



Informationen zur Umwelt und für Naturreisende auf Kreta:
Information about the Environment and for travellers in Crete:

The Orchids of Crete (Part 18): genus *Orchis* *Orchis palustris*^[1] JACQ. [ssp. *elegans* HEUFFEL]

So far we introduced **60 Orchid types** of Crete with our leaflet series “**The Orchids of Crete**” (Part 1- 17); therefore see at http://www.kreta-umweltforum.de/NLUK_en.htm [Navigator rubric **Botanical**].

^[1] *Orchis palustris* also known as *Anacamptis palustris*; German: **Sumpf-Knabenkraut**; English: **no common name**

From the two known and one more doubtful place of finding of *Orchis palustris* on Crete is with a probability bordering on certainty currently only the location in Matala occupied, also this was threatened in the past by anthropogenic influences and by advancing tourism. Currently it is extreme threatened in its continued existence by ploughing up of land for crop production and animal husbandry (meadow mowing and keeping of livestock within biotope). The Habitat area (the coastal marsh) is drained by new and small channels and it is anticipated that *Orchis palustris* in Crete (within 1-3 years) is the definitive "off".

The following pictures show, besides the biotope area (fig. 1 and 2), the country carination (fig. 3), the meadow mowing (fig. 4) and cattle ranching in the environment (page 2, fig. 5 and 6).





Staff members of the NLUK counted only 78 plants (in bud) by mid May 2009, of which 22 were visibly affected by livestock in the biotope (eroded and/or trodden) and will unfortunately not come to flourish. The following picture (fig. 7) show *Orchis palustris* in bud at location Malia on the 9th of May 2009; the increased desiccation of Habitat area provides here probably a "late flowering"; fig. 8 and 9 (photos: *G. Blaich*) show a blooming Orchid on site Malia from the 24th of April 2001; eight years ago "wet feet" of the plant were the reason for good growing conditions.



The *Orchis palustris* is a vigorous plant with a height up to 100 cm. It has stiff upright leaves that stay upwards. The flowers are pink and red-violet with a brighter labium centre. The lateral lobes of the labium are not turned, but flat standing with short, preceding central lobe. The spur is shorter than the ovary and slightly upwards. The Cretan plants convey (by KRETZSCHMAR, 2004) between the var. *robusta* T. STEPHENSON and the ssp. *elegans* HEUFFEL. Its flowers are smaller than at the regular species, the inflorescences but much richer. Hybrids are not known for Crete. Heyday: mid April to mid May.

Remark: The biotope area behind the dunes of the beach areas located (which now is greatly affected by tourism), is unfortunately also "busy" by the bathers. It also serves as "waste disposal" for litter and this also affects.