



The Zebra Mountain area.

busy building roads? We thought it wiser to get out of the area!

Of course, every field trip has its unexpected mishaps as well. On the second day we thought things had turned for the worst

when it looked as if we would have to travel on enthusiasm as a substitute for petrol. The pipe leading from the spare petrol tank to the main tank of the hired vehicle had a serious leak. Never without a plan, we mixed finely cut pieces of sunlight soap with water to form a mush pulp that was put on the broken section of the pipe. This lasted till we reached Ruacana. Ruacana, not surprisingly, does not have a mechanic workshop, but the owner of the petrol station organised a 2 m long water hose, which we used to make the repair. Essie and I were drenched with petrol in the process—our improvisation lasted until the end of the trip. Barbara rewarded us with a six pack of ice cold beer for our hard, messy work.

Back at home, the “fun” part of the field trip, namely identifying all collected plants, lay ahead. Not all specimens have been identified yet, but two of the specimens caused a lot of excitement in the institute: a new record was identified by Silke from her collection (*Stapelia leenderitziae* N.E.Br.), and Essie collected a rare specimen—only the second record for Namibia (*Rhinacanthus kaokoensis* K.Balkwill & S.Williamson).

A Lifesaving Tip for a “Successful” Field Trip

At the end of a hard day’s work, there is nothing more enjoyable than a cold beer. It relieves the frustration of the chores, such as changing blotters and making notes that need to be taken care of in the evenings. Luise’s recipe to keep a beer cold is as follows: Take a sock; soak it in water; put the beer bottle into the sock; hang the sock in a tree where there is enough wind circulation for half an hour; take the sock down; open the beer and enjoy!

(Thanks TAP for providing the beer incentive for the evenings.) We would also like to thank SABONET for sponsoring the hired vehicle. This increased our capacity to take enough presses along to make the trip really worthwhile. Thanks also to the Anglo American Camp for the generous use of their most welcome facilities in the Zebra Mountains for two nights. ▲

—Sonja Schubert

Pursuing Plants in the Khomas Hochland, Central Namibia

We started out on a field trip on 11 February 2003 that took us to Nauchas, the Spreegtschoogte, and the Gamsberg. The cloudy skies kept us cool and calm. As we drove from Windhoek up into the Khomas Hochland, it was hard to imagine that only a few weeks before it had been dry and blisteringly hot—the January rains refusing to fall, with record high temperatures the order of the day. Now everywhere was green.

It was a Tuesday morning when Silke Bartsch, Tobias Angula and I set out in the SABONET vehicle with our spades, secateurs, crowbars, boxes and enthusiasm to collect a range of plants for the National Botanic Garden in Windhoek. We aimed to collect cuttings of *Euphorbia guerichiana* and *Commiphora* sp., as well as some live plants. With Silke at the wheel, we made steady progress west out of Windhoek and then south towards the Namibgrens Guesthouse. We stopped regularly as we marvelled at the difference in the roadside plants, as compared to when we had travelled here with Ian Oliver, curator of the Karoo Desert National Botanical Garden, before the rains. We stopped at the two known locations for *Euphorbia pseudoduseimata*, looking for seeds. Although there were no seeds, we were delighted to find another small population!

We also found *Pterodiscus aurantiacus*, a small caudiciform plant, and lifted two.

Damp soil eased the task of lifting *Euphorbia gariopina* subsp. *gariopina* and reduced damage to the root system in the process. Tobias showed some mastery with the crowbar, while Silke cursed the GPS and relentlessly filled in data collection forms. When lunchtime came, we sought the shelter of a tree next to the road. With no time to waste, we soon took to the road again and it was then that I became aware of something burrowing into my neck. It was a tick! To my horror I noticed more, crawling up my legs and shirt. Time stood still as I furiously plucked them off. Strangely, my companions were tick-free...

With the afternoon stretching out before us and the drizzle keeping us in good spirits, we stopped to lift *Ebracteola montismoltkei*, *Sarcocaulon marlothii*, *Anacampseros albissima* and a *Stapelia flavapurpurea* (that almost escaped our attention under a thick bush).

Shortly before reaching our destination for the night, we stopped to explore an interesting granite koppie alongside the road. The rock hyrax (dassie) watched our every movement. The koppie turned out to be a place of great interest with a number of large *Aloe viridiflora* and *Cyphostemma bainesii* growing on the slopes. We lifted two *C. bainesii*. We were disappointed to find

neither young *A. viridiflora* plants nor any seeds. Reports from farmers in the area suggest that young *A. viridiflora* plants are rare, as the baboons remove the inflorescences before the seeds have time to disperse.

We reached our destination, grapevines laden with sweet, ripe, black grapes waiting as if ordered – a delicious entrée to the main course of venison. The busy day called for an early night.

On Wednesday morning we worked our way down the Spreegtschoogte Pass. Here we targeted *Euphorbia guerichiana*, taking cuttings and lifting young *Euphorbia guerichiana* plants. About 30 truncheon cuttings of *E. guerichiana* were taken to create a “forest” in the National Botanic Garden. We were also hoping to lift some *Sarcocaulon salm oniflorum*, but had to settle for only one plant in the end. The very steep, rocky terrain did not allow for the removal of the plants with sufficient roots intact. As we progressed down the pass, we saw *Commiphora*, *Hoodia* and *Moringa*. It was obvious that the season’s rain had not yet been down the pass into the lower Namib and it was dry and hot. After lunch, enjoyed under a *Boscia albitrunca*, we set off on the circular route for the Gamsberg. We stopped near some white quartz plains, hoping for an interesting find. I searched in vain, while my colleagues, who chose to climb a nearby mountain ridge, were excited to find a *Commiphora saxicola*. We

took a single truncheon cutting, not wanting to spoil the aesthetic appeal of the only plant near the road.

Soon we arrived at the Goub River Canyon, a tributary of the Kuiseb River. The heat and humidity were stifling, and while the shallow, muddy flow ruled out any prospect of a refreshing swim, Tobias showed the way by splashing his arms and face. As we travelled east towards the Gamsberg, the vegetation changed, with tree species becoming more evident. Leaving the brown dryness of the desert behind us, we climbed the steep Gamsberg Pass and were surrounded by *Commiphora*, *Euphorbia*, *Sterculia* and *Moringa* tree species. After winding our way to the very top of the pass and along the farm road, we arrived at Hakos Guest Farm, situated between the Gamsberg Mountain and the Hakos Mountains, with its endless view of the mountainous Khomas Hochland.

Thursday found us working our way down the pass again, stopping to take cuttings of the *Euphorbia*, *Sterculia* and the two common *Commiphora* species in the area. A few *Myrothamnus flabellifolius* and ferns were also lifted. Later that afternoon we took a walk on the farm (not to collect but to observe) and were surprised at the abundance of *Cyphostemma bainesii*. They seemed to pop up behind every rock and in every crevice.

On Friday morning, we headed back to Windhoek, having successfully collected all the plant material we set out to, other than *Euphorbia spartaria*, which we lifted closer to Windhoek. This last target accomplished, we returned from a very rewarding, beautiful trip! Into the back of the Toyota went *E. lignosa*, *E. guerichiana*, *E. gariepina* subsp. *gariepina*, *Ebracteola montismoltkei*, *Stapelia flavopurpurea*, *Sarco-*

caulon marlothii, *S. salmoniflorum*, *Cyphostemma bainesii*, *Boophane disticha*, *Pterodiscus aurantiacus*, *Anacampseros albissima*, *Commiphora dinteri*, *C. glaucescens*, *C. pyracanthoides*, *C. glandulosa*, *C. tenuipetiolata*, *C. saxicola*, *Sterculia africana*, *Myrothamnus flabellifolius* and a fern.

Should the various cuttings be successfully rooted and later planted out into the National Botanic Garden as planned, they will represent an attractive area of great interest to the public.

Our thanks to SABONET for funding the trip! ▲

—Steve Carr
SABONET Horticulturist



News from South Africa

Burchell's Tracks Retraced in Search of *Oxylaena*

In March 2003, we set out on a collecting trip in search of a species thought to be extinct. The trip started in the Uniondale area and was prompted by the opening of the Burchell 4x4 trail on Pietersrivier, a farm near the Prince Alfred's Pass, owned by Katot Meyer. A section of ox wagon tracks used by Burchell was revealed after a fire and now leads to adventures for many modern-day explorers. Since Burchell first collected the species in 1814, it has not been re-collected.

A trip like this requires careful planning well ahead of the departure date. We did our homework well, researching all available literature, analysing the descriptions, illustrations, old maps and journals. One of our references included a photocopy of the type specimen that is housed at Kew. Of great importance was to visit the region at the same time of the year as Burchell did and to get as close as possible to the original locality, which, in this case, was precise: "Knysna Division, between Cloete's kraal and Paardekraal." This is near Uniondale on a minor road, west of Prince Alfred's Pass. Fourcade (1944), who was familiar with the area, transcribed Burchell's field notebook ("*Catalogus Geographicus Plantarum*") and provided comprehensive notes on this part of his travels. This is essential reading for anyone interested in Burchell or in collecting plants in the area.

Oxylaena has been an enigma for many years. Many botanists searched for it but "never

found it." One of the main reasons for the uncertainty has been flower colour, as it was never described originally. The colour of the florets was stated by Bentham to be orange-yellow, but Burt and Anderberg thought that the florets might be white and pink. The leaves, as illustrated in *Hooker's Icones Plantarum* (1876), are exceptionally long and the cypselas are immature, making positive identification in this case difficult.

After doing all the groundwork, we were positive that we knew what the plant looked like and we had a good idea where to find it. Even then, it was not easy, as we had to search long and hard, putting the SABONET 4x4 to the test in an effort to find a plant resembling our "search-image." Our excitement was great when we found a small, compact, yellow-flowered plant with all the characteristics we were searching for. It was a grey, misty day in the Western Cape mountains. We were cold, but satisfied and decided to head for Oudtshoorn, very proud of our find and ready to process the collections of the day.

A visit to Mr Jan Vlok that evening burst our bubble. "No, this is not *Oxylaena*. It is *Gibbaria scabra*." What a disappointment! It was hard to believe, as there was nothing else flowering in the area that even vaguely resembled the taxon. This *had* to be it—surely there was another explanation? We were not going to give up that easily.

Shortly afterwards, one of us (Marinda Koekemoer) was fortunate to go on a trip to Geneva, sponsored by SABONET. An opportunity presented itself to investigate the type specimens when the NBI sponsored an extension of the trip to Kew. The most thrilling moment of this trip was when we established that *Oxylaena acicularis* and

Gibbaria scabra are in fact the same species. Botanists have been tricked all along: we have known the taxon, but under a different name! What remained was to establish the correct name and to publish the taxonomic treatment for the genus—a story for another day.

We thank SABONET for sponsoring this trip. Thank you also to Katot and Ilse Meyer for their hospitality in providing accommodation and sharing their enthusiasm and knowledge generously, and to Mr Jan Vlok for sharing his expertise. While we are pleased that the mystery has been resolved, we are sad that the excitement and the camaraderie of the search are over!

For accommodation in Oudtshoorn and information on the Burchell trail (or other exciting places around Oudtshoorn), contact: Katot & Ilse Meyer
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—Marinda Koekemoer & Hester Steyn
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