

COWHORN ORCHID

Cyrtopodium punctatum (L.) Lindl.

Synonyms: *Epidendrum punctatum* L.

Family: Orchidaceae (orchid)

FNAI Ranks: G5?/S1

Legal Status: US-none; FL-Endangered



Billy B. Boothe



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Field Description: **Orchid** attached to tree trunks by many white aerial **roots**. **Stems** (pseudobulbs) 30 - 35 cm long and 5 cm thick at base, pointed, with papery sheaths or rings left from old leaf bases. **Leaves** to 71 cm long, narrowly lance-shaped with parallel veins, rising from tips of pseudobulbs. **Flowers** to 7.5 cm across, in showy, much-branched clusters up to 1 m long with 30 - 40 flowers; **sepals** 3, pale yellow with large purple- brown spots; **petals** 2, bright yellow with small purplish-brown spots; **lip** 3-lobed with 2 brownish-red lobes curving strongly upward, and middle lobe bright yellow. **Fruit** to 9 cm long and 5 cm wide, green, nodding.

Similar Species: An exotic terrestrial species, *Cyrtopodium paranaense*, has yellow-green flowers with no spots; it has escaped into pine rocklands in Dade County.

Related Rare Species: More than 70 other native orchid species are endangered or threatened in Florida.

Habitat: Trunks and stumps of cypress trees in swamps and scrub cypress stands, branches of buttonwood trees in coastal hammocks, and occasionally pine rocklands and marl prairies; epiphytic, rarely terrestrial.

cowhorn orchid

Cyrtopodium punctatum

Best Survey Season: Flowers March - May but pseudobulbs and leaves are distinctive all year.

Range-wide Distribution: FL, Mexico, West Indies, Central and South America.

Conservation Status: This orchid was removed "wagonload upon wagonload" by plant collectors, and is now found in only the most remote areas in a few preserves.

Protection and Management: Enforce plant protection laws and prosecute plant poachers. Protect wetlands from draining and logging.

References: Coile 2000, IRC 1999, Langdon 1981b, Luer 1972, McCartney 1985a, McCartney 1985b, Ward 1979, Wunderlin and Hansen 2000a.

