

Orchid of the Month – February 2017

By Joan Gunn

Ornithocephalus inflexus



This miniature charmer (about four inches tall) grows well mounted and thrives in the intermediate greenhouse. This is a small plant without pseudo bulbs and as the slender, fragile roots require constant moisture, the base of the plant should be covered with a little moss. It can be grown horizontally on a tree-fern raft or on cork (for moisture control), but we grow it on a vertical mount and water frequently, year round. The leaves come out in a fan and the flower spikes have a short stem supporting the small white flowers. This plant was collected in Guatemala. According to a picture in *Orchids Travel by Air*, *O. inflexus* flowers can be green in the plants native to Panama.¹

It blooms from 5 to 6 months of the year, starting sometime between October and December here in Sacramento. In Mexico it blooms from early spring to late summer.² Originally it came from Weyman Bussy in the fall of 2001, as an unidentified species from Jalapa, Guatemala. Recently identified by Ron Parsons, and for a confirming reference picture, see *Introduction to Orchids of Mexico* by Leon A. Wiard, page 207 or *Simon & Schusters Guide to Orchids*, page 116. Rather rare in Guatemala where it grows epiphytically on trees in forests and pasturelands, up to 1,100 meters altitude.³ This reference also notes that this plant is tolerant of disturbances. However, a different species of *Ornithocephalus* in the same collection suffered severely from repotting, so we are hesitant and treat the plant gingerly.



Ornithocephalus (“bird’s-head”, so designated because of the resemblance of its column and anther to a bird’s head,) was established by William J. Hooker in 1824. It is a genus of miniature species. As a rule, they are delicate plants to be grown by experts.

1 Orchids Travel by Air, Mulder, page 92.

2 An Introduction to the Orchids of Mexico by Leon A. Wiard, page 207.

3 Orchids of Guatemala and Belize by Oakes Ames and Donovan Stewart Correll, pages 686-7