

FAREWELL ERIC GREEN

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Eric Green was a well-known carnivorous plant enthusiast extraordinaire who has left a lasting legacy on the world of carnivorous plants. Not only has he greatly increased the knowledge and understanding of native carnivorous plants of South Africa, but he also made a significant contribution to the knowledge of their cultivation. We all had the privilege of meeting Eric during travels to South Africa and this is a brief summary of Eric Green, and some examples of how he helped us, and others in the study of South African carnivorous plants.

Eric Green

Eric lived in Cape Town; and for most of the time that we knew him he was in Southfield, a suburb of Cape Town about 20 km SSE of the city center; and about 10 km east of Table Mountain. In the late 1990's he lived with his daughter, Kim, her husband, Shane, and his grandson Brandon. Eric's son, Shane, also lived in Cape Town. In the 1980's, Eric worked as an illustrator/layout designer in a printing press company (where he also created the sales lists and cultivation guidelines which he sent with his private carnivorous plant sales). Later he had his own business "Green Irrigation", in which he installed and maintained irrigation systems in gardens and buildings in Cape Town.

Eric developed a passion for carnivorous plants in a region rich in indigenous species, especially of the genus *Drosera*. Maybe because of the scarcity of local enthusiasts, Eric established a wide network of communication and trade with numerous CP hobbyists around the world. During this time he built up an impressive private collection of plants, and he was a very skilled grower, not only of native South African species, but of all genera of carnivorous plants. In the 1980's, he had a shade house with many large and thriving *Nepenthes* and *Heliamphora*. In order to provide his pitcher plants with suitable food, Eric raised cockroaches in his garage – to the shock of his wife. By the late 1990's Eric's CP collection took up his entire backyard. Thanks to Cape Town's pleasant climate with mild, humid, and frost-free winters, as well as warm, dry, and sunny summers, Eric was able to build up a large and diverse plant collection.

In 1997 most of Eric's backyard consisted of pots of *Sarracenia* species and hybrids, pygmy *Drosera*, South African CPs, *Byblis gigantea*, and tuberous Australian sundews, all sitting on low benches that were protected from the elements by a partial cover of shade cloth. The backyard was enclosed on three sides by tall concrete walls and near one of these were two large pots; one for *Drosophyllum lusitanicum* and the other for *Roridula dentata* and *R. gorgonias*. Eric had constructed three lean-to greenhouses on two of the boundary walls in which he grew Mexican *Pinguicula*, tropical *Drosera*, *Nepenthes* species and hybrids, *Heliamphora* species (mature and in flower!) and hybrids, *Cephalotus follicularis*, and tropical *Utricularia*. Eric also used the flat concrete roof of his garage in front of the house to grow most of his Venus flytraps, which also had a commanding view of Table Mountain. Amongst his collection was a very large 17-year-old *Nepenthes rajah* plant

Eric was surprised that such plants were rare in cultivation at the time, given the “ease” at which he grew his plant.

Eric propagated his plants and traded them with other enthusiasts around the world. In the 1990’s he was particularly fond of *Pinguicula* and he often sent seed to colleagues with tissue culture labs who were able to produce mature plants quickly; many of these are still in cultivation; such as an attractive form of *Pinguicula moranensis* he informally called “Fraser Beaut” after his friend Fraser Lamond. Eric’s generosity and kindness were obvious to all CPers who interacted with him, whether personally or through seed trades. His willingness to send seed of rare South African CPs was of course gobbled up by many enthusiasts who helped establish many of those species to cultivation thanks to Eric.

For numerous decades, Eric explored the Cape area and amassed a great understanding of where the local carnivorous plants grew. Such places included Table Mountain and Silvermine Nature Reserve, where, among other species, the showy *Drosera cuneifolia*, *D. hilaris*, and *D. ramentacea* grow; the Fernkloof Nature Reserve near the town of Hermanus (Front Cover), where *Roridula gorgonias*, *D. glabripes*, and *D. slackii* can be found; Bainskloof (Fig. 1), for *D. regia*; and Gifberg and Cederberg where *D. alba* forms stunning carpets of tightly packed blood red rosettes in thin, seasonally sodden soils. Eric also knew of different locations to see plants in the diverse and beautifully flowered *D. cistiflora* and *D. pauciflora* complexes, such as at Caledon, Darling, and Malmesbury (Fig. 2). He would often travel to these places in his motorcycle, and was keen to take visiting enthusiasts from overseas there too, or direct them to these places. Eric undertook several of his fieldtrips with his friend Günter Eitz.

During these field trips, Eric (and Günter) also came upon sundews which he could not identify, and which he proposed to be new to science, and later often were described by botanists as new species, among them *Drosera slackii*, *D. rubrifolia*, *D. coccipetala*, *D. ericgreenii*, and the natural hybrid *D. × corinthiaca*. Especially, Eric discovered many different location forms and taxa from the winter-growing, summer-dormant *D. cistiflora* and *D. pauciflora* complexes – some of which were described later by Paul Debbert as *D. variegata* (also known by the informal name *D. cistiflora* “Eitz”), *D. liniflora*, *D. rubripetala*, and *D. atrostyla*. Unfortunately, most of these botanical descriptions do not mention the original discoverer of the plant.

Memories of Eric Green

Robert Gibson

I had the great fortune of meeting up with Eric in 1997, 1998, and 2006. On my first trip I did not know Eric well and yet he welcomed me enthusiastically at Cape Town and generously showed me around many of the local carnivorous plant sites. One of the most memorable trips was to Gifberg and Cederberg, about 250 km north of Cape Town to see *Roridula dentata*, red-leaved *Drosera capensis*, and different forms of *D. cistiflora*. We unfortunately timed our visit in late July 1997 to one of the rare wet days in the region. The chilly air and rain did not dampen our spirits to see these amazing carnivorous plants in the wild, in a beautiful setting, but we were soaked to the bone after walking around in wet fynbos and from a slow and cold ride on the motorcycle back to Cape Town. Eric stayed in the lee of a south-bound truck for some respite from nippy headwinds. Despite this we returned to Cape Town sodden and cold but still buzzing from the plants we had seen that day.

Fernando Rivadavia

I met Eric Green on two trips, in 1997 and in 2006. Unfortunately, soon after arriving in Johannesburg in 1997, I was robbed of all my money, passport, camera, GPS, etc. Eric took me under his



Figure 1: Eric Green in the field at a *Drosera regia* site near Bainskloof in August 2003. Photo by Aric Bendorf.

wing, housing me for two weeks, feeding me, and even paying for all my expenses for the first few days until I could get a new credit card. As a result, I ended up wasting too much time between banks and consulates on that trip, but Eric did his best to save my vacation by taking me to numerous CP habitats. He even lent me his old camera for my two weeks in Cape Town as well as for the following four weeks that I travelled around the rest of South Africa and neighboring Zimbabwe.

Those two weeks with Eric in 1997 was definitely an odd time for me: I was of course very shaken by the whole robbery ordeal, but at the same time highly excited with all the amazing CPs I was exposed to. It was only over the course of the following months and years that it slowly sunk in and I came to appreciate all that Eric and his family had done for me while I was in Cape Town.

Eric personally took me to see several breathtaking CP locations, mostly on the back of his motorbike (Rivadavia 2000), which was of course fantastic. However I also remember tediously long hours on the back of that bike, feeling miserably cold and wet due to winter mists and rains, wondering how much longer my nearly frostbitten fingers would be able to keep clasping Eric's waist. We sped between CP sites as I held on for dear life, sometimes peeking over Eric's shoulder to see the speedometer reaching 160 and even 170 km/h, the whole time hoping that no trucks would come speeding around a corner on the narrow mountain roads, and praying for no guinea fowl or baboons to suddenly cross the road in front of us.

Eric had to work during the last few days of my stay in Cape Town, so he drew some magnificent maps of CP sites, all from memory. Thanks to the level of detail, I was astonished that I was able to find each and every spot on his hand-drawn maps! The only (very frustrating) exception was *D. regia* which I walked past several times, looking for an open habitat similar to what I had seen in



Figure 2: Eric (on right) with Andreas Fleischmann (center) and Fernando Rivadavia (left) at one of the few remaining sites of the purple-flowered form of *Drosera cistiflora* near Malmesbury, September 2006. Photo by F. Rivadavia.

Thomas Carow's pictures. Eric later told me *D. regia* actually grew among thick grasses and laughed at how much time Thomas had spent carefully clipping away the grasses so he could take those beautiful shots.

During my second trip in 2006, I mostly saw more of the same species and better explored habitats previously visited. But I did visit several new spots with a few more species, finally saw *D. regia*, and even discovered a new species of *Utricularia*. Yet the highlight for me was the rare dark-purple flowered *D. cistiflora* in full bloom. We only found this on our last day, thanks to a picture in a botanical book bought a few days earlier, which led us to the small town of Kalbaskraal. We happened to stop by a field that had many pretty wild flowers and decided to ask the farm owner if we could go take some pictures. To our huge surprise, the farmer not only knew about the dark-purple flowered *D. cistiflora*, but the picture in the book had been taken on his property, and he would be delighted to take us to the very spot – actually, two spots!

Thus, through a series of enormous coincidences we wrapped up our 2006 trip with two stunning populations littered with dozens of wide open dark-purple flowers of this amazing *D. cistiflora* form, which none of us had ever seen before. We were also very lucky that we were there early on a beautiful sunny day, since we'd missed seeing open flowers at other *D. cistiflora* and *D. pauciflora* populations due to overcast weather or because we arrived too late in the day.

It makes me very happy that of all the days Eric could have joined us in the field, he had by chance come on our last day to share the spectacular discovery of the rare dark-purple flowered *D. cistiflora*. As we admired what to me is the most extraordinary sundew in the world, I was able

to thank Eric for all that he'd done for me on those two trips to South Africa, while literally on my hands and knees.

It's probably very fitting that this is also my last memory of Eric Green: both of us sitting on the ground, among those beautiful, dark purple *D. cistiflora* blooms. A memory to last me a lifetime!

Andreas Fleischmann

During my South African trip in 2006, which at the same time was Fernando's second and Robert's third trip, we met with Eric twice for dinner and were able to drag him away from his work schedule to be with us in the field on our last day. Eric drew detailed maps, including every tiny dirt road and track, enabling us to quickly find almost everything we wanted, including even sites which Fernando and Robert had already seen nine years earlier, but failed to locate again from memory.

Thanks to Eric's location data and useful hints, we were able to see 23 taxa of carnivorous plants in just two weeks time – that's almost the entirety of South African CP flora! Eric was very happy that he was able to take a few hours off work to join us during two field trips; and for me it was a memorable experience to see him botanizing CP habitats and talk about the plants we encountered; re-discovering plants that he had seen many times before did not diminish his passion when he spotted the first specimens at a certain location. These spectacular sights, together with Eric's kindness, knowledge and enthusiasm will always be treasured.

Out of the many interesting stories regarding CP discoveries and past trips, which Eric glowingly told us during dinner, I remember a few nice anecdotes: Eric told us about Fernkloof Nature Reserve, a CP hotspot near the town of Hermanus, which he visited many times. Eric was smoking cigarettes while ascending Fernkloof valley, when he first met a local park ranger. They went for a walk together, and the ranger first was quite reserved, and Eric told us that he had the feeling that the ranger did not seem to like him much – because he noticed that Eric kept smoking cigarettes in the field – walking in dry, flammable fynbos vegetation in a protected area. The ranger was apparently afraid that Eric would throw away the cigarette stubs in the field, but then Eric smiled, and showed him the content of the pockets of his trousers. Eric told us that he always put the stubs in his pockets, and that on that day, they were full of cigarette stubs (Eric called them by the Afrikaans word “stompies”). Eric emptied his pocket into his hand, and showed it to the ranger. The surprised park ranger laughed, and became friends with Eric – and Eric told him a lot of interesting facts about the local CPs, of course.

Another story is that of Eric's discovery of the first South African “tuberous sundew”. In the past, he collected plants to grow in his greenhouse, but also to share with friend CP growers all over the world. Once, he and Günter Eitz went to Gifberg highlands, to a nice location of the winter-growing *Drosera alba*, and dug with a shovel in the summer-hardened dried soil. While sieving the soil for dormancy organs of *D. alba*, he noticed some small, globose tubers. He was amazed, as *D. alba* was the only plant growing at this spot in the rainy season, according to his memory. Therefore, the tubers could only have belonged to the *Drosera*. He sent the tubers to CP growers, very excited that he had discovered the first tuberous African sundew. Half a year later, his friends reported that a nice species of *Oxalis* was growing in their pots – but no *D. alba*. And thus the myth of tuberous *Drosera* in Africa was very short lived. And indeed, we too, during our field trip in 2006 observed this nice pink-flowered *Oxalis* species growing sympatrically with *D. alba* populations on Gifberg.

Eric told us many more interesting stories about his plant discoveries. I was amazed by his botanical knowledge, his enthusiasm, kindness, and modesty. Eric, thank you again for your kind hospitality when Fernando, Robert, Kirk, Stew, and I visited South Africa in 2006; for all of the inspiring discussion on CPs, but especially for botanising and exploring the Cape area, for sharing

your experiences and discoveries with the CP community, and for helping to introduce so many of those South African beauties in cultivation! Without your efforts, the CP world would not be as rich, we would not know of so many beautiful South African sundews!

Christian Dietz

The name Eric Green has been long known to me for his extensive field work and the discovery of many South African plants. In preparation for my second trip (together with Dr. Claus-Jürgen Lenz and Tim Beier) through South Africa in September 2012, I managed to contact him and after exchanging emails we decided to meet in Cape Town.

Eric gave us a warm welcome at his house in Kuilsrivier. He was really interested to hear about what we had already seen and what we still wanted to see. His deep love for carnivorous plants was obvious.

He had an incredible memory for places. One plant we had not been able to find in 2009 was *Drosera ramentacea*. Eric was able to describe in all details off the top of his head where this plant grows. His description was so detailed, that he could even describe the shape of a nearby rock formation. Without his help, we most likely would never have found them!

We asked Eric if he could show us a location on a farm close to Caledon that he discovered years ago. Eric kindly agreed and a few moments later we were on the road and he was teaching me how to drive correctly on South African highways, especially how to overtake other cars. In South Africa, slower cars often offer the possibility to be easily overtaken by faster ones. As a “thanks”, the faster car should flash its hazard lights 2-3 times after overtaking the slower car, who will then politely flash his front lights in return. According to Eric not following these rules would be ignorant and rude to the kind (but slow) driver. We all had lots of fun for the rest of the drive discussing this cultural quirk, as Eric continuously commented on every single car we overtook.

We finally arrived at the location near Caledon, where we saw *Drosera coccipetala*, *D. zeyheri*, and *D. cistiflora*. Sadly the *D. coccipetala* and *D. zeyheri* (dark pink and deep red respectively) had already spent flowers! Even so, it was well worth the visit for the privilege to be taken there by the actual person who discovered those rare plants.

We stayed at the Caledon site about two hours before we drove back to Eric’s house. We gave him one of our books (Dietz *et al.* 2010), which we produced after our first tour in 2009, as a small thank you. The first thing he looked up was the pictures of the sundew named after him, *D. ericgreenii*. He told us how surprised and happy he was when he heard that a plant had been named after him. He still couldn’t believe it.

Eric was really interested to know what we have seen during our trips in South Africa, so we promised to show him pictures of everything as soon as we got home in October. Sadly I never got in contact with him again. The bad news that he had passed away was sent to me by his son’s girlfriend, Elmarie, in March.

Thanks for everything, Eric! It was a pleasure to meet you and to be out with you a day. This day will stay in our memories for a long time! Thanks!

Eric’s Legacy

Eric helped spread a wealth of information about the carnivorous flora of the Cape Town region at a time when very little was known, allowing many CP enthusiasts today around the world to grow plants that were previously not in cultivation. The knowledge and plants shared have also resulted in the publication of numerous new species, including *D. × corinthiaca* (Gibson & Green 1999) and *D.*

ericgreenii (Fleischmann *et al.* 2008). Eric's enthusiasm for carnivorous plants was contagious, and thanks to his generosity many of the plants he shared live on in plant collections around the globe.

Sadly Eric passed away on Friday 15 March 2013. He is survived by a son, daughter and at least one grandchild. He will be sadly missed by many carnivorous plant enthusiasts around the world. Farewell Eric. His spirit will live on in the plants he discovered.

Acknowledgements: Thank you Eric, and your family, for making us feel welcome and sharing your immense generosity, passion, and knowledge with us and with CPers around the world. We thank Aric Bendorf, Günther Eitz, Frank Wolpert, and Dr. Claus-Jürgen Lenz for providing additional details about Eric and also sharing some of their memories with us as we prepared this paper.

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10th International Carnivorous Plant Conference
18–20th JULY 2014
CAIRNS-AUSTRALIA

ANNOUNCEMENT:

10th ICPS CONFERENCE
18–20 JULY 2014
CAIRNS, AUSTRALIA



The 2014 ICPS Conference is presented by the three Australian CP Societies: The Australian Carnivorous Plant Society, The Victorian Carnivorous Plant Society, and The Australasian Carnivorous Plant Society.

The conference will be hosted by The Cairns Botanic Gardens, which houses an impressive collection of tropical CPs.

This 3-day event will cater for the scientific/academic community, hobbyists, and conservationists alike with high quality contemporary speakers and a range of public events.

Two unique post-conference field trips have been organised to capture the diversity of tropical Australian CPs:

- Monday 21 July 2014, a full-day trip to Mount Bartle Frere to see three different locations for *Drosera schizandra*.
- Tuesday 22 – Saturday 26 July 2014, a rare opportunity to visit the very tip of Cape York to see *Nepenthes*, Tropical *Utricularia*, *Drosera*, and *Byblis*.

To express an interest in attending and to receive a pack, please email:

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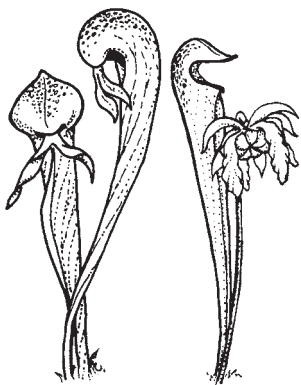
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Front Cover: Eric Green in the field at the Fernkloof Nature Reserve near the town of Hermanus, South Africa, in July 1997. Photo by R. Gibson. Article on page 76.

Back Cover: Bob Hanrahan at the Coalmine Beach *Cephalotus* site near Walpole, Western Australia, in July 2007, showing the plants growing on steep angles of the hills. Photo by Phill Mann. Article on page 87.

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