

Conservation Status of Wild Palms in Latin America and the Caribbean

DENNIS JOHNSON

3311 Stanford Street, Hyattsville, MD 20783

The IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources), Species Survival Commission, Palm Specialist Group, recently completed a project entitled Economic Botany and Threatened Species of the Palm Family in Latin America and the Caribbean, supported by World Wildlife Fund—U.S. (WWF 3322). Collaborating on the research were Robert Read and Michael Balick, as well as Stephan Beck (Bolivia), Rodrigo Bernal (Colombia), Hermilo Quero (Mexico) and Thomas Zanoni (Dominican Republic).

One general objective of the project was to determine the current *in situ* (in the wild) status of threatened native palms. As far as we know, there are not yet any cases of total extinction of contemporary species within the region. However, a total of 53 palms are now classified as Endangered (Table 1). The official IUCN definition of "endangered" is "taxa in danger of extinction and whose survival is unlikely if the causal factors continue operating." Of the palms listed, two have been found to be on the verge of extinction in the wild: *Attalea crassispatha*, with only three adult plants located in Haiti in 1986; and *Schippia concolor*, last seen in nature in 1973. Fortunately, both species are reportedly under cultivation in botanical gardens in Florida. It has yet to be ascertained if these specimens are mature and producing viable seed.

Of great concern is the fact that 33 of the Endangered palms are not reported to be under cultivation anywhere. Private palm growers and botanical gardens are urged to give particular attention to the

cultivation of these species as insurance against their total extinction. Planned future activities of the Palm Specialist Group include monitoring the status of threatened palms and taking appropriate actions to assure that extinctions do not occur. I invite Society members to send me any information they may have concerning the palms in Table 1. With Palm Society membership building steadily toward the total estimated number of palm species in the world (2,600), we possess the interest and expertise to protect the plant family we all so enjoy.

Table 1. *Endangered palms of Latin America and the Caribbean.**

| |
|--|
| <i>Acanthococcus emensis</i> Toledo (<i>Acrocomia emensis</i> (Toledo) [Moore])—Brazil |
| <i>Attalea burretiana</i> Bondar—Brazil |
| # <i>A. crassispatha</i> (Martius) Burret (<i>Orbignya crassispatha</i> (Martius) [Glassman])—Haiti |
| <i>A. septuagenata</i> Dugand—Colombia |
| <i>A. tessmannii</i> Burret—Peru |
| <i>A. victoriana</i> Dugand—Colombia |
| <i>Bactris militaris</i> Moore—Costa Rica |
| # <i>Barbosa pseudococos</i> (Raddi) Beccari—Brazil |
| # <i>Ceroxylon alpinum</i> Bonpland—Colombia |
| <i>C. crispum</i> Burret—Peru |
| <i>C. latisectum</i> Burret—Peru |
| <i>C. verruculosum</i> Burret—Peru |
| <i>C. weberbaueri</i> Burret—Peru |
| <i>Chamaedorea amabilis</i> Wendland ex Dammer—Costa Rica |
| # <i>C. cataractarum</i> Martius—Mexico |
| <i>C. ferruginea</i> Moore—Mexico |
| # <i>C. glaucifolia</i> Wendland—Mexico |
| # <i>C. klotzschiana</i> Wendland—Mexico |
| # <i>C. metallica</i> Cook ex Moore—Mexico |
| <i>C. montana</i> Liebmman ex Martius—Mexico |
| # <i>C. oreophila</i> Martius—Mexico |
| <i>C. pulchra</i> Burret—Guatemala |

- #*C. radicalis* Martius—Mexico
 #*C. seifrizii* Burret—Mexico
 #*C. stolonifera* Wendland ex Hooker—Mexico
 #*C. tenella*—Wendland—Mexico
Chelyocarpus dianeurus (Burret) Moore—Colombia
Coccothrinax borhidiana Muñiz—Cuba
 #*C. crinita* Beccari—Cuba
C. pauciramosa Burret—Cuba
C. victorini León—Cuba
 #*Copernicia ekmanii* Burret—Haiti
C. humicola León—Cuba
C. occidentalis León—Cuba
Cryosophila cookii Bartlett—Costa Rica
C. kalbreyeri (Dammer ex Burret) Dahlgren—Colombia
Geonoma hoffmanniana Wendland ex Spruce—Costa Rica
Hemithrinax ekmaniana Burret (*Thrinax ekmaniana* (Burret) [Moore])—Cuba
Itaya amicornum Moore—Brazil, Peru
 #*Lytocaryum insigne* (Drude) Burret & Potztal—Brazil
 #*L. weddelliana* (Wendland) Moore—Brazil

- #*Neonicholsonia watsonii* Dammer—Costa Rica, Panama
Oenocarpus circumtextus Martius—Brazil, Colombia
Parajubaea torallyi (Martius) Burret—Bolivia
Reinhardtia koschnyana Wendland & Dammer—Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Panama, Colombia
 #*Schippia concolor* Burret—Belize, Guatemala
Socratea hecatonandra Dugand—Colombia
Syagrus acaulis (Drude) Beccari—Brazil
S. campicola (Barbosa Rodrigues) Beccari—Paraguay
S. leptospatha Burret—Brazil
S. lilliputiana (Barbosa Rodrigues) Beccari—Paraguay
S. macrocarpa Barbosa Rodrigues—Brazil
Wettinia castanea Moore & Dransfield—Colombia

* This listing uses the current binomials in the Conservation Monitoring Centre database. In the case of *Acanthococcus emensis*, *Attalea crassispatha*, and *Hemithrinax ekmaniana* yet unpublished name changes are indicated.

Reported to be in cultivation.

Principes, 31(2), 1987, p. 97

LETTERS

Dear Professor Uhl:

Recently, during a stay on Nevis in the West Indies, I met Lewis Knudson, who is active in palm cultivation there and a member of the Society.

I told him about an early and interesting botanical collection of palms in the garden of the Marquise di Corsini in Italy. We visited him there last fall and were fascinated with the scope and rarity of the collection, dating from the early 19th century.

His address, should the Quarterly want to contact him, is Sr. Cino Corsini, Porto Ercole, Italy. He is also looking for botanists/students who can help identify some of his collection.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM HOWARD ADAMS
 Hazelfield
 Shenandoah Junction
 West Virginia 25442