



A Year in the Life of a *Govenia*

Over a 12-month period, OSM members locate a Costa Rican Orchid, begin the identification process, lead two botanists/taxonomists to plants in bloom, and follow the official identification, cataloging, and greenhouse placement of a specimen.

Rain doesn't stop postal employees from completing their rounds, and it certainly doesn't stop any orchidists determined to see something *in situ*. A band of OSM members visited the Savegre River Valley, Costa Rica, in May 2005, and experienced clear mornings and afternoon downpours.



It was during one of those downpours that Linda Sizer returned to the lodge and enlisted others to come and see the orchid that she found. After a little (HUH!) trial-and-error, she led OSMers to the site of her find. At that point, it was agreed that she had found an orchid, but there was no idea as to what it is.



Linda was among OSM members who made the March 2006 visit to Costa Rica. Stopping at the Jardín Botánico Lankester, there was an opportunity to visit with Kerri Dressler, who does the photography for her husband Bob - Dressler, R.L. (1993). *Field guide to the orchids of Costa Rica and Panama*. Ithaca, NY: Comstock Publishing Associates). Rod Knowles and Linda transferred images to a portable medium, and Kerri had Bob examine them. He clearly identified it as a *Govenia*, and “probably” a new species.



A note at this point. The blooms of this *Govenia* are very small, and it is one of some 26 listed species (Genus: *Govenia*; Tribe: Cymbidieae; Subfamily: Epidendroideae; Family: Orchidaceae). High-powered magnification is important in differentiating species, and “Linda’s *Govenia*” was not an exception.

In May, 2006, Russ Tyler and Rod Knowles returned to Costa Rica, with the specific purpose of leading Robert Dressler and Franco Pupulin (University of Costa Rica and the Jardín Botánico Lankester) to the site found in May 2005. With amazing efficiency, and good fortune, the site was reached and there were many plants in bloom. With the appropriate permits, Bob and Franco took a small number of specimen plants and Rod and Russ observed and did photographic documentation.





Returning to the Jardin Botánico Lankester, Franco examined the blooms under the microscope and photographed a plant, while Bob pressed a plant. The remaining plants were potted up and placed in the orchid house of the Jardin Botánico Lankester.





Linda's find is a thriving colony of *Govenia ciliilabia*. This colony is terrestrial, but *Govenia* can be epiphytic. The blooms in this colony are creamish yellow and finely flecked with purple, with a white column, and a purple-striped lip. True to its name, it is characterized by very, very fine hairs (thus the importance of magnified examination of a sample bloom).

For *Govenia ciliilabia*, it was a fine year and an orchid hunt had a most happy ending. Linda can take great pleasure from knowing that she not only found an important orchid *in situ*, but she also has made a major contribution to the orchid collection and documentation of the Jardin Botanico Lankester and the University of Costa Rica.

(05 June 2006 – Tyler & Associates Orchids)