

Odontoglossum Alliance Newsletter

Volume 38

August 2001

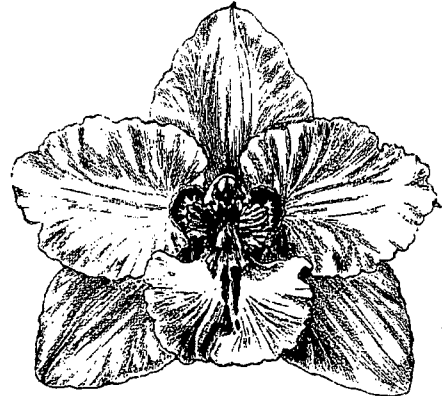
Three Articles

By Stig Dalstrom

TO PULL A DRAGON BY THE TAIL

ORDINARY DAYS IN AN EXTRAORDINARY LIFE

DO NOT LOSE YOUR HEAD OVER ORCHIDS



TO PULL A DRAGON BY A TALE

By Stig Dalström

In November 1999, three dubious characters entered an obscure hotel in Cochabamba, Bolivia. Rick arrived from Oregon, Jan came from Sweden and I left Sarasota in an attempt to locate an elusive orchid, somewhere in this awesome and boisterous country. To understand the background we have to return to 1981. While going through Selby Gardens' herbarium collection, I came across an unknown *Odontoglossum* specimen. Janet and Lee Kuhn of J & L Orchids had sent a raceme with a few starry flowers for identification. The flowers had a peculiar shape and I eventually concluded that it was a new species. The only collection information was "Bolivia, 1978".

My first trip to Bolivia failed to reveal the whereabouts of this orchid, although I did make some other discoveries, one of which became *Odontoglossum tenuifolium*. The second attempt proved fruitless as well. I suspected that I might be chasing this ghost for the duration of my life so in early 1999 I decided to go ahead and describe this species anyway, in spite of scanty material. I chose the name *Odontoglossum dracoceph* because a part of the flower looks like a small dragon's head. The original plant was still alive and currently resided in Jan's greenhouse in Sweden, but for some reason the conditions did not seem to suit this spoiled brat (the plant) and it had refused to do much of anything. Fortunately, a second plant turned up in a friend's greenhouse in Belgium. It supposedly originated from Father Andreetta's orchid collection in Paute, Ecuador. I knew this gentleman well enough to conclude that wherever this plant came from, it probably was not Ecuador. True enough, and eventually the trail once more pointed towards Bolivia.

So here we were, challenging the Bolivian traffic again. My attitude is that when you go to Bolivia you drive like a Bolivian. My less enthusiastic partners thought otherwise and simply took over after a "close one" with a truck. It was just as well because it is difficult to look for orchids in the passing trees and keep the car on the road at the same time.

November is a flowering season for many orchids in Bolivia, and we saw thousands of beautiful *masdevallias* in bloom, but no *odontoglossums*. Gradually a familiar despair developed in my heart. The second from last day we also forgot to bring the food and turned rather grumpy in the afternoon. Fortunately, while digging through some dusty bags scattered in the car we discovered a good-sized salami that seemed "ripe" enough. We decided not to waste it and felt a little better afterwards, for a while. The greater part of the evening and the entire night was a different story altogether. As I was wrenching my intestines, revealing noises from Jan's bathroom told me he was doing great too. Rick is a vegetarian, which is nothing to brag about, but on rare occasions can be quite advantageous. On shaky legs we decided to make one last attempt the next morning. We soon found a pretty *Masdevallia* that looked unfamiliar (and later proved new to science), but no trace of *Odontoglossum dracoceps*, which by now was a legend. I felt lousy on the way back to the car and wanted to kick something hard. I aimed at a branch in the middle of the trail, but wait! There was something growing on it that looked vaguely familiar...? Yes, after a closer examination there was no question about it. Finally, an 18-year crusade was over! I had a location for *Odontoglossum dracoceps*.

ORDINARY DAYS IN AN EXTRAORDINARY LIFE

By Stig Dalstrom

As the plane descends among the rugged peaks of the Ecuadorian Andes, I squint through the cabin window. The darkness is compact, and it is raining. I always get a little sentimental arriving at a foreign port in the darkness. I remember being attacked by dogs one night at an Italian railway station many years ago. Ecuador has a lot more of these imbecile creatures and with the same bad attitude.

I am invited to lecture on *Odontoglossum* species at the International Orchid Show in Quito. The invitation also extends to stay with my old friend Harry Zelenko, a distinguished artist, designer, and orchid personality who recently sold his brown stone building in New York City, which included two levels of greenhouse space on the roof, and moved to the outskirts of Quito. Quite a change. Harry and Lou Jost meet me at the airport, and then the problems start. Where is the car? Harry has just bought a new and unfamiliar "greenish" car but does not remember where he parked it. He is in serious need of cataract surgery. It is dark. It is raining, and we are in South America. Contemplating my fate, I watch my friends run up and down the parking lot in the rain. Finally Harry remembers that he parked on the other lot, and we can eventually get moving. Lou insists on having the backseat and he suddenly looks very solemn. His serious facial expression reminds me of another time in another life, when Harry, with a diabolic grin on his face, drove me around in New York City. It was a rather breathtaking experience, and I realize our next problem. Harry was a choleric driver then and is not likely to have mellowed with age. Considering the overall bad odds, my heart jumps along with the car, as we plunge into the mad flow of lethal metal around us. It turns out that I know the city better than the driver does. In addition, he is almost deaf, and I have to shout, point, and wave all the time to avoid a disaster. Various unidentified carcasses and the frequent and open manholes in the road are a nuisance in daylight but a real pest at night. We fly by a traffic light, which shows red and green simultaneously, and end up in a lane with meeting traffic. Charging cars and buses blink their lights and honk their horns so I suggest that we take a short cut over the plantings to get back to where we belong. Harry "jumps" over some bushes and demonstrates proudly what a well-built vehicle he has. I say that I am amazed. It is very quiet in the backseat.

The Orchid Show turns out to be a success, relatively speaking. Lots of old friends turn up, good and some less good speakers present a variety of lectures and plenty of rare and attractive orchids are exhibited. The chivalrous Manuel Arias from Peru is there with his usually interesting display and generally misleading plant labels. He has several *Masdevallia* species among which a bright red one is unknown to me. I also see other orchids rarely exhibited in the United States, such as *Cyrthochilum* (*Neodryas*) species and a very pretty miniature *Epidendrum* with amethyst colored flowers. My eyes catch a large spray of yellow flowers, and my heart skips a beat as I lean over to see better. No doubt about it, this has to be a new *Odontoglossum* species! I run over to Manuel's sales booth and ask him about it. I have to have it. Unfortunately, he only brought one plant and it has to stay in the display until the show is over; but yes, I can have it as a contribution to science (meaning that it could be named for him). Andrés Maduro from Panama is also present. His fabulous display of rare Panamanian *Lepanthes* and *Telipogon* species, with delicate and intriguing flowers, is truly remarkable. Andrés himself is also an intriguing, but anything but delicate, character. Observing him is like kicking a beehive and watching the contents busily take off in all directions at the same time. He tells me self-importantly that he has bought the entire Arias display, including the *Odontoglossum* plant. I soon realize that "my" plant has been sold three times, but I am not giving it up that easily.

The Colombian presence is strong with several displays and vendors. Everything seems deceptively peaceful, until a call from the police causes a considerable stir. Apparently, somebody is selling illegal plants and the entire show is about to be confiscated. Wild panic breaks out. The Colombian and Ecuadorian police as well as Interpol are involved, and the situation turns hilarious for a while, until the show organizers manage to convince the authorities that only *some* vendors have *some* plants, unknowingly brought illegally to Quito. In haste a lot of plants disappear, or change owners, before the rest are seized and shipped off to a bleak future somewhere in Colombia. It creates a bad atmosphere and a lot of suspicions of who originally called the police.

At the height of the mess, I stand in front of the Peruvian display, reasoning to myself, -"Well, there are things we only do for love, and things we only do for science." I cut off the front part of the *Odontoglossum* plant and stuff it into my herbarium press. Fortunately, the authorities in Ecuador have provided all the necessary legal documents in advance for taking plants out of the country. This may seem a little odd to anybody who has fought the bureaucratic jungles of South America, for any kind of paperwork. However, I am not to question their motives, for I suddenly have a type specimen of a new orchid species for the Selby Herbarium.

The highlight of the show undoubtedly occurs when Cal Dodson receives an outstanding award, the rank of *Caballero*, issued by the Ecuadorian President, for his almost life long contribution to Botany and Science. We are now to address him as Sir Calaway. In addition, I personally receive an Honorary Membership in the Quito Orchid Society, which leaves me surprisingly moved. I simply love these people!

DO NOT LOSE YOUR HEAD OVER ORCHIDS!

(by Stig Dalström)

The man in front of me is a Shuar tribesman, a "former" headhunter from southeastern Ecuador and he hates me. All I want to do is to spend a few days in the Cutucú Mountains, but all *he* wants to do is to cut me into little pieces and have my head as a trophy. From my point of view a compromise is not an option. I explain that a very rare orchid was discovered here fifteen years ago. Unfortunately the unique plant disappeared and

was assumed lost until it (or a second plant) turned up in Germany, supposedly collected on the other side of the Andes, and I need a site confirmation for a floristic project. The man shouts bad words and waves his machete in response.

This is the third "battle" in a week and our expedition is sagging. I cannot really blame him because his hatred consists of fear and frustration for not controlling his life anymore. It belongs to some distant and corrupted politicians. Gone are the good old days when they pored melted gold into the throats of captured Spaniards and shrunk enemy (outsiders) heads into the size of tennis balls. They are not allowed to do this anymore, it gives the area a bad reputation. The Cutucú Mountains are very rich in plants, poorly known scientifically but still protected by fierce Shuars. There just has to be a way around this...

We decide to make a detour and sneak in from behind instead. At the end of a long and winding road we face another obstacle. Before we can reach the forest we have to cross a roaring river in a suspicious looking iron gismo, suspended from a rusty steel cable and by pulling a rope with more knots than I care to think about. Despite dark visions of the River Styx, we get across safely and are about to enter the forest when two men appear, dragging a miserable looking cow through the rainforest. The cow is blissfully unaware that her life will go down-river from here. One man enters the gismo with a rope tied to the cow, while the other man kicks the astonished animal into the water. The cow turns into a manatee and immediately disappears in the strong current. We see three pairs of terrified eyeballs and quickly run down the slope to assist, and can eventually pull them across. By now everybody is exhausted, the cow half-drenched and half-strangled and our hands are full of blisters, but the creature is alive. When we turn around another little man is glaring at us. He has materialized from nowhere and claims that we need to pay to trespass on his land. I look at his wooden spear and agree that it sounds like a mighty fine idea. Finally, in late afternoon we can look around for plants. This is the only known location for the strange *Masdevallia bicornis*. We also find *Sievekingia*, *Huntleya*, *Teuscheria*, and other unusual orchid species in the extremely lush forest, as we climb up and down a ridge, having a great time. The altitude is too low for odontoglossums but at least we beat the Shuars. A *Lepanthes* species is probably new and Lou asks what we shall call it. I suggest "*decapitata*" (beheaded) but he does not think that is such a good idea.

Due to the late hour we prepare to spend the night by our car. Suddenly hostile people surround us. Where did they come from? Lou and Ivan agree to explain to their chief who we are and what we are doing. "Don't we realize how extremely dangerous it is here? Had we crossed the river and gone up the ridge we would have been shot, no questions asked!" Rick and I just look at each other. Several hours later Lou and Ivan return with their heads intact, saying that we can spend the night here in reasonable safety. We just have to leave before seven o'clock next morning when a bus arrives with about twenty angry Shuar chiefs, on their way to discuss how to get rid of foreigners. We leave early.

However, the result of these encounters may lead to something good. The chief that Lou met wants us to teach him the basics of Eco-tourism. The idea is to find ways to use visitors without cutting them, a slightly different angle to a familiar problem.

TEXT TO THE SLIDES

Odontoglossum helgae. A single plant ever found, but where?

2) A certain degree of lunacy is an asset when looking for orchids. Lou Jost, viewing a *Lepanthes* species.

Odontoglossum Alliance Meeting

The Odontoglossum Alliance meeting is scheduled for 10-14 April 2002 in conjunction with the Illinois Orchid Show and AOS trustees meeting to be held at the Sheraton Hotel in Chicago. We have an interesting and exciting program of four speakers. We will have a half-day session of lectures followed by an evening dinner and auction of fine Alliance material. The speakers for the session are:

Larry Sanford who will report on a series of growing experiments.

Milton Carpenter of Everglades Orchids. The title of his talk is: Creating Odontoglossum Alliance hybrids for Tropical and Sub-Tropical climates. The talk will examine his 40-year quest for the creation of Odontoglossum Alliance hybrids, which will perform well in warm climates while retaining some of the beauty of the modern "cool-growing" Odontoglossums.

Stig Dalström will provide one of his fascinating talks on Alliance species.

Norris Williams, Professor at the University of Florida will describe the current state of research and results of the application of DNA technology to the identification of the relationship of the Alliance species.

This is a program of premier speakers with some of the latest information on our plant alliance.

Professor Williams is an author on two recent scientific papers on the DNA results.

Sue Golan, our on site representative, has selected a fine French restaurant in the local area, for our dinner and auction with a modest expense.

The meetings, dinner and auction will be held on Friday, 12 April 2002.

Prepare for the Auction

Your Alliance has assembled prominent speakers for our program. This has not been without cost. The Alliance dues cover the newsletter printing and mailing costs. The plant auction is what provides the ability to have speakers at our meetings. While a number of speakers will be attending the trustees meetings and show, there are a one or two for which attendance without support would not be possible. In addition the newsletter has been enhanced to have more than one color page per issue. These additional costs are covered by the plant auctions at our meetings. Please examine your collection and consider making a donation to the auction. In future newsletters, instructions will be given as to how to deliver your contribution in the event you are unable to attend the meeting in person.

Election Results

Tom Etheridge and Russ Vernon were overwhelmingly elected to our Board of Directors. Each has a term expiring in August 2004. The Board with their respective terms is now:

Term Expires

Helmut Rohrl, Chairman	August 2002
Mario Ferrusi	August 2002
Howard Liebman	August 2002
Tom Perlite	August 2003
Robert Hamilton	August 2003
Juan Felipe Posada	August 2003
Tom Etheridge	August 2004
Russ Vernon	August 2004

The Alliance is indebted to James Rassmann and Roger Williams for their Board service.

Dues Reminder

This is the final reminder for those whose dues have been paid through May 2001 and have not yet sent in their renewal. If there is a renewal notice along with you newsletter, please respond promptly. If dues have not been paid prior to the November newsletter mailing, you will be dropped from the membership list.

Robert Dugger AOS Trophy Best Odontoglossum Alliance Flower Awarded Each Year.

The Alliance established the Robert A. Dugger Award for the Best Odontoglossum Alliance flower awarded each year. The AOS Committee on judging determines the designated award, which is a monetary award. The amount of money in the endowment fund is \$6100.00, which is left intact. The interest gained each year is the monetary award. The award last year was approximately \$375. Donations from our members for the award have dwindled to a mere trickle. We are holding in our bank account an additional \$900.00 donated for the fund. Your Chairman, Helmut Rohrl and President, Steve Beckendorf have directed that these funds be transferred to the AOS bringing the endowment to \$7000.00. They have suggested that any further donations to the fund be made directly to the American Orchid Society. This will permit the Alliance to begin concentrating on examining a potential new project. The membership should be proud of the accomplishment of the Alliance members to establish this fund in honor of Robert Dugger who contributed so much to the generation of Odontoglossum hybrids.

Plant Notes

By Russ Vernon

About a year and a half ago, I wrote a short article concerning a "natural" based product I was using to prevent root rot. This product is called Rootshield. Now that I am repotting some of these plants, I wanted to pass along my observations.

I use Pro-Mix HP 50/50 with Sponge Rok, very large perlite, as a growing medium. With only a few exceptions, the roots were all healthy and extensive. The exceptions were the few plants that had been dripped on by the humidifier. Old roots as well as new roots from the recent growth were all healthy. All but the newest roots were branched.

I have used Rootshield on many other genera as well and find it equally helpful.

Should you want this product, Rootshield can be obtained from many horticultural supply companies.

Plant Notes

By John Miller

For three years I have been battling soft scale. I clean it out in the winter during repotting, but when the summer gets to high night temperatures (above 70 deg F) and the high humidity from the ocean breezes the scale blooms. It is very insidious. You see a little here then a little there and the next thing it is everywhere.

I first thought I solve the problem with Enstar, an insect growth inhibitor. For a while it seemed to work and I proclaimed NO BUGS. At the end of my first year when it came to the winter repotting, there was the scale. The next year I doubled my efforts using both Enstar and Orthene alternately. Again the same result. While the early part of the summer it seemed under control, by the end of the summer it was back again.

This year I consulted with Bob Hamilton and Tom Perlite as to their suggestion. I ended up us with a program of a couple of treatments using Attain and followed up with a round of Orphene. Well! The summer is not over yet. In fact as I write this we are in the midst of that high heat wave coupled with humidity that is above 80%. But so far I do not see any blooming scale as I have in the previous two years. My fingers are crossed.

For me the use of Attainrr was very easy. I have a greenhouse that is 18' by 24'. Attain comes in a spray can. After closing up the greenhouse for the night you set the can down and push the button on the top. This locks the spray open and away it goes as I leave closing the door behind me. The next morning I open the greenhouse and remove the empty can. The cost of a single can is about \$12.00, but if it works it is well worth it.

Plant Notes

By Russ Vernon

Enclosed is the award slide of an Odontioda recognized in last January. Larry Sanford and I bought a group of seedlings and previously bloomed Odonts from Paul Phillips of Radcliff Orchids at the EOC in Pittsburgh the year before. The plants had come from the EYOF (Eric Young Orchid Foundation). I had asked Paul what he knew of the bloomed plants quality. I know Paul and he put on his best sarcastic face and said, "Well you know they are all of exhibition quality." So far, Larry has an AM on Norman Point and I have an HCC on a Victoria Village! More to come?

Please see the color page for Odontioda Quennevais 'Primrose Beauty' HCC/AOS 78 (Eric Young x Samares)



Odm. helgae



Odm. bolina
(dracoceph)



Odm. ariasii



Notylia sp.



Miltonia spectabilis



Miltoniopsis vexillaria



Odm. aspidorhinum



Odm. dracoceph



Odm. epidendroides



Odm. povedanum



Olieriana brevilabia



Oncidium abortivum



Oncidium cucullatum



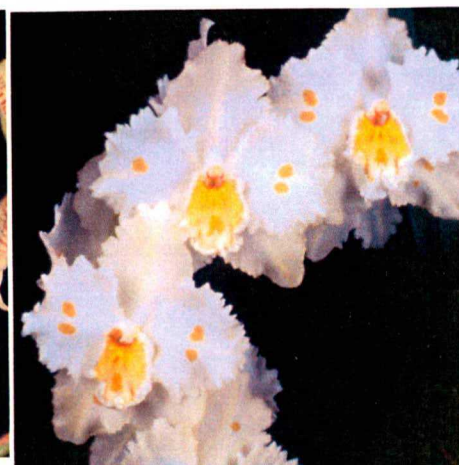
Oncidium floribundum



Oncidium fuscum



Oncidium hastilabium



Oda. Quennevais
'Primrose Beauty' HCC/AOS