

## PINGUICULA VULGARIS IN ICELAND

ROBERT GIBSON • P.O. BOX 1330 • DUBBO • NEW-SOUTH WALES 2830 • AUSTRALIA

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During early August, 1997, I participated in a hiking trip in southern Iceland. Aside from the stunning scenery and fascinating geology, I observed *Pinguicula vulgaris* in the wild.

Iceland is a young island in the middle of the north Atlantic Ocean, between Scotland and southern Greenland. It has been built from active volcanism over the last 14 million years (Einarsson, 1994). Whilst the island was named after the extensive ice caps which have developed during the present cool temperate climate, up until 3 million years ago the island had a warm temperate climate and a flora similar to that now found in the southeast of the United States of America.

On my trip *Pinguicula vulgaris* was seen to grow at elevations below 600 metres amongst moss in a range of habitats—from thin humus-covered basalt to peaty soil beside creeks and paths. The flat, bright green rosettes, measuring up to 15 cm across, had four to ten leaves and between zero and three scapes. New leaf production from the shallowly buried, bulb-like growing point had stopped for most plants, but the leaves had not yet started to die away. Many plants had open flowers and ripening fruit, and only a few were still developing scapes. The purple flowers up to 1 cm wide had white throats and palates, and short, subhorizontal spurs. The scape of each flower was curved over so that the petals hung below the calyx. However, after pollination the scapes straightened and the fruits were held erect—this may assist in wind dispersal of the seed. Very few insects were seen trapped on the leaves, and those seen appeared to be small (less than 2 mm long) flying insects. No insects were seen visiting the flowers, which might have the ability to self pollinate.

*Pinguicula vulgaris* is the most widespread of the three carnivorous plants usually recorded on Iceland, and is found almost everywhere save for the ice caps and surrounding desert-like plains. The other carnivorous plant species are *Drosera rotundifolia* and *Utricularia minor* (Taylor, 1989; Love, 1983), but they were not seen. *Drosera rotundifolia* reportedly grows in scattered coastal locations on the east, north, and especially west of the island. *Utricularia minor* is recorded from scattered lakes and old peat extraction pits. *Pinguicula alpina* has also been reported three times between 1785 and 1932 in the west and north-west of Iceland (Love, 1983). The presence of this species on Iceland, however, is disputable, and requires further field study.

It was a bonus to see *Pinguicula vulgaris* in the wild during my hike in Iceland. They were a wonderful complement to this amazing part of the world.

### References:

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