

Orchids from Tanjung Pappar, Pulau Saparua, Moluku Province, Indonesia

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Habitat and Climate



The cape is very rugged and dissected karst limestone with deep narrow crevices. The surface is highly eroded and brittle. The vegetation is largely intact but over the centuries has undoubtedly been modified by man. *Pandanus* sp. dominate the understory, and a mixture of hardwoods form a broken canopy. *Hoya* cf. *coronaria* is a predominant climber on the cliff edges. Sparse leaf litter was scattered across the surface forming pockets soil.

Pulau Saparua is the driest of the islands to the east of Ambon and south of Ceram. The monsoon reaches the island normally from July to September, bringing heavy rainfall and winds, particularly in August. During this period, high waves drench everything from the cliff edges to many meters inland. The heavy rains eventually wash the salt out of the rocks and leaf litter,

An El Nino event in 2016 caused a 15 month drought on the island, killing a number of large hardwoods. In September 2017 it rained non-stop for over 30 days. The vegetation at this location, with exceptions, seems very resilient to these conditions.

The main flowering season for orchids was said to be the first quarter of the year. Many genera were seen, but without flowers.

Vanda lissochiloides

This robust terrestrial *Vanda* was only found as scattered individuals directly on the cliff edges on Paparu, though on Pulau Molana, free-standing karst blocks on the east coast were covered thickly in colonies of this orchid. Some individuals were flowering (late November). During the monsoon these colonies would be drenched by waves during storms.



Vanda furva

Only a single plant was found growing in its original position, on a cliff-edge tree, immediately above a large *V. lissochiloides*. It was flowering profusely.



Dendrobium cf. calceolum

During the drought of 2016 the orchids on the trees that died were relocated on living trees. It was reported that most were in the crowns of the dead trees.



Notes

As Saparua, and the neighbouring islands of Molana and Haraku are very dry, there are almost no mosquitoes and apparently next to no risk of malaria, in contrast to Ceram. The result is that these islands are slowly attracting people and the coastal vegetation is slowly being destroyed.

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