currently establishing a new Genera and Species section on the website where descriptive text can be added to an online template. We hope when it goes live in approximately 2 weeks’ time, that this section will become as popular as the Gallery has proven to be. This development opens the way for contributors to load information without having to worry about understanding or having to use the website development software.

An exciting new development is that we have agreement and will soon be using the distribution maps provided by OrchidMap on the WOSA species section of the website. Because the OrchidMap data is live there will be no need to update distribution data as the latest distribution map will be shown when accessing a species.

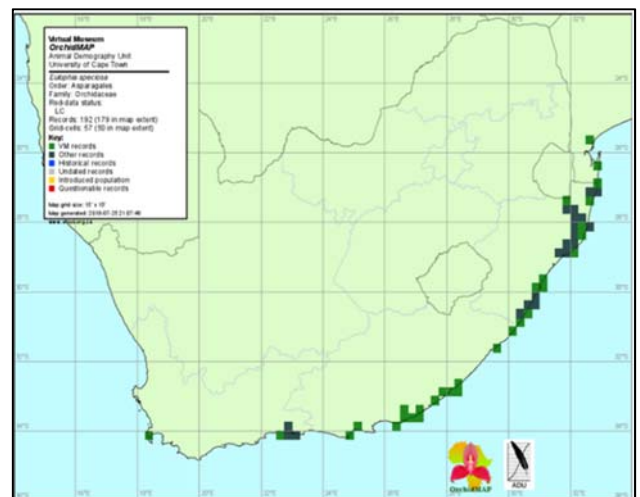


Figure 1 Typical distribution data for *Eulophia speciosa*

From the projects side of things, we have a few new developments and some feedback and one of these is the *Diaphananthe millarii* Project proposed by

Professor Craig Peter. It provides an opportunity for the KwaZulu Natal Chapter to make its mark on local conservation. *Diaphanathe millarii* is under threat of extinction due to over-collection, largely by muthi collectors. Prof Craig Peter has obtained international seed funding and plans to introduce the species back into its natural habitat in the near future. Craig will be convening a workshop on this project on Sunday morning and you are all welcome to participate before we leave for the second outing.



Figure 2 *Diaphanathe millarii* – Photo Lourens Grobbler

During the course of today we will be getting some feedback on the critically endangered *Brachycorythis conica* ssp. *transvaalensis* or Albertina Sisulu Orchid with respect to the crowdfunding exercise that was undertaken.

You may also have seen the article in the latest Orchid Journal that details the official naming of the orchid at a prestigious event held on the 10th of July last year at the opening of the Sisulu Circle at the Walter Sisulu National Botanical Garden in Krugersdorp.

At that function I had the privilege of presenting a print of Daleen Roodt's painting of the orchid to the Sisulu family and met with the minister of Environmental affairs Dr Edna Molewa and the minister of tourism Mr. Dereck Hanekom.

Dr Molewa has sadly passed away since then. But this critical exposure including TV coverage on the day

was instrumental in putting the conservation issues facing the orchid in everyone's mind. It is successes like these that highlight the importance of the existence of conservation organisations such as the Proteadale Conservation Association and WOSA. Without these I can guarantee you that the site where the orchids are currently growing would have been bulldozed for development by now.

We have also had a detailed proposal put forward by Alan Townsend in the last month to put together a video on our indigenous orchids in the lines of what the National Geographic presents on their TV channel. It is undoubtedly a very ambitious project that needs a dedicated champion to drive it along. But something like that could put WOSA onto the map for an international audience and with that exposure creates leverage with the authorities for the conservation of our orchids. We will be considering the proposal in a very serious light.

From yesterday evening's AGM you will have noted a change in responsibilities on the WOSA managing committee. Bill Mincher has been having some serious health issues for a while now and has not been able to attend the last Conference as well as this one. He has decided to step down as Chairman but will be staying on as Vice Chairman, so he can remain involved and facilitate a smooth handover of the Gard. I am glad to say that when I spoke to him on Tuesday this week, he was very upbeat and noted that he had been feeling much better in the last few days and I hope that this is the start of the path to recovery.

In his absence I would like to thank Bill on behalf of the committee and the members for the mountains of work that he has been doing tirelessly and relentlessly behind the scenes – including keeping a keen eye on the Conference arrangements for today's conference. I think for his efforts and involvement Bill deserves a big hearty round of applause!

In terms of the WOSA4 conference that we are kicking off this morning our theme for the conference is "Getting to know our Orchids" and I can guarantee we will get to know some of our orchids very intimately during the course of the day. I'm especially curious to find out how many species the genus *Stenoglottis* will consist of by the time we're finished with the first session.

From WOSA's side we would like to thank Jimmy and Enone Pauck for the invitation to host WOSA4 in KwaZulu Natal and for the hard work they have invested into organising the Conference. We also welcome the establishment of the KwaZulu Natal Chapter and know that it will become an important part of orchid conservation in South Africa. We have always had a strong KwaZulu Natal contingent at the Conferences and look forward to hearing of your progress in the years to come.

We would like to thank each of the presenters for once again providing excellent content and, in so doing, giving us a programme line-up that continues to draw people to the conference year after year. We are most appreciative of the research that is being conducted at the Universities and presented at the conferences. The important contribution and selfless sharing of knowledge by all presenters, whether from the academic sector or orchid enthusiasts, must be acknowledged and applauded. It is safe to say: any country would be proud of the programme content we present at our annual conferences.

In January 2020, the plan is for the WOSA Annual Conference to return to Dullstroom in Mpumalanga and after that potentially hold one in Cape Town either in February or in October to coincide with the winter rainfall peak flowering season.

So, without further delay I would now like to hand over to Jimmy again who is the chairman for the first session this morning.

Bill Mincher – Vice Chairman
Karsten Wodrich – President
26 January 2019