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Book Reviews



Orchids Orquídeas in Inkaterra Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel by Benjamin Collantes, Carmen Soto, José Koechlin, 352pp, 255 colour photographs, hardback, 2007. Published by Inkaterra. US\$150 plus US\$44 p+p (total \$194). Available from Robin Gogliormella at the American Orchid Society, email: robing@aos.org, or tel: 001 561 404 2061. ISBN 9786034504318.

This is a valuable book in that it gives details of the orchids in the Peruvian region of Machu Picchu, with 178 photographs of species growing in the gardens and environs of the Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel. This luxury hotel has chalets in restored cloud forest (previously it had been derelict fields where animals grazed) with native trees, stone walls and flower beds on which orchids collected from the locality have been planted. A total of 372 different species are to be found here, and there are thousands of them, providing an orchid conservation garden that is perhaps the biggest in the world (although access is normally limited to hotel guests). As a habitat it is successful in many spheres, for

184 species of birds, 108 species of butterfly and 96 species of ferns have also been recorded here. The authors are Benjamin Collantes, one of the world's great orchid photographers, Carmen Soto, chief resident biologist at the hotel, and José Koechlin the enthusiastic conservationist and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the NGO Inkaterra Association.

The book is large format, very well designed and produced. The text is in English and Spanish, with 20 pages of introduction covering the historical aspects of the area, and the orchid literature for Machu Picchu with acknowledgements to many contributors, and 30 pages on orchid biology. There are atmospheric photographs of the forest and the Inca ruins, which make one realise why this is such a famous World Heritage Site. The last 40 pages cover aspects of conservation and a list of flowering times of the orchids, a glossary and bibliography, but the central 110 pages are devoted to photographs of the orchid flowers with a brief text on each.

It is these central pages that will be of most interest and use to orchid enthusiasts, with Benjamin Collantes' stunning photographs. I have seen his work as 35mm transparencies and they are faultless. Many have been reproduced beautifully but in the process of scanning and printing some are 'over-egged' with a contrast and colour saturation that never appeared in nature. Nevertheless, they can all be used to identify the orchids that one sees in the orchid garden of the hotel and in walks in the hills and forests of Machu Picchu. With literature on the orchids of Peru in such short supply, I have found them extremely useful.

A paper-back, slimmed down version is proposed for the future, and it is to be hoped that the cost will be reduced while the number of orchids illustrated will be conserved.
Henry Oakeley



Tropical Slipper Orchids: Paphiopedilum & Phragmipedium species and hybrids

by Harold Koopowitz, 411 pages, 359 colour illustrations including nine watercolours by Carol Woodin, hardback, 2008. Timber Press. £45, US\$59.95. ISBN 139780881928648.

I enjoyed this book and I am delighted to have it in my orchid library. It reads well, not just on the first or second time of reading, but on many occasions when one dips into it to confirm old facts or look for new ones. It is well designed and produced and with so many illustrations it is a frequent source of pleasure.

The author is a superb grower of slipper orchids and the information in this book is presented from a horticultural point of view. The first six chapters (108 pages) are introductory, or general. They provide information on the history, biology, conservation, and cultivation of these intriguing plants. This is of great value and includes numerous tips and advice on modern media. Having visited Harold's collection in Anaheim, California, I can vouch for the success of his methods and the importance of selecting good plants when setting out to grow these genera. His collection has been developing for more than 40 years and includes some fine species and awarded hybrids.

The 80-odd *Paphiopedilum* species

are presented in seven chapters or 'alliances' that are easy to comprehend and facilitate finding information about them – though there is also a good index. These chapters are followed by one on the 15 *Phragmipedium* species and also the single *Mexipedium* species that was originally described as a *Phragmipedium* from Mexico.

Finally, nearly 200 pages are devoted to hybrids, their breeding and qualities. With a plethora of excellent colour photographs of remarkable flowers, this is a very important part of the book for any slipper orchid grower. I cannot think of another which includes so much information about the best and most desirable of the thousands of hybrids that have been described and registered since 1869, particularly in the genus *Paphiopedilum*.

Carol Woodin's paintings are a delight, though I am sorry that the one on page 23 has the wrong caption. The author agrees that the plant portrayed is not *Paphiopedilum venustum*, but none of us is sure exactly what it is. Presumably it is a hybrid that was incorrectly labelled in the greenhouse where it was grown.

However, I can highly recommend this book. All slipper orchid growers should own a copy and it ought to be in every orchid society library. It contains information about 482 tropical slipper orchids in cultivation, practical tips for growing, collecting, and hybridising, and detailed instructions for propagating and breeding. The text is written for beginners and specialists by a former professional orchid grower and lifelong enthusiast, and it is copiously illustrated with high quality photographs throughout. What more could one want?

Joyce Stewart



Ireland's Wild Orchids

by Brendan Sayers and Susan Sex, 109 pages, many colour illustrations and photographs, 2009. Published by the authors. Available from <http://orchidireland.ie> for €35 (about £32), limited edition library copies are €175 (about £160), postage and packing €5.

Field guides to plants and animals tend to follow a standard format. They are pocket-sized, copiously illustrated with colour photographs, short descriptions, distribution maps and either hard bound or soft bound in a flexible water-resistant cover. This delightful guide to the orchids of Ireland has all of those attributes, but it differs from most in featuring a series of splendid watercolour drawings of habits and floral close-ups by Susan Sex, the talented Irish botanical artist, surely one of the best botanical artists of modern times. Additionally, this field guide departs from the normal in being ring-bound with hard waterproof plastic covers protecting the book, ideal for transport into the field. This allows it to be opened flat in the field, a useful ability when attempting to identify and name some of the more difficult species, of which Ireland has a few.

With 35 taxa in 31 species, Ireland is not rich in orchids, even by European standards, but it does have some rarities. Some of these are European rarities, others are rare in Britain and Ireland. These include

two species, *Dactylorbiza occidentalis* and *Neotinea maculata*, now confined to Ireland within these islands. A further species, *Spiranthes romanoffiana*, has its European headquarters in Ireland. The bog orchid, *Hammarbya paludosa*, thrives in Irish bogs but is still difficult to find. Several marsh orchids are also well represented, with the white-flowered *Dactylorbiza fuchsii* var. *okellyi* an endemic.

The authors have adopted the modern nomenclature for European orchids, thus *Orchis morio* is now *Anacamptis morio*, and *Coeloglossum viride* is *Dactylorbiza viridis*. Their intimate knowledge of Ireland's orchids is demonstrated by the clear and personal accounts provided for each species. Present-day distributions are clearly laid out county by county on the distribution maps. The ecological details will lead orchid enthusiasts to the places where species might be seen. The quality of the illustrations, both the watercolours and photographs is exemplary and very helpful in indicating the differences between closely allied taxa, such as in *Dactylorbiza* and *Epipactis*.

The introductory chapters lucidly explain orchid morphology, using clear watercolour drawings. The conservation aspects of Irish orchids is explained clearly, full protection being given to eight species. Hybridisation in *Dactylorbiza*, a common event and major problem for botanists trying to identify plants, is also discussed.

You will appreciate that I like the style, format and presentation of the field guide. The copy I have has no publisher details, ISBN number or price. I hope sincerely that this will not deter enthusiasts from seeking out and buying what is a superlative example of this popular genre.

Phillip Cribb

