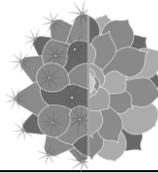


British Cactus & Succulent Society

Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

March 2020



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Editorial

We're now into March and hopefully the worst of Winter is behind us but given how unpredictable things can be, the chance of a sudden cold spell remains a possibility, probably until the middle of April. Since it was sunny yesterday, I gave my plants their first watering. Temperatures outside were close to freezing at night but they will be above zero for the week ahead so I don't think there was too much risk.

Announcements

Don't forget to **renew** your BCSS **membership** – this can be done using the form included with the CactusWorld Journals which were sent out to members in December. You can also renew using Paypal or a credit card at the BCSS website, at: <http://society.bcsc.org.uk/index.php/subscriptions.html> (when renewing online you'll need to know your BCSS membership number, this is written on the address label of your Journal – David and I also have a list of membership numbers for current members).

There's a sheet on the front table to register your interest in car-sharing for the **Havering Cactus Mart**, which will take place on 9th May.

Last Month's Meeting

Table Show

At the start of the meeting, Adrian mentioned the committee would like people to make an effort to enter the monthly table show and Miranda Stevenson had agreed to say a few words at the start of the meeting to promote the table show.

Miranda mentioned she was sorry to hear at the AGM that the committee were thinking of doing away with the table show if entries to the show were at low levels. She's been interested in cacti and succulents since she was a kid - but it was only after she retired and joined the BCSS that her interest picked up. When she came to our meetings, she thought it was a good idea to bring plants for the table show, but she didn't really know how the plants were judged. She recommended getting hold of the BCSS Handbook of Shows (I have a few spare copies if any new members needs one) which explains the show classifications and plant groupings and also gives some general advice on showing. She also asked some of the more experienced members what judges look for and she enjoyed the mini show meeting we held a few years ago, and she hoped we would do it again. She provided a list of 5 things that taking part in the table show had helped her with:

- 1) It makes you look at your plants and gain an understanding of the classifications and groupings. She was disqualified once for bringing in a bulb!
- 2) It makes you look at your plants more closely and tidy them up and try and make them look their best.
- 3) The show lets you see other plants in the relevant classes.
- 4) Some people may get put off thinking they will never win, but you never know
- 5) It is good fun!

She suggested that the minishow meeting should be held again, and that will also get people to bring in some of their plants. She also thought that some quick feedback after the table show was judged would be useful for everyone.

Rio Grande do Sul

Adrian introduced Cliff Thompson from Portsmouth branch, who had kindly agreed to stand in at short notice to give us a talk in place of Paul Klaassen who had been ill during December and January.

Cliff said he had been able to travel to all sorts of cactus habitats and has lost count of how many trips he's done. Rio Grande do Sul is the southernmost state of Brazil. This trip was part of a 3 month trip in 2009 to Brazil, where he and others visited 3 different states. Brazil is a huge country, some 2500

miles tall and 2500 miles wide, and the state of Rio Grande do Sul is as big as the country of Uruguay. We saw some pictures of their accommodation. Parked outside we saw a car which had been stripped of most of its usable parts - perhaps you shouldn't park here for too long! Others on the trip included Paul Klaassen, Angie Money, Marlon Machado, Wiebe Bosma, Woody Minnich and John Senior.

Out in habitat, in this region you always need to look up when you are looking for plants. There were many plants growing on the trees - apart from orchids and bromeliads, there were some Cereoids plants up there too. We saw the first of many *Fraileas* and Cliff commented on how moist it was. The substrate laying on the rocky terrain is very minimal and consisted just of moss. There were a few bulbs in flower and we also saw a verbena and a petunia. A road cutting was a manmade habitat, and this was filled with plants of *Notocactus ottonis*. It was amazing how everything grows so well. There are cracks in the rock and detritus can get in there, allowing the plants to send roots down and grow upon the rock. *Jatropha urens* has a sting 10x worse than a stinging nettle. An Iris-family plant had lilac spots on the flower. *Parodia gaucha* was a new cactus described by Marlon - to Cliff, it looked like a different form of *Parodia minima*. It's a soft bodied plant, which flowers profusely and doesn't like the cold. A member of the compositae had attractive feathery foliage.

Notocactus concinnus is easy to grow but it's not easy to keep in good condition as it ages. In Brazil, 100s of square km are dedicated to growing Eucalyptus - it grows 5m a year and so is cultivated and cropped. Unfortunately, creating these plantations destroys the natural habitat. Across the road they found some *Gymnocalycium horstii* - the plant bodies had some burn marks so a fire may have gone through here, but the plants would probably survive. *Frailea gracillima* was growing on limestone, along with a *Notocactus*. Cliff likes to photograph lichens and we also saw an Asclepiad of some sort. We also saw animals in the road - a herd of cattle were causing a traffic jam.

He remarked how some of the scenes here would not look out of place in Yorkshire, although there were no pubs of course. We saw another Asteraeace plant and various spring flowers coming through. *Notocactus ottonis* was probably 5 years old. There was plenty of moisture around. A *Tillandsia* was in flower and we again saw *Fraileas* growing alongside *Notocactus*. In the *ottonis* group, a lot of the plants look the same but Marlon said there were different species. A snake made everyone panic. *Frailea*

pygmaea is the size of your little finger and we saw a tiny mature plant in flower. In some of the open areas there were pieces of exposed limestone and a dodder plant was growing in a cowpat. We saw the epiphytic cactus *Lepismium lumbricoides* in flower. In this area, the majestic *Araucaria* trees grow. The monkey puzzle tree *Araucaria araucana* grows further south and the plants here are *Araucaria angustifolia*. The next *Frailea* looked like *F. pygmaea* but was actually *Frailea gracillima* ssp. *horstii*.

Some ants were ½ inch long and very industrious. We saw a view of a typical dirt road. There is some amazing geology around and we saw some wind eroded sandstone. They were going to see *Frailea phaeodisca* which is another small plant and they found it growing in amongst moss and the resurrection plant, *Selaginella lepidophylla*. There were some pebbles around since some fragments of the rock were harder than others. There were areas of limestone and quartzite pavements. We saw more examples of cowpat culture and the vegetation looked like an open meadow, almost anywhere in the UK. They found *Gymnocalycium denudatum*, and *Frailea gracillima* ssp. *horstii*. A lapwing watched them, interested in what they were doing. We saw *Echinopsis oxygona*. *Notocactus uebelmannianus* is a well known *Notocactus* with purple flowers but these plants were *Notocactus crassigibbus* with a purple flower. The roots reach into cracks in the rock and in the same habitat you get the yellow flowered form as well as the purple forms growing next to each other. There was some bacterial slime here and they were careful not to tread in it. Stunning plants of *N. crassigibbus* with purple and purple and yellow flowers were 8 inches across. *Portulaca* was found here and it grows everywhere in South America, as do members of the Solanaceae. A *Calliandra* had a red bottle brush flower. One tree was plastered in plants (orchids and bromeliads) and other smooth-barked trees nothing. Some toad tadpoles in water were 6 inches long.

They went onward to find more plants of *Frailea pygmaea*. *Wigginsia (Parodia) sellowii* and *N. ottonis* were growing next to each other, along with *Notocactus crassigibbus*. They were growing beneath an *Araucaria*, growing in the shade and they were shiny and clean. It's a shame they weren't in flower. We saw some fungi, but he had no idea what they were. We saw *Frailea gracillima horstii* again - it varies slightly from place to place. *Petunias* plants were etiolated and we saw the remarkable ovenbird nests, as well as a super penthouse ovenbird nest built on a man made structure (a post).

There are 8 species in the *N. ottonis* complex according to Marlon. We saw some *Sinningias* and some of these are house plants and also *Parodia horstii* and a *Portulaca*, More pebbles had eroded out from the rock. *Echinopsis oxygona* was growing here along with another *Sinningia* – there are probably pollinated by hummingbirds or possibly moths. We saw *Notocactus ritterianus* and *Gymnocalycium denudatum*. A local on a horse came up to them, talked to Marlon and went away. *Frailea mammifera* has a brown chin under the areoles. We saw *Wigginsia* and *Echinopsis oxygona* again – there are many forms of it in habitat. We saw a red verbena. There was more limestone and weathered rock – the *Frailea* heads here were fairly big. An abandoned lapwing egg was an unusual colour. We saw *Frailea mammifera* again and the brown chins were more obvious if they grow in the sun. We saw *Gymnocalycium denudatum* again, in flower. Another person turned up. and went away again. We saw more oven bird nests again.

Brazil was a Portuguese colony so the architecture in some of the towns reflects this. In another habitat they found *Parodia linkii* – this was large flowered compared to *N. ottonis*. A green lizard was interesting, and they found a gold-spined form of *Frailea mammifera*. There was a huge orgy of beetles in the flower. The plants have pectinate spines and the flowers were 1 inch across. We saw *Frailea densispina* and *Parodia succineus*. The black ibis is a bird which is not often seen. We saw *Notocactus minima* and a nice shell which must have belonged to a land snail. *Frailea pumila* grew everywhere in this region and they also found *Wigginsia sellowii*. They found 2 species of *Dorstenia* – three different species grow in Rio Grande do Sul - *D. brasiliensis*, *D. carautae* and *D. tenuis*. One was in flower with the typical composite *dorstenia* flower. Everywhere you go, there's so much vegetation in flower at this time of the year. As we saw earlier, the other vegetation will tend cover up the cacti for a few weeks until those other plants die. We saw *Gymnocalycium uruguayense* with a yellow flower and *Parodia fusca*. The Southern screamer is one of the largest birds in the region and it's bigger than a turkey. *Parodia mueller-melchersii* was found growing on open limestone amongst detritus. The seeds can get started in this. We also saw *Frailea perumbilicata*.

He is interested in fossils and geodes and there were some to be found here. It had rained in the night and they came across a huge ant's nest some 6 feet across. They found another form of *Frailea phaeodisca* - the areoles were a lot darker here but the plants were still finger sized and there were dozens of them. There was an oddball one with

lighter areoles and some plants were in flower. *Parodia buiningii* was an interesting find, it is not reported from this area but they were quite near the Uruguayan border. *Frailea castanea* is quite hard in cultivation and some say that it is better grown in the house rather than a greenhouse. They found *Frailea perumbilicata aurispina* and also *Parodia mammulosus* and *Wigginsia sellowii*. An insect was from the roach family, but it was only a nymph without wings and about 2 inches in length. They came across another *Dorstenia* and another population of *Frailea phaeodisca perbella* with slightly darker epidermis. They came across 100s of plants in a tennis court sized area. At the periphery was *Frailea pumila*, and they only found these because they were in flower. A *Portulaca* had a purple flower. They found the true *Notocactus minimus* – it wasn't that small in habitat but it is quite small in cultivation – the plant was about 4 inches tall, he wasn't sure how old it was. We saw a view of open plains with patches of rocks poking through. These are good areas to find plants, and they found *Parodia mueller-melchersii*, *Frailea phaeodisca* and a large millipede. Next was the picture of a butterfly from the skipper family – he must have taken 20+ shots of it to get a good image. There were *Fraileas* and *Notocacti* on the limestone and also a picture of a moth. One of the *Notocacti* had spines sticking out rather than reflexed against the body and he did get some seed. A *Dorstenia* had produced urn-shaped seed pods

Next was a “spot the plant” image – there were three small plants in the ground and they were hard to see, being well camouflaged. It was strange to see the yellow flowers of the plants poking through the *Saginella*. Rheas are part of the natural wildlife and they seem to be tolerated by the farmers there – they get on OK with the cows and the sheep and apparently can also dive through the wire fences. Some small snakes were constrictors – they were less than an inch in diameter. They came across a natural rock arch. In the open areas there were cattle here. We saw *Tillandsias*, and a *mimosa* in flower. *Parodia horstii* is a short lived plant and somewhat cold sensitive. There were bromeliads galore, some with red/yellow blooms. *Frailea fulviseta* was 1½ inch tall and 1¾ inch in diameter. A moth had an 8 inch wingspan. He happened to be in the flight path of some wasps and managed to get stung 4 times!

Frailea cataphracta was growing in pure sand. It looks like *F. phaeodisca* and was an inch across at the very most. It was easy to spot in the sand. After the forest edge there were no more cacti, but he did find *Echinopsis oxygona* along with *Gymnocalycium horstii* growing at the edge. A *notocactus* was from the *minima* group - he has trouble cultivating this

species. In contrast, *Frailea pumila* is one of the easier Fraileas to try and grow, and it can grow to 2-3 cm across. *Parodia linkii* and *Parodia muricata* are both from the ottonis group, and from a distance they do look like ottonis. There were some curious brown lizards here and a Petunia shrub about a foot in diameter. found In one area they found thousands of cacti - the seed must have cascaded down an old track and germinated in a group in this area.

They were near the town of Mata and there was fossil wood (petrified rock) galore here. They use the fossil wood for decorative purposes in the town, e.g. for bollards and it was also used to form the church steps. We saw some telephoto photographs of *Parodia magnificus* and these clumps were 6-12 feet long - the plants are always on the other side of a river! The clumps only grow on the morning sun side of the river - there were no plants on the afternoon sun side. We saw an Amaryllis type flower and also some pink spheres stuck on a plant stalk - Cliff though these were the eggs either of a snail or a lizard. A *Cereus* was growing with a begonia in the shade. Cliff mentioned they were quite fortunate and only got rained on once - most of the storms were in the evenings and you could enjoy the lightning show while enjoying an evening beer.

The 2nd half of the meeting started with Cliff taking a few minutes to describe his judging of the table show plants. Next was a continuation of the visit to the riversides where the *Eriocactus* group of plants grow. He showed a tall hillside and asked would you want to climb that in 95% humidity to see *Parodia maxima* or staying at the air conditioned bar in the hotel enjoying a beer. Plants named horstii are named after Leopold Horst who explored the area and owned a nursery here. The nursery moved from the original location but is now run by his son. Most of his business comes from selling seed. Cliff saw that apart from workers pollinating plants, bees and hummingbirds are also flying around and he wondered how pure the seed would be. The bigger plants are sold for landscaping and the others to florists and horticultural businesses etc. The son was going to take them to see the site for *Notocactus lenninghausii*. These cliff dwellers are sometimes grouped under the name *Eriocactus* - they all grow on vertical cliffs and each of the 5 species have their own river valley. Those who were brave enough to take close up pictures were lowered down on ropes but John Senior lost his balance, panicked and ended up dislodging many plants which fell to the bottom. We saw a picture of Leo Van Der Hoven on the back of a horse and posing with Horst's son - they have been friends for many years.

We saw *Eriocactus warasii* growing in its typical habitat of limestone mixed with mudstone and sandstone on the vertical cliff. There were other plants here including *Peperomia* and *Oxalis*. They found another site for *E. warasii* and also found some plants of it growing on trees - the seeds must have been blown up there. The plants were growing 50-60 feet up the rock faces so access from below wasn't possible. A young *Araucaria* looked similar to a conifer seedling - it gradually changes shape as it gets older. We also saw *Begonias*, *Sinningias*, *Verbena* and an *Asclepiad*. Cliff commented that out of the 100s of rock sites they visited on this trip, only 1 or 2 did not have any cacti plants growing there.

P. oxycostatus and *P. linkii* were shown flowering together - the former had a red stigma and the latter had a yellow stigma. Another man-made habitat cut through the limestone was home for 1000s of *N. ottonis* plants, with no competition from anything else. *Parodia minima* was growing here as well. In a canyon, there were huge bromeliads (3 feet tall) and also orchids growing in the high humidity in the canyon. We also saw more fungi. The valleys are really rifts in the limestone and in this case it was a 300 feet drop to the valley. There were huge urn bromeliads 2-3 feet tall, with a flower spike emerging from one of them. There was a waterfall at the edge. *Araucaria angustifolia* can grow as wide as they are tall and that means a huge canopy. Their rough bark means lots of things can grow on them and we saw *Tillandsia* and mosses - Cliff mentioned there were also miniature bromeliads but he hadn't included images of those. We saw another massive bromeliad and *Tillandsia*. It really was a botanist's paradise.

Looking right down the gorge, there was a *Gunnera*, although the leaf is different from the ones we grow in our gardens. An *Araucaria* was growing in the open and all around it were lichens and bromeliads. They were looking for *Brasiliparodia buenekeri*. There aren't many sites for it and it is characterised by having hooked spines. A verbena buried in the moss had finished flowering. A *Tillandsia* had a vivid blue flower. They also found a *Rhipsalis* of some sort. One of the things he likes to photograph is churches. In the local pizza shop, Pink Floyd's album *The Wall* was nailed to the wall.

They found another plant they were looking for - *Parodia graessneri*. A fire must have gone through here but since the meristem is inside the centre of the plant, they had survived. The plant has an interesting green flower. There were dozens and dozens of plants here, and the largest were 4 inches in diameter. For show purposes it is quite a choice

plant and difficult to grow well. There were other plants here – an Asclepiad with ants crawling over it, a pea family plant and also some type of poppy. A miniature shrub had petunia-type flowers which were one inch across. They found *Brasiliparodia buenekerii* here with 2-3 dozen plants and some with seed on them. Another plant they found was *Parodia rechensis* – this is probably extinct now due to habitat loss. They also came across the largest of the Brazilian bird eating spiders – it was plate sized but totally uninterested in them. They also found a population of *Parodia ausensis*, a plant which has not been found anywhere else. We saw some more fungi and also some tree ferns – there are several species in the humid forests. We saw a picture of a road which had suffered a landslip – these occur from time to time, but the roads are vital so get repaired quickly. They found another site for *Parodia graessneri* - there were lots of plants and some had seeds. The flowers were paler than the previous population. It was good to see 100s of seedlings and plants of all generations. He took around 20 pictures of a hummingbird pollinating a flower to get a decent shot – but even with 1/500 second shutter speed it was impossible to see its wings.

They found a *Sinningia* with a huge tuber in a rock crack – the plant was 18 inches across. There were some interesting structures on the cliff face and it turned out these were wasps nests which had been vacated. They found a *peperomia*, and another site for *Notocactus lenninghausii* – this was the same river system as earlier, but there were just a few plants at this spot. Picture of *Parodia haselbergii* weren't plants in habitat – it was part of a university project which had been abandoned. The plants here had dark green bodies with silvery spines and red flowers. Along the edge of the road there are often gullies to drain away flash flood water and these are often filled with all sorts of plants, we saw a tree fern, some sort of lupin and a petunia.

A church he came across was amazing – it was made mainly from a combination of concrete arches and concrete slabs. Another tree fern showed fresh growth emerging from the centre of the plant. At a national park, they found the yellow spined form of *Parodia graessneri*. A young *Araucaria* looked just like a conifer - you can't check the age because they have pith under the bark instead of rings. There were more plants on the other side of the gorge, visible with telephoto lenses, and they eventually found a path to the other side. They found *Parodia graessneri* with slightly different yellowish spination and yellower flowers. As a bonus, A *Lepismium houlettianum* was hanging off the edge.

There were also signs of snow – some parts of the country do occasionally experience snowfall.

A bridge had been repaired using bits of wood. – the bridges are often damaged by flash floods. Another large spider wouldn't behave – it just crawled over his shoes. A lily-type flower was a *crinum*, according to Ben. We saw a bus being held up by cattle on the road – the gaucho wasn't going to move his animals for the bus. We saw lichens and moss growing under an *Araucaria* in leaf litter – there was also a beautiful *P. linkii* with flushed stigmas. He found a branch broken off an *Araucaria* tree and was able to photograph the immature cones. One of the towns they visited seemed to have a population of Coatis which were raiding a shop for apples – they are semi-tame and the locals feed them all sorts of stuff. There was a good selection of cheese and sausage in the shop. At night he heard a croaking outside their window and found a large toad outside – it was about 6 inches long. On the street was a 12-window VW camper – the original moulds were taken to Brazil and the last of them were made over there.

The Caracara is a carrion feeding bird. We saw the business end of a rock splitter. Brazil is big on hydroelectric power and lakes have been created – but many plant habitats have been flooded by these projects. However, all the minerals and rock dug up was dumped nearby and ended up creating a new man-made habitat for any plants that could take advantage. They dug up a *Sinningia* to see how big its root system was. Another spider was smaller than the ones they had seen before and not aggressive in any way. *Eriocactus claviceps* was growing on the other side of the river and was growing in a similar way to the other plants they had seen before, with huge clumps of plants growing down the cliff face.

P. clavisensis was one of the plants that was buried under water when the dam was made - thousands of plants were lost. A wasp nest was almost translucent and you see the insects inside, they were quite small, only ½ inch long. They had wanted to go and see *Eriocactus claviceps* in the gorge where the lakes had been formed and had wanted to hire a boat – but they were not allowed to do so, due to some bureaucracy with the electricity company. Back at Horst's nursery, we saw some of the plants, including a few *cristates* and lots of seedlings.

Cliff ended by saying altogether, they covered some 2500 km – you need to travel these sorts of distances to see this range of plants.

Vinay Shah

Table Show Results

There were 9 entries in the February table show, and 2 entries for "Plants in Flower".

	Cacti – Echinopsis	Succulents – Crassulaceae
Open	(1) B Beckerleg <i>E. obrepanda</i> v <i>purpurea</i>	(1) B Beckerleg <i>Echeveria lilacina</i>
	(2) -	(2) B Turner <i>Echeveria agavoides</i> cv. "Ebony"
	(3) -	(3) M Stevenson <i>Aeonium arboreum</i>
Intermediate	(1) B Beckerleg <i>Lobivia famatimensis</i>	(1) M Stevenson <i>Adromischus herrei</i>
	(2) -	(2) B Beckerleg <i>Echeveria lauii</i>
	(3) -	(3) M Stevenson <i>Tylecodon decipiens</i>

Cacti/Succulent in Flower
(1) M Stevenson <i>Crassula hemisphaerica</i>
(2) B Beckerleg <i>Titanopsis calcarea</i>
(3) -

Robin Caddy

Next Month's Meeting

Our next meeting will be held on April 7th and will feature a talk by Stuart Riley with the title "A Tour of Continental Nurseries & Collections". Stuart runs the Plant Life Nursery in Sussex so makes frequent

trips to Europe to visit nurseries and he also visits collections when he is able to. He has spoken to the branch on many occasions and this talk should give us a good idea of the sort of things you can expect to see if you were able to visit some of these places. Of course Brexit may change how plants from Europe are allowed to be imported into the UK, but for the time being, nothing has changed.

The April Table Show will consist of the **Rebutia** group (cacti) and the **Haworthia** group (succulents), along with "plant in flower". 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 table show classes use the classifications from the *Guide to Shows 10th Edition* (contact me if you don't have a copy of this).

The Rebutia group includes *Aylosteria*, *Cintia*, *Cylindrorebutia*, *Digitorebutia*, *Mediolobivia*, *Neorebutia*, *Rebutia*, *Setirebutia*, *Spegazzinia*, *Sulcorebutia* and *Weingartia*.

The Haworthia group includes *Astroloba*, *Haworthia*, and *Poellnitzia*.

For committee members, a reminder that the next **Branch Committee meeting** will take place at 7:30pm on Tuesday 26th March, at the Chilworth Village Hall (situated next to the Chilworth Arms).

Forthcoming Events

Sat 14 th Mar	Isle of Wight	Northern Peru Nov 2017 - Cliff Thompson
Sat 21 st Mar	Portsmouth	My world of Mammillarias - Tony Roberts
Tue 24 th Mar	Southampton	Branch committee meeting – Chilworth Village Hall
Tue 7 th Apr	Southampton	A Tour of Continental Nurseries & Collections - Stuart Riley
Sat 11 th Apr	Isle of Wight	Open Meeting
Sat 18 th Apr	Portsmouth	Plant Auction
Tue 5 th May	Southampton	Cultivation & Propagation Workshop, with demos and discussions
Sat 9 th May	Isle of Wight	to be confirmed - Rodney Simms
Sat 9 th May	Havering	Branch visit to Havering Cactus Mart, North Romford RM5 3QJ
Sat 16 th May	Portsmouth	Interesting Haworthias - Stirling Baker

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

Facebook : <https://www.facebook.com/southamptonbcsc>