

Committee R.D. Fitzgerald Trophy
Australian Native Orchid Society

May 21, 2010

Dear Colleagues:

Please accept this letter as a formal and enthusiastic endorsement of Colin Bower for the R.D. Fitzgerald Trophy in 2010. To be honest, I did not know of the existence of this trophy until informed by Dr. Peter Weston a few weeks ago. In my professional opinion, Colin Bower makes a logical and happy match for this award for two outstanding reasons.

First, let's remember that Fitzgerald carried out seminal research and field observations on self-pollination in the native orchids of Australia. He also commented on the low conversion rate of flowers into fruits in at least one *Dendrobium* sp. Dr. Bower's work from 1992 until the present day is not only in concert with Fitzgerald's pioneer studies it expands and develops the role of insects as agents of cross-pollination in your terrestrial species. Bower has made considerable progress in less than 20 years of fieldwork. Fortunately, the Missouri Botanical Garden subscribes to *The Orchadian* and the *Australian Journal of Botany*. I own a copy of *Genera Orchidacearum* Volume 2 so it has been easy to follow Dr. Bower's progress whether he publishes his research alone or with Drs. Brown, Peakall, Mant and Weston. While I acknowledge the sheer importance of Dr. Bower's long-term work on the pollination of orchids by male wasps please note that I am most interested in his past studies on hybridization in *Diuris* and *Chiloglottis*. This topic does not get all the attention it deserves in Australian Orchidology despite the fact what we are going through a much-extended period in which large species are being chopped up into little ones. First generation (F1) hybrids and species with past histories of recombination must be identified and tracked if Australian treatments of orchid diversity are to remain relevant.

Second, let's also remember that Fitzgerald was not trained as a botanist. Dr. Bower's highest degree is in Zoology. One of the most exciting features of life in Australia is that people often enjoy double careers and it's their second career that makes the most positive impact on society. I've discussed this quality of careers with North American colleagues and we agree that what happens in Australia has no modern parallel in America or Canada. After all, we've forgotten what Fitzgerald did to better Australian railroads but his completed orchid publications live on. Likewise, the late Sophie Ducker is remembered for her contributions to studies on algae of the southern hemisphere and her books on the history of Botany. We don't have much to say about her job running

student laboratories at the U. of Melbourne (although she did it for over a quarter of a century). The late, William W. Delaney is acknowledged for his work as a wildlife painter/illustrator compared to his professional employment as an architect. A dear friend of mine is about to receive an Australian Medal of Honor in June 2010 and I can assure you that it wasn't for her work at the ABC archives. I could go on and on but we really should consider ourselves lucky that Dr. Bower is making such accomplishments in our field while he is relatively young and fit instead of waiting for time allotted in retirement. Consequently, I argue there are few applicants as appropriate for this trophy as Colin Bower.

Sincerely,

Peter Bernhardt
Professor Biology
Research Assoc. The Missouri Botanical Garden, Royal Botanic Gardens (Sydney)