

Daniel Sullivan (1836 – 1895)

Daniel (or David) Sullivan, born in 1836, was headmaster for 27 years of the State School at Moyston, a small town near the Grampian mountain range in western Victoria, Australia. The discovery of gold in 1857 started a small gold rush and the post office, which opened in 1860 as Campbell's Reef, was renamed Moyston in 1866. Today Moyston, with a population of about 350 people, is part of the greater Ararat district, and is noted for its proximity to Hall's Gap in the Grampians and its potential for further mineral prospecting.

In the early 1870s, to relieve the tedium of village life and the stress of his work at school, Sullivan began collecting mosses and ferns. He sent specimens for identification to the government



Paracaleana minor

Once found in Northland and Bay of Plenty, and now known from a single small colony at Rotorua, the small duck orchid *Paracaleana minor* (known also as *Caleana minor* and *Sullivania minor*), was first recorded in New Zealand in the early 1900s. It is a slender orchid, with a narrow linear leaf 4–10 cm long attached at the base of the plant. The thin red flower stem 5–20 cm high supports 1–7 yellowish-green “upside down” flowers, with the irritable labellum, which is covered in raised purple glands, attached at the top by a flat, curved, sensitive strap. It flowers in November and December, and is assumed to be insect pollinated, but also reproduces by forming new tubers.

PHOTO: John Johns, provided by Brian Molloy

botanist and director of the Melbourne Botanic Garden, Ferdinand von Mueller, who then encouraged him to make a comprehensive collection of plants in his vicinity, and promised to name them. It was timely, for Mueller was embarking upon an ambitious project to distribute duplicate sets of dried native plant specimens to educational institutions, and was establishing a large network of collectors across Victoria. Sullivan became an important part of that network.

Mueller was also an enthusiastic patron of the Field Naturalists' Club of Victoria, founded in 1880, and in July 1881 Sullivan was elected a member. In August that year he contributed “A Census of the Grampian plants” to the club's proceedings and presented a set of dried specimens for its herbarium.

Enumerating about 600 species, his work was published as ten papers in *Wing's Southern Science Record* (1882–83). Subsequent papers on the Droseraceae (sundews), Leguminosae (native peas) and Ranunculaceae (buttercups) of Victoria, and on the Epacridaceae (southern heaths) of the Grampians appeared in the *Southern Science Record* or in the *Victorian Naturalist*, the Field Naturalists' Club journal, which began monthly publication in 1884. Two papers on the mosses of Victoria, in which he mentions having collected 200 species from different parts of the colony (1887), appear to have been his last contribution to the club.

Sullivan added many new habitats for Victorian plants, and several species, especially mosses, were named after him. A minute moss, *Aloina bifrons* (synonym *Aloina sullivaniana*), is indigenous to Australia and New Zealand, where it is known from a few small populations. Three specimens collected by D Sullivan in 1883 at Moyston, Victoria, are in the plants collection of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa. At Halls Gap in the Grampians Sullivan discovered an orchid that Mueller, in 1882, named *Caleya sullivanii*, and has since been known as *Paracaleana minor* and *Sullivania minor*. Widespread in Australia, *Paracaleana minor* is a rare vagrant in New Zealand.

Elected a fellow of the Linnean Society (London) in 1885, but compulsorily retired by the Education Department in 1894, Sullivan's health and spirits declined. After a short illness he died at Moyston on 2 June 1895, in his 60th year. The Daniel Sullivan Memorial Seat at Halls Gap is a fitting place to rest and reflect upon the significant contribution he made to the study of Australian plants.