

ORCHID CONSERVATION 97: AN INVITATION

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Many positive and successful conservation efforts are underway in the world today. Little is noted, however, of these efforts. *Orchid Conservation 97* is an attempt to rectify this problem with wide dissemination via the conference and publication of the proceedings in *Selbyana*. Interested conservationists will be capable of adopting these proven techniques or modifying them as necessary in their own localities.

The genesis for *Orchid Conservation 97* began with a small group of concerned conservationists in the Tampa Bay area who were dissatisfied with the almost universal negativism of the conservation movement. Most of these people were members of The Orchid Conservation Committee (TOCC), an organization originally associated with the American Orchid Society North-Central Judging Region and the Florida West Coast Orchid Society¹. Many of the previous lectures and conferences had concentrated on the "gloom and doom" of slash and burn agriculture, pollution, habitat loss, and population explosion. Admittedly, the negative aspects of these problems cannot be ignored or belittled; however, there are many effective conservation efforts that have or are producing positive results. There seems to be little or no interest in these positive and successful conservation efforts, possibly because they have little sensational value and do not stir the general public to demand further action. Notwithstanding this apparent lack of interest by many conservationists, we wanted to produce a conference that concentrated on the broadest possible dissemination of these successful and effective conservation efforts.

The drawback to this idea was that TOCC was a very small local group within the greater Tampa Bay (Florida) area. To orchestrate a conference of the magnitude envisioned, that would reach the desired audience and hopefully produce results, would require the sponsorship and infrastructure of an organization with considerably more stature in the orchid world than

TOCC. The obvious choice was Marie Selby Botanical Gardens, in Sarasota, Florida.

The initial proposal to Marie Selby Botanical Gardens was made by TOCC Chairman of the Board, Mr. John Beckner, who is also a research consultant to the Orchid Identification Center staff at Selby. Executive Director Dr. Mark Bierner, Director of Research Dr. Meg Lowman, and Director of the Orchid Identification Center Dr. John Atwood, all of Selby Gardens, were very receptive to the proposal and agreed to undertake the conference. The name "Orchid Conservation 97" was chosen to reflect the idea of providing current information on the status of orchid conservation in 1997, and it is anticipated that future conferences will be organized at intervals to recognize new conservation initiatives.

The conference will be held at Marie Selby Botanical Gardens, June 6-8 1997. The program will consist of two days of lectures, panels, and work shops pertaining to successful and positive aspects of current orchid conservation. On the last day of the conference, participants may select from any of four informative field trips: (1) Fakahatchee Strand State Preserve, (2) Corkscrew Preserve and Collier-Seminole State Park, (3) Bok Tower Gardens, a part of the National Center for Plant Conservation, and (4) an orchid nursery. A closing banquet will be held on the last evening at the conference hotel; Alasdair Morrison, Chairman of the Royal Horticultural Society Orchid Committee, is scheduled to speak.

Speakers for the conference include Carson Whitlow, James Ackerman, Eric Hågsater, Carlo Balistrieri, Lawrence Zettler, Bruce MacBryde, and Raul Rivero. Topics to be covered include CITES and its ramifications, pollination biology and bottlenecks, symbiotic seed germination, conservation in Mexico, and conservation education. Of particular interest will be a talk on the successful use of tissue culture in the propagation of North American *Cypripedium* species by a group of New Hampshire high school students.

The fee for the conference is \$195 per person. That includes attendance at all lectures, lunch on 6 and 7 June, a reception on the evening of 5 June, and a subscription to volume 18 (2 issues) of *Selbyana*, containing the proceedings of the conference. Passes to Mote Marine and the

¹ The TOCC, while still working closely with its parent groups, has now become an independent 501c non-profit organization.

Ringling Museum have been arranged for spouses not participating in the conference. The closing banquet will be \$50 per person, and all non-registrants to the conference are welcome and encouraged to attend. Unfortunately, attendance is limited so early registration is recommended. A complete brochure with additional details may be obtained from Marie Selby Botanical Gar-

dens, 811 South Palm Avenue, Sarasota, Florida 34236-7726, or by calling (941) 366-5731.

This should be the orchid conservation event of the year and hopefully will provide all participants with information for initiating and implementing local conservation efforts. Just a little effort by a few people can make a difference!