

## A small orchid of fire renewal and inspiration at Cape Conran Coastal Park

**27.10.2020** - Parks Victoria rangers were recently surprised to uncover some spectacular Red Beak orchids, *Pyrorchis nigricans*, found growing in the Cape Conran Coastal Park in East Gippsland.

Red Beak orchids are a rare sight at Cape Conran Coastal Park, as they generally only grow after being stimulated by intense fire activity. Interestingly, the name *Pyrorchis* comes from the Ancient Greek word *pyr* meaning fire and *orchis* meaning orchid.

Despite the vast impacts of the summer 19/20 bushfires, rangers were pleased to see how the recent bushfire has helped nature to thrive in the park by creating a favourable environment for certain species to grow again.

The delicate Red Beak orchid is a tiny, ground-hugging plant that can range in size from five to 24cm in height, making it incredibly difficult to spot. It has a rotund, heart-shaped leaf which has tinges of red flecks and can sometimes feature black spots. On top of the leaf, you can find anywhere between two and seven flowers displaying white to pinkish tones with dark red veins.

The Red Beak orchid blooming for only a few weeks between September and November, turns jet black when dried, which gives rise to another common naming convention – Black orchid.

Visitors can go on their own discovery journey throughout Cape Conran Coastal Park and try to spot Red Beak orchids, seen at East Cape and along the Nature Trail from East Cape to West Cape.

Park visitors are reminded to stay informed with the latest Covid-19 restrictions. Visitors are responsible for their own hygiene and are encouraged to bring their own hand sanitiser as soap is not provided, wear a face mask, and practice good hygiene.

For the latest park updates, visit [www.parks.vic.gov.au](http://www.parks.vic.gov.au) or contact 13 1963.