

# WILD LITHOPS

HARALD JAINTA

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANJA & HARALD JAINTA



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J064: *meyeri*. Locality habitat. Richtersveld quartzite fields, 45 km NNE Port Nolloth, December 2010



J064: *meyeri*. Sun-reddened heads in beds of bright quartz



J064: *meyeri*. Large opaque windows cover the leaf tops



J064: *meyeri*. Wedged in a quartz crevice near Lekkering



J064: *meyeri*. Resting bodies form a depression in the sand

## *Lithops meyeri*

### L. BOUIS

In the heart of the Richtersveld and in the middle of the distribution area of the Ywc group (lithops that bear yellow flowers with a white centre), dull, putty-faced *L. meyeri* lies just thirty kilometres from *L. geyeri* and probably less than fifty kilometres from *L. herrei*. Hammer reports that *meyeri* and *geyeri* readily hybridise with *herrei* in cultivation.

The taxon was named for its discoverer, Reverend Louis Gottlieb Meyer (1867–1958), who first found the plants in October 1931 (Bouis, 1932a). Clergyman, explorer, and insect collector Meyer trained as an agriculturist in his native Germany before arriving in South Africa as a young missionary in November 1893 (Glen & Germishuizen, 2010). His mission area included the Richtersveld where he worked continuously until 1934 and where he gained a solid appre-



Louis Gottlieb Meyer  
(Source: DNG, Herre, 1959)

ciation for succulents. Some of the plants he sent to Marloth and Schwantes became new taxa, including *Herreanthus meyeri*, *Stomatium meyeri* and the genus *Meyerophytum*. In 1939, accompanied by Herre (1959), Meyer made his last trip through his beloved Namaqualand.

Meyer's Lithops is endemic to the Richtersveld and occupies a small strip of land north of Lekkering. We examined plants at a spot (J064) that likely corresponds to Cole's C272. Unlike most lithops, *L. meyeri* exhibits almost no morphological variability and we noticed only that some plants were more shrivelled than others in the oppressive heat. *Fenestraria* grows some thirty kilometres away, at the Orange River, and *L. meyeri* has similarly big windows, sunken into the tops of the leaf lobes, and the gaunt faces lack any markings. Camouflage was evidently not prioritised in this species' evolution—sun-reddened heads were easy to spot in their beds of bright white quartz.

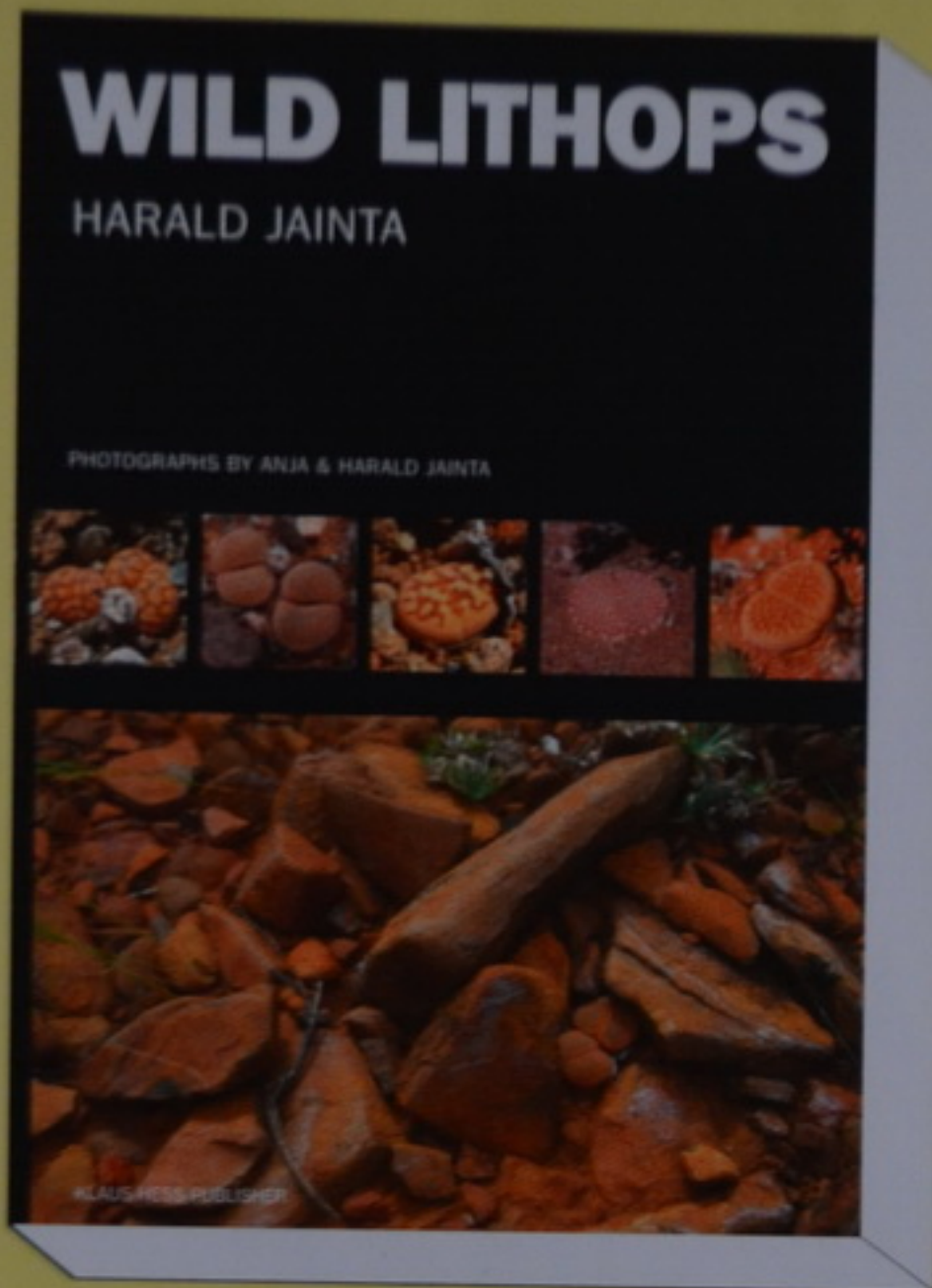
It is reported that *L. meyeri* is abundant in the quartzite plains of Lekkering known as 'Herre Fields', with the suggestion that a single large colony spans many kilometres. In 2014 we reinvestigated this area and found three more colonies, all occupying isolated flat-topped hills covered with quartz (J257–J259). We saw an abundance of plants which apparently face no threats. The huge arid zone west of Lekkering up to the Atlantic Ocean is said, somewhat implausibly, to lack lithops entirely. Perhaps the lack of sightings is due to under-exploration? It would take months to cover that thirty-kilometre swathe of inhospitable land.

*L. olivacea*, 150 kilometres to the east, belongs to the same flowering group as *L. meyeri* and, among other similarities (including large, open windows), also presents deep fissures. It seems to represent *meyeri*'s closest kin, but otherwise the species stands alone. Meyer's Lithops is unique in the genus with its oval, occasionally keeled leaf-pairs, and its consistent lack of prominent markings.



J064: *meyeri*. Heads typically reach more than 2 cm

**New Publication September 2017!**



Harald Jainta

# WILD LITHOPS

Photographs by Anja & Harald Jainta

With foreword by Steven Hammer and Ronnie Uijts

This **488-page unique monograph** of the genus *Lithops* features **all 91 currently accepted species** from a field research perspective and provides a valuable guide to lithops in their natural surroundings. **2000 colour habitat photographs** and **13 typographic maps** illustrate lithops relationships, diversity and distribution in southern Africa and a **new simplified taxonomy** is suggested. **60 portraits** and related **biographic information** honour the dedicated work of past and present Lithoparians. A thorough **review of published botanic and**

**scientific data on *Lithops*** plus a comprehensive **annotated bibliography** including **over 700 references** make this book a benchmark for plant lovers, succulent breeders and specialists of the unparalleled Living Stones.

**Harald Jainta** was born in 1963 and grew up in Adorf, Vogtland, Germany. In the 1980s he became interested in succulent plants and established a small collection including *Lithops*. After studying Biochemistry in Leipzig he has worked in research and management positions at pharmaceutical companies in Germany since 1988. His purely private passion to study lithops in the wild began in 2003 and through all subsequent sixteen field trips he was accompanied by his wife Anja.

